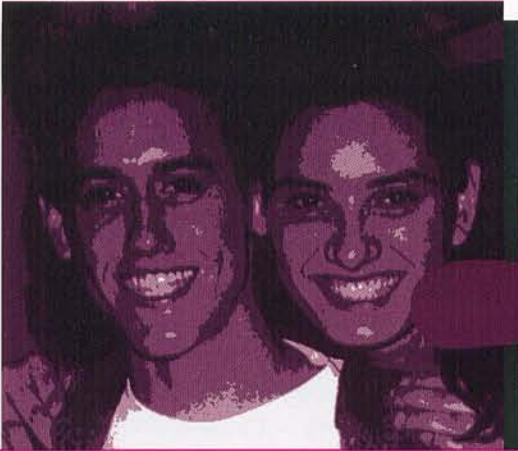


NEWS ANALYSIS OPINION

# ADVENTIST TODAY

VOL. 4, NO. 5

SEPTEMBER • OCTOBER 1996



**LA SIERRA CHAPLAIN STEVE DAILY  
REVEALS THE XER MIND**

The Lazarus Generation: Listening to and Believing in

# GENERATION

**COLUMBIA UNION COLLEGE  
SUES FOR STATE AID**

**THE SABBATH AS  
PLAY**

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# Is Adventist Today Divisive?

We at Adventist Today have many serious readers, and we take our readers seriously. We eagerly and thoughtfully read and reread the letters you write us. One of our esteemed readers and letter-writers is Ernest Steed. In his letter (page 4), he expresses concern that Adventist Today editors do not provide balanced coverage, but are divisive opponents of the Seventh-day Adventist message and doctrines. Below, Adventist Today Editor Raymond Cottrell responds to these concerns.

**A**dventist Today is for bona fide Seventh-day Adventists who care enough about their church to be well informed about the issues confronting it and to participate intelligently and constructively in resolving them.

Adventist Today is not for people who prefer to avoid problems that need the understanding of thinking, responsible church members. It is not for Laodiceans who prefer to think of the church as rich and increased in goods and in no need of the gold, the white robes, and the eye salve God offers it. It is not for dissidents or complainers or muckrakers.

Adventist Today is for people who want the church to be faithful to gospel principles in every aspect of its life and being and mission to the world. It is for people who profoundly want the church to be all that its divine Founder intends it to be: "without spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind" (Eph 5:27). It is for people who ardently await the divine summons, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt 25:34).

Adventist Today is open. By this we do not mean that the board and the editorial staff have no convictions, are neutral on the issues, or do not care. It means we respect our readers convictions when they differ from ours. It means we will give them a chance to express their convictions when they do so in an equally open and responsible manner. This may or may not result in equal space for opposing views.

Since the first issue of *Adventist Today*, we have printed views that differ from ours—most recently two or three major articles on the Sabbath. On major issues such as creation and gender inclusive ordination, we have not only accepted but invited opposing points of view.

Biblical interpretation (hermeneutics) is one of the most important issues before the church today. When we published a series of articles on this subject, the Adventist Theological Society, which disagrees with the position held by 90 percent of North American Bible scholars on this issue, did not contribute. Eleven of its leaders successively refused to participate. Refusal to dialog openly intensifies polarization and disunity. Unity requires confidence in each other's integrity and respect for each other's points of view.

*Adventist Today* is a magazine of news, analysis, and comment. We explore theological issues only when the topics have current news value. For example, the three Sabbath articles in the July-August issue are newsworthy for two reasons. One—a person severely disciplined by the church remains a member and an ardent advocate of the seventh-day Sabbath. Two—we wanted readers to evaluate the most cogent arguments a former Adventist pastor and a former Adventist Bible scholar could present against the seventh-day Sabbath. Evaluating these three scholars' viewpoints provides us a chance to re-examine our own reasons for keeping the seventh-day Sabbath.

Lest there remain any doubt with respect to *Adventist Today's* loyalty to the church and its mission, we as editors reaffirm our commitment to it and to its task. We participate regularly in our home churches and in the Southeastern California Conference. One of us chairs the conference nominating committee; another wrote the conference's constitution. Six of us are current or past teachers at La Sierra and Loma Linda Universities.

*Adventist Today* is for Adventists who care about the church as we do—the church to which we have all dedicated our lives, our labors, and our meager "fortunes."

Raymond Cottrell, Editor

Raymond Cottrell has served the church as pastor, foreign missionary, Bible teacher, writer, and editor for 66 years, 47 years as a church employee and the balance as an active retiree. His career spans half of the time since the GC was organized in 1863.



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**ADVENTIST TODAY**

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*Adventist Today* reports on contemporary issues of importance to Adventist church members. Following basic principles of ethics and canons of journalism, this publication strives for fairness, candor, and good taste.

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# FIRST CLASS



## **Adventist Today Balanced?**

I've received every one of your issues of *Adventist Today* and have noted your objective to give a balanced supportive presentation of and for Seventh-day Adventists.

In my opinion and documentary evidence you have in no way lived up to your proposals as an open publication, otherwise you would for instance have given equal space on many issues to foundationals and "independents" (who tell of disfellowshipping of some "concerned brethren" in Australia). You would likewise have given space to Dr. Russell Standish to report on his biblical convictions and the way he is being treated by church leaders.

After reading thoroughly each issue I'm convinced you are not supportive of Seventh-day Adventists but are in fact opponents and divisive, giving space to those arguing against this message and its doctrines. If this is not bad enough you then present Des Ford as the great defender of the Sabbath (an excellent article) knowing full well he has lashed out and torn the church with public attacks against the sanctuary message, the 2300 days prophecy, the investigative judgment, the nature of sin, and the doctrine of Christ's righteousness and its relationship to both justification and sanctification.

I see this as but a subtle attempt to soften resistance by church members against the "new theology" that Des Ford and *Adventist Today* seem dedicated to advance.

I believe in freedom of expression and religious liberty which also gives me the responsibility to unmask your deceptive agenda while pretending to support the truths of Seventh-day Adventists.

**Ernest H. J. Steed**  
DeBary, Florida

## **Adventist Today is the Balance**

In the March-April, 1996 issue, some of the letters to the Editor expressed displeasure, claiming that you were not balanced in your articles. In my opinion, it would be a mistake to try to print an opposing viewpoint to every article. *Adventist Today* exists to fill a vacuum that official church publications create. Therefore, you are balance to the "official" viewpoints. Please don't think it necessary to become bipartisan. You'd have to publish many more pages before you would even make a dent at balancing the more traditional viewpoints available to Adventists. Keep up the good work.

**Steve Divnick**  
Spring Valley, Ohio

## **Answering Questions**

Thanks for a great magazine! . . . I have so many questions about my church. You are helping answer some of them. Thank you.

**Don Jeffries**  
Bakersfield, California

## **Not Giving Up**

Thank you for not giving up on us! Yes, we do want to renew our subscription—we read it from cover to cover. The church, God's listening believers, needs a voice and some influence at times when we deal with the organization that also goes by that name.

I am a fifth-generation Adventist, loyal to the mission of the organized church, but very disappointed in some of its actions. It seems to me that [a particular action] lacks integrity. How can we as a church expect to be blessed if we are not faithful and honest in all matters?

**James L. Perry**  
Loma Linda, California

## **Tithing, Bureaucracy, and Individual Freedom**

Your news "analysis" on "Senior Pastor Fired Over Tithing" leads the reader to possibly conclude that Mike Pionkowski paid \$20,000 in tithe to the Takoma Park church. Did you verify that payment with the church treasurer or with the Potomac Conference treasury staff? Or verify that he was fired?

The report goes on to state that "some conference leaders have still tried to accuse him of rallying support." Again, if you had checked with the Conference administrators you would have found that the leaders instead, had prayerfully tried to work out this problem with Mike Pionkowski for a long time.

The issue has to do with church policy, but let's not cop out on the biblical interpretation that tithe paid should be labeled tithe and not local church budget, or whatever else the giver prefers. Members maybe are not currently disfellowshipped for tithe diversion or non-payment, but certainly denominational workers should uphold and abide by a policy based on one of our most basic beliefs.

**Daniel A. Chaij**  
Vienna, Virginia

## **Colin Cook and Homosexuality**

I feel that it is time for *Adventist Today* to get off Colin Cook's back and get the issue of homosexuality out of the closet.

I know a Seventh-day Adventist who, on discovering that they were gay, went looking for help. The only place in the church that seemed to offer any hope of change was Cook's program. When this person contacted Cook he was gracious, professional and knowledgeable. Regardless of Cook's difficulties I am still not aware of another place in the Seventh-day Adventist church where

people can go to get help with living out the traditional Seventh-day Adventist answer—"homosexuality is a sin." Is Seventh-day Adventist Kinship (an independent support group for Seventh-day Adventist gays on the web at <http://qrd.tcp.com/qrd/www/orgs/sda-kinship/>) the only other answer? My friend ended up accepting the Kinship answer—"being gay, lesbian or bisexual is a fact of life and a permanent part of one's personality." One thing that impressed me in this whole situation was that Cook is married and living with his family. Some members of Kinship are also married and living in their heterosexual families. Until we can come to an agreement on this issue, perhaps we need both answers.

I would like to see *Adventist Today* investigate the issue of homosexuality.

**Charles Longway**  
Palm Bay, Florida

### **Heart, Brains, and Viscera**

I commend the editor, staff, and writers for maintaining a good balance of heart, brains, and viscera—and for not being precisely in the camp of literalists or of modernists.

**Charles D. Potter, Jr.**  
Silver Spring, Maryland

### **Ellen White and Joseph Smith**

As I was reading J. Walters' article dealing with E. White's potential indebtedness to Joseph Smith, her literary dependency on another Smith came to my mind—Uriah Smith. You probably noticed that the current issue of the *Adult Sabbath School Lessons* deals again with the often recurring topic of the Investigative Judgment, recently rebaptized and slightly sanitized under the more palatable label the Pre-Advent Judgment. I wonder if you are planning to offer us some of your insights regarding this in your magazine. More specifically, I am personally interested in the following:

A. What significance, if any, do you assign to the fact that now we are openly admitting that at Jesus' ascension he went directly to the Most Holy place of the heavenly sanctuary? (see *Adult Sabbath School Lessons*, p.27) Although

we turn around and say that this is now no problem since, like in the Old Testament, Jesus can be in the Most Holy while the ministration is taking place in the Holy section of the Tabernacle, which new interpretation allows us to continue holding to the 1844 date.

B. Are we aware that by leaning so heavily on Leviticus 16, we have thereby created a more serious theological problem? The two main events included in the Day of Atonement activities were, (a) The killing of the sacrificial victim and, (b) The banishment of the scapegoat from the camp. The first of these two fun-

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from the hallowed  
halls of Academe.*

damental events forces us to place the beginning of the Day of Atonement not in 1844 but rather not later than 27 A.D. How on earth can we leave the killing of the sacrificial victim outside of the Day of Atonement, and separated from it by 1800 years? Don't we realize that such a peculiar prophetic interpretation creates a historical anachronism too hard to swallow?

C. Do you think that the day will come when we will muster enough moral courage to openly admit to the Christian world that the main source for this unique dogma of ours is not the Bible, but rather our red books which started as a "lesser light" but gradually have taken center stage to the point of becoming the sole arbiter between truth and error?

**Nic Samojluk,**  
Loma Linda, California

### **More on Ellen White**

I believe Ellen White was a true prophet and God's messenger. You obviously consider her a false prophet who largely expressed her own opinions. Therefore I disagree with much of what you print. But it is current, well stated and laid out, and interesting.

**Stewart Bauer**  
Redwood, California

### **The Sabbath**

Your discussion on the Sabbath Doctrine (Jul-Aug '96) is incomplete without an opinion from a Messianic Jew and maybe a rabbi, as only the Messianic Jews have retained the customs and traditions of true sabbath observance. Seventh-day Adventists are generally unaware that their version of sabbath observance has little in common with that of a Messianic Jew.

From the Jewish perspective, Adventists have reached back beyond Calvary to extract selected laws which happen to support their doctrines while declaring that all the others were "nailed to the cross." A Messianic Jew believes that the Law must be either accepted, or rejected, as a whole. The idea that Adventists can pick and choose which parts of the Law to retain defies Jewish logic.

**V. Wagner**  
Huntington Beach, California

### **Adventist Today a Yardstick**

It may come as an unwelcome revelation that some of your readers do not hail from the hallowed halls of Academe. To assume that the "traditional" Adventist is incapable of rigorous intellectual discourse or unable to follow the skillfully nuanced arguments you present is supercilious and condescending. Those who accept the Ten Commandments *in toto* as God's immutable law are not thereby rendered feebleminded.

It is one thing to recognize serious problems within the organized church—of which structure academia constitutes a prominent part (and not immune to criticism)—and quite another to amplify the voices of those who, whether sincere or self-serving, seek to adjust the Law of

God to conform to their own highly personal interpretations.

I received a gift subscription to *Adventist Today*. I have found it extremely entertaining and a useful yardstick by which to measure my own convictions. I eagerly anticipate observing "progressive Adventist theology" deconstruct the other nine commandments to "sing in the new key" and meet the needs of our intellectual elite.

*Iris Yaeger Specht*  
Newport Beach, California

### **Abuse in the Adventist Subculture**

Congratulations for candidly addressing a relevant and very serious problem existing within the Adventist subculture, that of physical, sexual and spiritual abuse. I was especially impressed with Edie Westphal's article on spiritual abuse. As a former Adventist educator with experience spanning elementary to higher education, I can attest to the devastating effect of this assault on the human psyche. Publicly and privately I often agonized over what I termed the Ellen White bludgeon employed by certain parents, ministers and teachers using *Messages To Young People* as a textbook. I frequently spoke with Adventist youth whose self-concept was so negative resulting from these experiences that they sincerely believed they were spiritually forever lost. We may have rejected the doctrine of eternal hell fire but found an excellent substitute in the unpardonable sin. Perfectionism has pervaded the church from its inception and is undoubtedly the worst heresy perpetrated upon Christianity, for by discouragement and hopelessness it has destroyed more lives than the Inquisition.

Spiritual abuse not only affects our children and youth but older church members as well. Self-appointed "hammers of God" engage in witch hunts and character assassination that destroy professional careers and embitter families, unfortunately all too often with aid and comfort from church leaders. Christ loved doubting Thomas and lying Peter, for he recognized their potential for good

despite their failures. Can we do less? As long as perfectionism is tolerated within the Adventist Church, we shall continue to experience spiritual abuse as a method of mind control. The church must sincerely and completely embrace the doctrine of righteousness by faith, which is, "in verity," the truth for our time.

Only then will love and acceptance of each other pervade our churches and institutions. As Paul wrote to the Galatians, "The only thing that counts is faith that works by love."

*John W. Cassell, Jr.*  
Calimesa, California

### **Ordination of Women**

I noticed in the March-April issue of *Adventist Today* that "Folkenberg Calls Ordinations Rebellious, Not Valid." What a pity that he would go on record making such an unwise, judgmental statement! The churches who have ordained women have made it very clear that their ceremonies were not valid outside their jurisdiction, so what's the big deal? The pressures from the theologians at Andrews University (Bacchiocchi, Holmes, Pipin, Damsteegt, Maxwell) who have campaigned so vigorously through their books and magazines, even trying to make a doctrine out of the subordination of women, must be getting to him.

The first mistake was to put a policy issue to a vote by the world church, since circumstances vary to widely from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. It should be an administrative decision made by conferences and unions according to the qualifications of the individuals and the needs of the community. It is very obvious that it was not settled at Utrecht and will never be settled by a world-wide vote. To try to enforce it now only increases tensions as one "side" tries to control the actions of others.

There is a fine line between rebellion and courage. The Catholic Church once saw Martin Luther as a traitor; we see him as a courageous man of God. The Pharisees saw Jesus as a threat worthy of crucifixion; we see him as our Redeemer. To condemn these churches for following

their consciences is walking on dangerous ground.

I have recently read a very fine discussion of the subject of women's ordination by two Catholic theologians in the *US Catholic* magazine for April, 1996. Their underlying theme is that ordination of women is a mark of church authority without basis in scripture.

Shortly before the campaign by Andrews University theologians to influence the world church against ordination of women on the grounds that it was unscriptural, the pope announced that women were "forever" barred from ordination in the Catholic Church.

How interesting are the twists and turns of history! Time was when the Seventh-day Adventist Church stood firm and alone in refusing to submit to the authority of the pope and the dictates of the Catholic Church on the Sabbath issue, yet now we follow in their footsteps! The only difference between the pope's decree and that of our Seventh-day Adventist theologians is that Catholic theologians do not claim a scriptural basis for their edict—only church authority. Could it be that Seventh-day Adventist church leaders are overly concerned with their own authority to the detriment of the growth of the church? Perhaps we should stop ordaining anyone.

Since the most backward countries in the world are dominated by the Catholic Church, it is not surprising that they would be influenced in their attitude toward women by the edict of the pope. That's why third-world countries have no business deciding church policy issues in more enlightened areas of the world, such as North America.

For an Adventist leader to exhibit such authoritarianism is a terrible mistake, and will only strangle the church. We might as well join the Catholics and submit to the domination of the pope.

*Carol Mayes*  
Chatsworth, California

#### **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

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# Colleges Graduating Into Universities

by Jim Walters

**S**outhern College is now Southern Adventist University, and Southwestern Adventist College is Southwestern Adventist University. Although the administrators, boards and most faculty members and students at both schools are elated, serious questions are being raised about the changing nature of Adventist higher education.

## Southern Adventist University

Why the name changes? "Becoming a university at this time...keeps Southern College abreast with what is happening around us in our own geographic area," explained Southern's president Donald R. Sahly to other Adventist college and university presidents in a memo telling of the board's July 1 decision. Also relevant is the friendly rivalry with Southwestern Adventist University and the fact that the Florida Hospital's college of medical arts has been planning (and has voted) to become a 4-year, baccalaureate degree-granting institution.

On September 9, Southern's constituency chose the name Southern Adventist University. Of students, alumni and faculty polled, 72 percent desired changing the name to Southern Adventist University. Other names considered were Adventist Southern University, Kenneth A. Wright University, and Adventist University of the South.

In Tennessee alone, seven private colleges have upgraded their names from college to university since 1985. In neighboring Georgia, the chancellor of the state's university system announced earlier this year a plan to change the names of 12 of the 13 state colleges to state "universities." In the state's educational system, the 2-year institutions of higher learning would be almost the only schools to retain "college" in their name. In each case of the upgrade from college to university in the state system, the college involved is offering at least one master's degree in addition to its primary baccalaureate degrees.

Southern College has never before offered master's degrees. For the past 20 years, La

Sierra University has offered master's degrees in education for Southern Union teachers on the Southern campus. This past summer Southern opened its first master's program, a three-emphasis master of science degree in education. Fifty-two graduate students, all but six or eight church-sponsored, are now enrolled. To encourage community enrollment, Southern charges 15 to 35 percent less for graduate tuition than for undergraduate. Next year Southern will open its second master's program, an M.A. in religious studies (see related story on ministerial education). A master's degree in accounting has also been approved by the board. Its implementation is awaiting adequate staffing. Another emphasis in education and a master's degree in community counseling are in the pipeline.

In a letter to alumni announcing the change of name, President Sahly underscored Southern's continuing commitment to undergraduate education: "(W)e are not becoming a research university where teachers are more interested in research than teaching."

Southern's board of trustees had planned to vote on the name change on October 24. However, the decision was made instead at a previously-called constituency session on September 9. The administration gave two reasons for acting earlier than planned. First, the school's attorney advised that the constituency should make the choice of name.

Second, Southern wanted to precede Southwestern in name-changing. "We felt we (Southern) were making the move to a university first....We wanted to be a leader and not an imitator," stated Vinita Sauder, director of institutional effectiveness and research, as quoted in the *Southern Accent*.

## Southwestern Adventist University

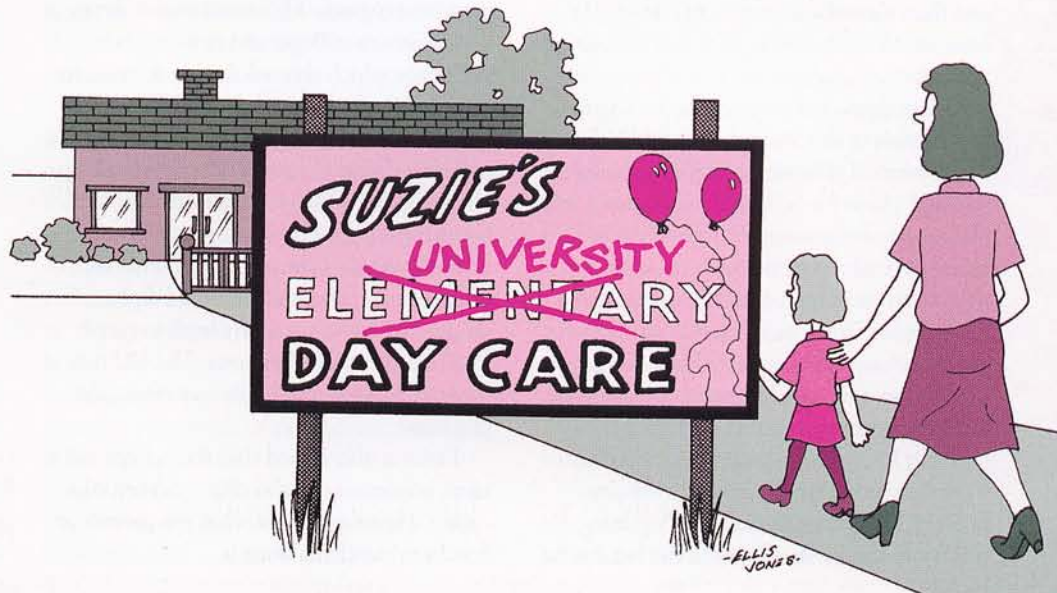
Several days after Southern changed its name, Southwestern constituents voted to change their school's name to Southwestern Adventist University. Constituents also considered other possible names: Adventist University Southwest, Keene University, and Texas Adventist University. Southwestern had desired to name the university after a \$50 million donor, but no such benefactor appeared.

In explaining its rationale for the transition, Southwestern, like Southern, points to the national trend. Southwestern began consideration of a name change seven years ago. Just over a year ago a consensus favoring a change of name arose among trustees, administrators and faculty, according to Jenell Eli Rusk, public information director.

Under the entrepreneurial leadership of president Marvin Anderson, a former business professor, Southwestern has built an expansive physical plant in the last decade, including an impressive fine arts building and a large library. The notion of naming the university after a major donor is vintage Anderson.

## Walla Walla College

Walla Walla College's board and faculty are actively discussing the pros and cons of a



name change, prompted to some degree by changes transpiring at Southern and Southwestern. Until two years ago, the college's 5-year master plan called for discussion of a name change, but because of lack of interest among faculty, it was dropped. However, last year the board asked that the faculty again consider the idea. A name change was discussed at several faculty senate meetings last year, with a straw vote at the last one favoring a change of name.

With perhaps the strongest tradition of faculty governance in Adventist higher education, WWC is far from deciding which way to go on its name. Faculty and students are only beginning the discussion in earnest. A significant argument against a change is just down the street from WWC—Whitman College, a premier liberal arts college in the Northwest with a large endowment and an impressive faculty. Whether WWC desires to be a decent college or “the trailing edge of universities” is a big issue, says Carolyn Gaskill, chair of the WWC master planning committee.

On the other side of the argument is the fact that international allure would be greater if the school were called a university, since in most of the world “college” does not connote higher education. Further, among Adventist colleges, WWC is one of the largest and academically strongest, with master's degrees currently offered in biology, educational psychology and social work.

### Large Issues: Southern as a Case Study

Floyd Greenleaf is a New Englander who graduated from Southern Missionary College and then earned a doctorate in history. He returned to teach at Southern and had served as academic dean until he was fired by President Sahly last summer. According to a special issue of the *Southern Accent*, Sahly said Greenleaf possessed a “different philosophical vision for Southern.” Greenleaf was planning to retire next year, and because he'd already signed a contract he is on salary for the present academic year. When contacted by *Adventist Today*, he refused any direct comment on issues connected to his departure, but said he could write a 150-page book on related concerns.

After he had been president at Southern for only a year, Don Sahly let the faculty know of his interest in Southern's gaining university status. In a letter to the faculty, he

revealed his major concern: the impending consolidation of Adventist colleges under the western and eastern banners of Loma Linda University and Andrews University. Sahly wishes “to preserve its [Southern's] identity in the light of the General Conference special commission to bring all colleges flagships of our universities, i.e., Loma Linda and Andrews.” In fact, the General Conference denied having such a plan, although various ideas have been bantered about as ways to strengthen Adventist higher education.

Two years ago Southern was in the throes of debating whether to offer graduate education. Three chairpersons, Larry Hanson (mathematics), Ben McArthur (history), and David Smith (english) wrote their board, urging it to set up a committee to thoroughly examine the complex issues raised by Southern's offering graduate programs. No such committee was set up, apparently because, at that point, most board members, administrators, students, and faculty members favored the change to “university.”

Larry Hanson, academic dean for four years under the Frank Knittel administration, sent the board a four-page position paper in which he argued against graduate programs and university status on the basis of costs and the mission of the college. Hanson pointed out that greater costs for graduate programs result from the need for more highly qualified professors, lighter teaching loads, smaller classes, and more support personnel and facilities. Rather than putting college resources into graduate programs, Hanson suggested they should be used to shore up the undergraduate program. He cited a recent survey of the 28 private colleges and universities in Tennessee which showed that, in relation to Southern, only one paid their professors less, only three had a lower doctorate/faculty ratio, only five charged higher tuition, and only Vanderbilt had a lower student/faculty ratio. Southern is regularly cited by accreditation teams for offering too many programs—40 baccalaureate, 18 associate, and 4 diploma programs. Offering so many leads to many small classes and higher costs. The addition of graduate programs will only exacerbate the problem.

Hanson also argued that the college has a more important mission than graduate education. He believes that what the parents of Southern's students want is:

“simply..., at an affordable price, high quality undergraduate programs embedded in a social and spiritual environment which meaningfully and attractively supports Seventh-day Adventist teachings and values; an environment which leads to a network of life-long friends including a spouse.”

Hanson urged that the college's creative and innovative powers be channeled into “improving our current programs—academic, religious, and social”—and into making them more affordable.

Hanson told *Adventist Today* that:

“The push for university status is driven by competition within Adventist higher education. Each college administration wants to be seen as more innovative and progressive than the others. This often leads to an emphasis on image rather than substance. Teachers, in their desire to teach at what some see as the more prestigious and professionally rewarding graduate level, also fuel the desire for university status. Little thought is given by university status promoters to the mission, needs, and costs of Adventist higher education. It is most unfair for Adventist educators and college boards to burden the 800,000 church members in the United States with the costs of five to eight wannabe universities each offering many of the same graduate programs.”

Hanson believes that after four years of solid undergraduate education, good students should be urged to attend the finest universities of the country for their graduate education.

Ben McArthur got his graduate degree at one of the schools Hanson likes Southern graduates to attend—the University of Chicago. McArthur has reservations, but he is more optimistic than Hanson. He takes a “wait and see” attitude, saying that the name change could be a positive turning point for Southern. He laments the “slipshod” process of the change and the lack of substantive debate, but he is hopeful that perhaps a next step will be the prizing of research and the objective criticism of big issues that characterize university life.

To some critics, Southern has skirted the larger issues that face Adventist higher education. To others, Southern has made a pragmatic decision on immediate concerns, with the final verdict still out. Regardless, Southern and other Adventist institutions of higher learning increasingly appear to be calling their own tunes rather than following a single director.



# What Evangelicals Say About Seventh-day Adventists

by Larry Christoffel

**D**uring the 1950s, evangelical leaders Donald Barnhouse and Walter Martin, of *Eternity* magazine, shocked the Christian world by declaring that Seventh-day Adventists are not cultic but rather should be welcomed as fellow Christians. Today, evangelicals writing on Adventism describe a pluralistic church that includes evangelical, mainstream, and cultic elements.

Seventh-day Adventists ring true, declared Martin, on the verities of the Christian faith: Scripture as the basis of faith and practice, the Trinity, justification by faith alone, the new birth experience, and Jesus Christ's eternal deity, virgin birth, sinless life, vicarious substitutionary death, bodily resurrection, and literal second coming. He totally disagreed, however, with Adventist stands on the investigative judgment, the Sabbath, conditional immortality of the soul, annihilation of the wicked, the writings of Ellen G. White, and other issues.

Walter Martin founded and directed the Christian Resource Institute (CRI), a well-respected evangelical resource on the cults. Kenneth R. Samples, CRI's correspondence editor and research consultant, published an article on Seventh-day Adventism in response to the many questions coming in—"From Controversy to Crisis, a Recent Re-assessment of Seventh-day Adventism," Summer, 1988, *Christian Research Journal*.

Samples traced Adventism's history with special attention to recent happenings, such as Desmond Ford's denial of the investigative judgment and Walter Rea's exposure of Mrs. Ellen G. White's literary borrowings. He identified two theological

camp within Adventism, traditional and evangelical, which differ on the meaning of righteousness by faith, the human nature of Christ, the significance of 1844, the possibility of perfection, and the authority of Ellen G. White.

Pastors, theologians, and administrators from the Southeastern California Conference met with both Samples and Martin early in 1989, and Samples interviewed about a dozen and a half prominent Adventist leaders around the Loma Linda area as he attempted to understand the denomination. After Walter Martin's unexpected death in June, 1989, Samples

*Primitive Seventh-day Adventism, writes Samples, was clearly a cultic movement.*

published another article, "The Recent Truth About Seventh-day Adventism," in *Christianity Today*, February 5, 1990. This article, repeating much from the previous one, also identified a liberal camp within Adventism which denies Christ's vicarious substitutionary atonement.

With this release came more meetings between Samples and pastors, theologians, and administrators, invitations for Samples to speak at Adventist Forums, and an invitation to visit the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. Samples, with CRI colleagues, co-authored the book, *Prophets of the Apocalypse*, (Baker, 1994), the story of David Koresh and the tragic Waco incident, a delicate assignment with implications for the image of Adventism among other Christians. He founded and directs the Augustine Fellowship, an organization promoting a gospel understanding among all Christians.

Samples puts forth his current assessment of Adventism in the foreword to Dale Ratzlaff's new book, *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists* (Life Assurance Ministries, 1-800-355-7073). Primitive Seventh-day Adventism, writes Samples, was clearly a cultic movement which held "a non-trinitarian view of God, a semi-arian christology, a semi-pelagian gospel, a message of restoration, a strongly legalistic piety, an identity rooted in speculative eschatology (rather than the gospel), and an unsophisticated and unreliable hermeneutic."

Problematic also were the early Adventists' claim to be the "remnant church" which keeps God's commandments and their claim to be guided by divinely inspired Ellen G. White.

Samples notes, significantly, that over the years Adventism has corrected many of its early theological errors. "In fact, Ellen G. White seemed to play a significant role in helping the Adventist church move toward theological orthodoxy (acceptance of the trinity, an orthodox view of Christ, etc.)."

Samples writes that: "Following in the footsteps of my friend and colleague Walter R. Martin, my writings have endeavored to give Seventh-day Adventism a fair hearing in the evangelical ranks." His current assessment of Adventism includes a long-standing recognition of "the broad theological diversity present within contemporary Adventism: traditional, evangelical, liberal, cultural, etc." He maintains that "Seventh-day Adventism as a broad church body should not be viewed as a non-Christian cult or heretical sect such as Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormonism." However, he is "painfully aware that there exists a cultic branch of Seventh-day Adventism that seeks to trace its identity to the Adventist pioneers of the nineteenth century."

While he is "not in complete agreement with Mr. Ratzlaff's overall assessment of Seventh-day Adventism," Samples does believe that Ratzlaff "has provided a penetrating analysis of some of Seventh-day Adventism's most distinctive early doctrines—and their unfortunate implications in the present-day church."

For example, Samples points out that in the views of some contemporary Adventist scholars, "...doctrines such as the sanctuary

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and investigative judgment as historically set forth by Seventh-day Adventism have no sound biblical foundation.” Tied to “the alleged authoritative writings of Ellen G. White,” these doctrines, “without her prophetic imprimatur,...as on the early Adventist movement as a whole, ... would have no foundation whatsoever.”

Samples agrees with Ratzlaff “that the doctrine of the investigative judgment is antithetical to the biblical gospel,” and “seems to be clearly incompatible with the doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, on the account of Christ alone.” It appears to “rob Adventists of the assurance of their salvation by wrongly emphasizing a person’s individual works of obedience, rather than properly emphasizing the righteousness of Christ himself, which has been imputed to the believer and received through faith alone (Rom 3:23,24). Our standing before God rests completely in the imputed, alien righteousness of Jesus Christ.”

Dale Ratzlaff and his wife Carolyn left the Seventh-day Adventist church in 1981 because they could not conscientiously teach the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary and investigative judgment doctrines. Dale Ratzlaff has written two books on doctrines held by Adventists. The first, *Sabbath in Crisis* (1990, revised 1995), challenges Adventism’s view of the Sabbath as a test. His second book, *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists* (1996), attacks the Adventist doctrines of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment.

Ratzlaff, without calling Adventism a cult, identifies what he regards as the church’s cultic doctrine. Although his main concerns are the sanctuary and

investigative judgment teachings, he also has a problem with the church’s position on Ellen G. White, the Sabbath as an eschatological test, and the remnant church belief. Within Adventism, Ratzlaff states, are a number of theological camps, including liberal, historic (which he splits into early historic and contemporary historic), evangelical, and denominational (pages 333-337).

“Evangelical Adventists should not be considered a cult,” writes Ratzlaff. They accept the Pauline message of justification by faith, and do not see themselves as the only ones to be saved. They question the church’s traditional understanding of the cleansing of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment, as well as the seventh-day Sabbath as the final test of authentic Christianity. They do not hold up Ellen White’s writings as authoritative for doctrine. He writes, “One wonders, however, upon what basis they can really be called Adventists. I found that they often disagree with a number of Fundamental Beliefs of SDAs” (page 334).

Timothy Oliver is an editor and researcher at Watchman Fellowship, an evangelical cult-watching organization. He recently published his negative assessment of Adventism in the Profile section of *The Watchman Expositor*.

Seventh-day Adventist teachings he saw as most clearly contrary to the gospel and unorthodox in nature are its insistence on water baptism as an essential prerequisite to salvation, its teaching about the end time significance of sabbath observance to identification of true believers, and its doctrine of the investigative judgment.

(“Seventh-day Adventist Church,” special cut-out section).

Other non-Adventist evangelicals take a different position. Seventh-day Adventism’s acceptance by many into the family of evangelicals is reflected in the book *The Variety of American Evangelicalism* (edited by Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston, 1991). Russell L. Staples, an Adventist scholar, provides a chapter, “Adventism,” among chapters by a variety of Christians with links to evangelicalism.

Some Adventists call themselves “evangelical Adventists.” They insist that “evangelical Adventism is authentic Adventism, Adventism as God meant it to be.” (See Michelle Rader, Larry Christoffel, David VanDenburgh, “Evangelical Adventism: Clinging to the Old Rugged Cross,” *Adventist Today*, January/February, 1994, pages 6-8). In essential agreement with the gospel as defined by Samples and Ratzlaff, they insist on a kind of Adventism which focuses on Jesus Christ, accepts his substitutionary atonement on the cross, affirms justification by faith apart from works, and which bases faith and practice on the Bible alone.

A major disagreement that some evangelical Adventists have with Ratzlaff, Samples, and other non-Adventist evangelicals is the Adventists’ firm conviction that God raised up the Adventist movement specially to prepare the world for Christ’s soon return through the proclamation of the everlasting gospel. Evangelical Adventists believe that God is using them, along with other Christians, to bring the gospel to the world and to segments of the church where it is denied or unknown.

## Columbia Union College Sues for State Aid

by Albert Dittes

Citing unfair religious discrimination, Columbia Union College has taken the Maryland Higher Education Commission and Board of Public Works to court.

It filed suit in the United States District Court for the District of Maryland, Southern Division, and it charges the state with unconstitutional conduct because it denies CUC financial aid, especially funds

from the Father Sellinger Program, which it grants to other similar colleges and universities. It further alleges that the state has denied such aid because of CUC’s speech and beliefs and “therefore, such conduct violates plaintiff’s rights to freedom of speech, freedom of association, free exercise of religion, and to equal protection under the law, as guaranteed by the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution.”

The college requests "a permanent order enjoining defendants from continuing to apply a policy of discriminating against plaintiff in the appropriation of Father Sellinger Program financial aid or in any other manner on the basis of the content or viewpoint of plaintiff's speech and belief or on the basis of the content or viewpoint of the speech of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with which plaintiff is affiliated; its expression; its exercise of religion; or its association."

CUC claims to meet the basic requirements of the Father Sellinger Program, namely:

- it was founded in 1904, well before the July 1, 1970, existence requirement of the Father Sellinger Program;
- it is accredited by the State Department of Education;
- it maintains more than one associate of arts or baccalaureate degree program;
- it would submit for approval any new programs or major alteration of programs to the Commission;
- it would refrain from utilizing any of

the money payable under the Father Sellinger program for sectarian purposes.

The suit states that CUC applied for Father Sellinger funds in January, 1990, claiming to conform with "all applicable, content-neutral Commission requirements" and "agreed to use Father Sellinger Program funds for non-sectarian purposes only."

The Maryland Higher Education Commission disagreed. According to the suit, "On April 14, 1992, the Commission found that the college is 'pervasively sectarian.'"

CUC claims to be just as entitled to the funds as Catholic higher education institutions such as St. Mary's College, Loyola University and The College of Notre Dame of Maryland.

Dr. Charles Scriven, president of Columbia Union College, asked for the commission to reconsider the decision on Dec. 27, 1995, citing a decision of the United States Supreme Court in *Rosenberger v. The Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia*.

William F. Howard, Assistant Attorney General of Maryland, replied by saying "unless the nature and practices of Columbia Union College have changed very substantially since 1992, I do not believe there would be any point in pursuing a new application for private aid at this time."

The suit charges that the State of Maryland has "denied, and, unless enjoined, will continue to deny Father Sellinger Program funds to plaintiff solely and expressly on the basis of plaintiff's viewpoint, the content of its expression, and the free exercise of religion by its faculty and students."

The petition asks for "a permanent order enjoining the defendants from maintaining and applying a policy of discriminating against plaintiff's speech or on the basis of the content or viewpoint of the speech or the religion with which plaintiff is affiliated."

The state has not yet filed its reply and did not wish to comment on the case. President Charles Scriven of Columbia Union College also declined comment at the present time.

## Ministerial Programs Factionalize

**S**outhern College will join three other Adventist universities in North America in offering an advanced religion degree for clergy. Until the recent past, only the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University offered ministerial education. In the early 1980s, Loma Linda University began offering a master of arts (M.A.) degree in religion. Loma Linda was sensitive to Andrews University's suspicion that a "West Coast seminary" was developing, however, so Loma Linda emphasized that the focus of its degree was ethics.

Today, Andrews University offers an M.A. in religion and a master of divinity (M.Div.). In addition, La Sierra University's School of Religion offers an M.A. in religious education and one in religious studies; Loma Linda University offers an M.A. in religion with concentrations in either ethics or clinical ministry, and now Southern will offer an M.A. in ministry.

The announcement of Southern's new M.A. came inadvertently at the annual meeting of Adventist religion department chairs last summer. Southern's Jack Blanco asked if LLU's new M.A. degree in clinical ministry would duplicate the seminary program at AU. Someone then asked him if Southern was starting its own M.A. program in religion. He admitted that they were planning to inaugurate an M.A. program in 1997 for older pastors in the Southern Union. Southern, he said, felt it could do a better job for its men than the seminary.

Southern plans to restrict its M.A. to pastors who are at least 35 years of age, but several of those present saw the new degree as a further diversification of ministerial education.

One of Southern's board members observed that the church should not have all its theological eggs in one basket. And one influential faculty member at the school believes this issue may well be the

driving force behind the push for both graduate work and university status at Southern.

Ellsworth McKee, president of McKee Baking Company, Collegedale, Tennessee, provided start-up funding for both of Southern's current M.A. programs, one in religion and one in education.

A new and unusual ministerial education program in the church is not run by an Adventist college or university, but by the University Church of Loma Linda. This church recently voted to establish a ministerial education committee to direct the education of its own unordained ministers. This program allows for the pastors to earn their academic degrees from a variety of schools. The degrees can be in areas as diverse as social work and music (see *Adventist Today*, May-June, 1996).

"I think we are witnessing the Balkanization of Adventist ministerial training," stated one Adventist theologian. (According to the Random House unabridged dictionary, to "Balkanize" is to "divide into contending and usually ineffectual factions.")

# Adventist Anti-Catholic Book Denounced

“**B**ook denounced that claims pope in league with devil” read a headline in the *San Diego Union Tribune* on August 30, 1996. The paper, California’s third largest daily, ran a story describing the book *God’s Answers to Your Questions*, published by the Review and Herald Publishing Association.

The piece, an Associated Press release that may have run in up to 100 papers nationally, says the book “likens the papacy to the beast in the book of Revelation, an ally of Satan in the world’s final days. The Seventh-day Adventist Church publishes the book and distributes it nationally door to door.”

The writer, Jan Clenski, asked several Protestant and Roman Catholic leaders for their comments. They expressed strong feelings. A Bible professor at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, for example, said he was surprised that the Adventists publish the book. “It’s outrageous and inflammatory and untrue biblically in any sense,” he said.

Twice the article refers to the Adventist church as a “major” denomination and conveys surprise that it would link the pope to the devil. It quotes Roman Catholic William Donohue of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights in New York as saying, “For this to come from the Seventh-day Adventists and not from a splinter group makes this offense particularly egregious.”

“The book merely follows the lead of such Protestant Reformers as Martin Luther and John Calvin,” says George Reid, head of the Biblical Research Institute at Adventist world headquar-

ters. The Review and Herald’s Richard Coffen defends the book: “Our position is that we are criticizing the system and not individual Catholic Christians.”

*God’s Answers to Your Questions* is only a condensed version of *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*, an Adventist stand-by for over a hundred

*Twice the article refers to the Adventist church as a “major” denomination and conveys surprise that it would link the pope to the devil.*

years. First published in 1890, it sold millions of copies during the past 106 years. (The Review and Herald alone has records documenting that it published over 4 million copies). The Associated Press writer apparently did not know this background information. Today, student literature evangelists are the primary means of distribution for *God’s Answers to Your Questions*.

North American church leaders are concerned about the bad press the denomination could suffer from this AP article. They have put “message points” on the Internet giving statements for local pastors and members to use in case

they have to speak to the media about the issue. The following is typical of the 7 points:

“The primary issue is not the identity of the Antichrist, but the attempt by the Antichrist to trample on individual freedom of conscience, to use secular power to make people obey dictates they may not believe in.”

In 1975, Neal Wilson (former North American Division president) submitted a brief in a trial document during the Pacific Press equal pay trial in California. His brief included the statement:

“Although it is true that there was a period in the life of the Seventh-day Adventist Church when the denomination took a distinctly anti-Roman Catholic viewpoint, and the term ‘hierarchy’ was used in a pejorative sense to refer to the papal form of church governance, that attitude on the Church’s part was nothing more than a manifestation of widespread antipapery among conservative protestant (sic) denominations in the early part of this century and the latter part of the last, and which has now been consigned to the historical trash heap so far as the Seventh-day Adventist Church is concerned.”

Today, varying administrative agendas and ideological pluralism exist in the denomination, and the church is divided on its traditional view of Catholicism.

A group of progressive Adventists object to the denomination’s continued affirmation of traditional anti-Catholic views based in nineteenth century American Protestant fundamentalism. This group is now working on a statement linking the beast of Revelation to the principle of evil.

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Ervin Taylor, Chair, September 17, 1996

# Our Children Are Looking at Us Funny

by Jean B. Lowry,  
professor, Loma Linda University

**D**id you find Utrecht to be disappointing, frustrating, exasperating, hostility producing, and predictable? I did. I felt it all. It was time for me to throw in the towel. Then I remembered a short piece that I had read by Dick Gregory, a black civil rights activist. Rereading that account reminded me that change requires persistence. I was inspired by those people who would risk their lives for justice. I was encouraged to stay the course.

It was 1962 when Gregory went to Greenwood, Mississippi for that Freedom March. Black clergymen had been at the forefront of the civil rights movements. Yet, when Gregory arrived in Greenwood, he found only 2 of 12 black churches had opened their doors to the marchers. The people no longer looked to the church for support but to the courts. The local black leaders had deserted the cause because they were "scared of losing their jobs, of having their churches bombed, of coming up empty in the collection plates."

Gregory was arrested during that march. In the police car on the way to jail, he had an amazing experience. The white policeman, who moments before had been hitting him, stopped the car and with tears in his eyes said, "My God, what are you trying to do to me?" He told Gregory that he could not arrest him, that "when he was at home at night his kids looked at him funny, that they made him feel bad."

I resonated to the story but I didn't know what I could do. Fortunately, the La Sierra University Church called a business meeting to vote support for the ordination of Adventist women. I voted. Then, Dan Smith, pastor of the La Sierra University Church, preached on justice. His sermon was not about women's ordination. It was a call for Christians to act in response to injustice. He called each of us to do what we can, when we can. That afternoon I wrote to all the conference and union presidents and to Elder McClure.

In my letter to the church leaders, I drew heavily on Gregory's account of the Freedom March. The people of Greenwood and Adventist women share some common experiences. The leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist church has deserted women. They aren't afraid of having their churches bombed, but the fear of losing jobs or having empty collection plates is a reality each leader must face if he takes a stand for justice.

The Adventist women that I know no longer look to the corporate church for justice. When we achieve a measure of justice, we do not say, "Thank God." We say, "Thank you, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission."

Our children are "looking at us funny." When I told my own 19-year-old son about the vote in Utrecht, he shook his head and said, "What is wrong with them?" I ended my letter by asking our church administrators to "open the door" to women; to act so that our children would no longer "look at us funny."

I wrote 58 letters. I did not ask for a response. Much to my surprise, 12 people chose to respond. The opinions expressed ranged from noncommittal to strongly supportive. A few sentences from some of the letters may give a sense of the feelings expressed:

"Dear Sister Lowry: Thank you for your letter... Your suggestions are interesting and I am sure will be discussed in the future."

"I understand he (Elder McClure) is working on the matter, and undoubtedly will have some type of progressive recommendation in the near future. In the \_\_\_ Conference we have ten ladies who are...doing excellent work, and we appreciate them very much."

"Please know that your church leaders are taking this issue very seriously and plan to continue to address the matter."

"Rest assured that many of us share many of the concerns that you do...While the alternatives before the church are not real exciting, I do hope that some course can be taken which will send very positive signals to both women and to the future leaders of our church."

"Right now we are studying and praying how to be proactive and yet work within the parameters of Seventh-day Adventist Church governance."

"Let me be very direct in my response to you as I wrestle with the issues of what happened at Utrecht. I have come to the conclusion...that the issue of women's ordination is directly tied to cultural developmental understandings. You and I can look at how a culture treats their women and find a direct correlation in whether they are willing to discuss the issue of ordination. That, unfortunately, is a developmental issue within the United States as well as outside the US—especially so outside the US."

"I must assure you that you are preaching to a converted choir member who was just as disappointed in Utrecht."

"I have been a long time supporter of women's ordination as has the \_\_\_ Conference Executive Committee. I have two daughters. I have tried to help them understand that the negative vote was not a betrayal by the North American Division leaders. Rather, it was a result of a cultural majority that see women having submissive roles to men. This new majority of the Adventist church will probably never approve the ordination of women."

"I have believed in, been supportive of, and have been promoting women's ordination for years...I was terribly appalled at what happened at the General Conference session."

"God, of course, reveals in scripture His will for the quality and inclusion of all in this great mission. He also confirms by the calling of many women who are effective soul winners in their church ministry. We are not doing the right thing by failing to ordain these women."

The majority of these letters tell me that we are in for more "talk" followed by inaction. However, there is hope when even one conference president says "we are not doing the right thing." There is hope when even one conference president says he is a supporter and so is the conference executive committee. Maybe, just maybe, one conference is ready to stand for justice.

I know women who don't care if a conference ever recognizes the ordination of women. They see the church moving toward congregationalism and applaud that move—the local church can and will continue to ordain women. They think the blessing of the corporate church is not needed. I disagree with that view. The church's blessing is symbolic and necessary.

I have known parents who did not attend their own child's wedding because they did not approve of the intended spouse. The wedding took place. Siblings and friends sang and rejoiced for the bride and groom. The parents were alone in their choice to break the tie that binds. The couple is married. Even if the parents later accept the spouse, the "family" has been changed in a subtle, destructive way.

The church is important to me. It is time to come to the wedding. It is time for the corporate church to affirm that women are made in the image of God, not in the image of men.

*Jean Lowry is a faculty member at Loma Linda U. Her special interest is in working with preschool children whose speech is unintelligible.*

# The Lazarus Generation: Listening to and Believing in GENERATION

**BY STEVE DAILY**

Once upon a time, on an Adventist campus, lived an administrator who was a very intimidating soul. Not only did this guy weigh nearly 300 pounds, but he had the ability to look darts right through you. On more than one occasion I passed this man on the walk, said "Hi," and got totally ignored. This was the experience of many faculty, so you can imagine how intimidating he was to students. One morning, as this administrator arrived at work, he noticed that the president was circling through the administrative parking lot unable to find an open space.

Knowing that this was one of the president's pet peeves, the administrator immediately phoned the men's dorm, right across from the administrative lot. (Students arriving late at night, after the dorm lot was closed, sometimes parked in the administrative lot). But to his dismay and frustration, the administrator found that no one was answering the dorm phone. Finally, after 15 rings, a student who just happened to be hanging out in the lobby grabbed the phone and said, "Yeah, what do you want?"



Steve Daily, campus chaplain at La Sierra University, also teaches psychology and Christian beliefs. He is the author of *Adventism for a New Generation*, *The Heresies of Jesus*, and *Jesus for a New Generation*, published by Better Living, 1-800-848-0028.

The administrator, put off by this, asked, "What's wrong over there? Why can't you answer phone in a reasonable amount of time?"

The student responded, "I don't know. I don't work here. The desk monitor took off somewhere."

"Well, let me speak to the dean," demanded the administrator.

"Oh, I haven't seen the dean for ages," responded the student.

"Then I want you to announce over the intercom that any student whose car is parked in the administrative lot will have it towed away at his own expense immediately and will be fined by the school as well," barked the administrator.

The unmotivated student, who was a little irritated with this whole scene, barked back, "Why can't these fat cat administrators hunt for a parking place and walk to their offices like the rest of us do?"

Enraged, the administrator shouted, "Do you know who you're talking to, son?"

After a long pause, and in a much more serious voice, the young man responded, "Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, do you know who you are talking to?"

The administrator, a bit bewildered, answered, "No, who is this?"

The student responded, "Well, in that case, I guess I'll see you around, fatso!" and he slammed down the phone.

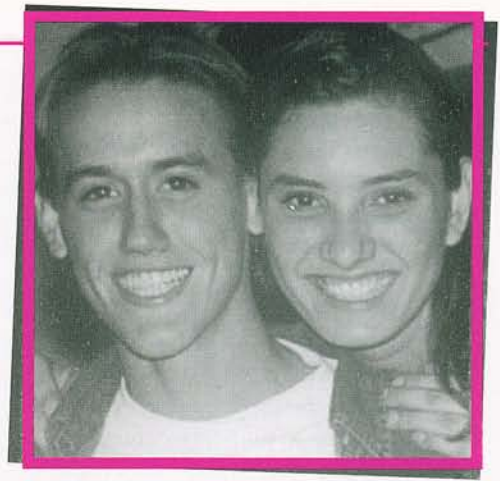
We smile at such a story because there is something deep in the human psyche that rejoices when the strong and powerful are defeated by the weak and impotent. We love it when the underdog wins against all odds. This is the theme of most great movies from *E.T.* to *Forrest Gump* to *Independence Day*. It is the theme of the greatest Bible stories from the Exodus to the Advent. Jesus modeled this theme and took great pleasure identifying with others who modeled it as well.

"Then Jesus was filled with great joy of the Holy Spirit and said, 'I praise you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the strong, from intellectuals and the worldly wise, and revealing them to those who are as trusting as little children'" (Luke 10:21).

When I think of Generation X, the post-baby-boom generation, this theme takes on a particularly powerful meaning for me, because this is a generation that has been written off for dead. Beavis and Butthead are right when they say that this is the first generation that can honestly tell its parents, "You got all the jobs and we get unemployment; you had all the fun, and we get AIDS; you got all the fancy cars and fine houses, and we get a multi-trillion dollar debt." Whether we look at our rapidly eroding rain forests and ozone, or our rapidly multiplying social problems, this generation is characterized by virtually all the so-called experts as a "ripped-off generation." This is the first generation in U.S. history that will not keep up with its parents. Almost every book I read about "Generation X" (not the most flattering name) seems to have a negative title:

*Generation Alone*  
*The Lost Generation*  
*Declining Fortunes*  
*The Disillusioned Generation*  
*The Invisible Generation*

Yet, as one who has worked closely with this generation for most of the last 20 years, I don't buy it. I believe the very reasons given by those who write this generation off are its greatest strengths. This may well be the first generation in our history with the perspective to see that the "American dream" is turning into a nightmare, that materialism is a mirage, and that our cancerous cultural decay is inextricably related to our self-inflicted vulnerability to viruses that kill the soul. For the first time a generation is waking up to the fact that "it's not the economy stupid," it's a crisis of spirit, a crisis of values, a crumbling foundation that can only be cured by a committed, passionate faith. Jesus



ance, mental health, family, getting radical for God, women's ordination, money, medicine, getting a job, and in more than one case, "nothing." In Adventism, as in the general population, there is tremendous diversity in Generation X, but I do not see

nearly the same degree of cynicism, nor the death of idealism, that is attributed to Xers in the population at large.

Our students, as you listen to them, reveal a deep underlying desire to see God do something powerful in their lives and on our campus, but they show a certain fear of expressing this overtly, and an impatience with institutional religion that tries to plan and program spirituality. I recently participated in the

Generation X symposium that was hosted and sponsored on our campus by the Hancock Center for Youth Ministry. Here again, the picture that emerged concerning Adventist youth was significantly different from what we tend to find with Xers in the general population.

One of the symposium questions that I found particularly interesting was, "What do Adventist Xers want from a church worship experience?" The following 10 answers were revealed by Stu Tyner, based on his survey of Xers here and across the United States:

#### **10 Things Generation X Adventists Want from a Church Worship Experience:**

1. Energy - Genuine passion for what we're doing.
2. Informality - OK to dress different and be casual.
3. Creativity - Don't want to know how the "movie" ends.

**O**ur students, as you listen to them, reveal a deep underlying desire to see God do something powerful in their lives and on our campus.

said that "only those who see their sickness recognize their need for a physician" (Matt 9:12).

This is a generation that, at least in part, sees its sickness and smells the moral decay in the culture that surrounds it. Like the people around the rotting body of Lazarus, this generation cries out, "It stinketh." And such is its salvation. This generation is hungry to be healed. This is the "Lazarus generation," a generation written off for dead, that is ripe for resurrection. This is not so much a ripped-off generation as it is a fed-up generation looking for something more, something real, something reliable, something radical.

In preparation for this article, I talked to about 50 students whom I visited in their dormitories on our university campus. I asked each of them the question, "What is most important to you, and to your generation as you see it?" Their responses included such concerns as: independence, relationships, freedom, honesty, God's guid-

4. Practicality - Dealing with everyday issues.
5. Challenge - Make us think and ask tough questions.
6. Acceptance - Warmth but not pressured participation.
7. Sincerity - It can't be a show, it must be real.
8. Worship not performance - God-focused music, preaching.
9. Uplifting - Let us leave on a high with God.
10. Variety - Different approaches to meet different moods.

Even the sermon titles suggested by Generation X Adventists illustrate their creativity and unique mind set within our subculture. Some of the ones I liked the best were:

- Good Christian - Good Adventist?**
- Spiritual Olympics (the most-baptisms game)**
- What's God Got to do with It?**
- The Religious Gestapo**
- Sit Down Till You're 35**
- No Beast - No Feast**
- 2000 Reasons Not to Set Dates**

There is tremendous spiritual energy and creativity to be mined in Generation X, but in many cases it has to be hunted down and harnessed. It is not always obvious nor available on the surface. For example, pollster George Barna describes Xers as individuals who are "primarily concerned with those issues that affect them personally" and who have little interest or "altruistic concern" for issues that affect the nation, much less the world, as a whole. When Xers were asked in a national survey to list the most significant problems facing our nation and world, the majority of those surveyed could not come up with any issues that concerned them, and those who did mention concerns expressed them in the percentages in the box below.

When I first read these statistics in Barna's research they really depressed me. How could only 1 percent of Xers mention the deterioration of religious faith and values as a significant issue in our age? But the more I reflected on the statistics the more they began to make sense. And the reasons that they make sense are

many of the same reasons why I am so optimistic about this generation.

**1. Xers are by nature very private about their personal faith.** First of all, while remembering that we can't accurately label this generation, we realize it is generally true that Xers tend to be intensely private about their personal faith and religious beliefs. This is a generation that places a premium on the importance of friends and close relationships. Yet while 42 percent say that they frequently pray alone only 23 percent have talked with friends about God or the meaning of life (Howe & Strauss, *13th Generation*). Therefore, it is not surprising that few would generate such topics to total strangers conducting an interview.

But the question remains: How is being intensely private about one's faith a good thing? My answer is that for many in this generation, private personal faith is both a protection from and a protest against the enormous amount of hypocrisy present in so much of public religion today. Xers see through much of this hypocrisy and want nothing to do with it. Here they are in good company, for there was no sin that Jesus denounced more thoroughly or passionately than the sin of hypocrisy.

**2. Their disillusionment with public religion plays perfectly into God's hands.** I believe that God is looking for people today who are disillusioned with the cultural and spiritual *status quo* in our nation. God is also looking for people who are wrestling deeply, personally, and privately with ultimate issues, and is connecting these people in small groups and informal networks such as the Internet.

Like the disciples Jesus chose, Xers do not fit in with institutional religion as we have known it for decades in this country. They generally have no time for the traditional denominationalism of our past. The new wine that God is about to pour out with the final anointing of the Holy Spirit can't be contained in the religious wineskins that have gone before. This generation is custom-made for Jesus, and the radical, unpretentious Jesus is custom-made for them.

### Issues Considered Most Significant by Generation Xers

Issue Mentioned	% Who Mentioned It
substance abuse	34%
world stability	31%
reducing national debt	20%
environmental protection	16%
abortion rights	14%
addressing poverty	7%
addressing crime	6%
the AIDS epidemic	6%
reducing defense budget	6%
improving public education	5%
family difficulties	3%
economic challenges	1%
deterioration of morality & values	1%
absence of religious faith	1%

Note: All answers were to open-ended questions. Respondents were allowed to provide multiple answers, resulting in percentages greater than 100 percent.  
Source: *The Invisible Generation*.



**3. This generation hasn't deluded itself into thinking that it has all the answers.** Unlike the baby boomers, who have picketed, protested, and pontificated their way into national prominence, Xers do not claim to have all the answers, nor do they feel adequate to find the answers for what could be a frightening future. This is not particularly praiseworthy when it degenerates into an unhealthy apathy or cynicism, but when such an attitude lays the foundation for a healthy faith, it is exactly what the Divine Doctor ordered. God isn't looking for people who think they can take down the walls of Jericho. Rather, God is looking for people who are overwhelmed by their own inadequacy and their desperate need for divine intervention in their lives and in our

world. Like Lazarus, we can't raise ourselves, nor can we peel off our stinking rags once we are raised. God is looking for a generation that knows they are nothing apart from his anointing. And the Xers seem more prone to such an insight than any generation that has preceded them.

**4. God delights in identifying with the underdog.** As we noted earlier, most of scripture is a record of God intervening in human history to accomplish his divine design against all odds. If ever a generation has been written off by its contemporaries, it is the Xers. But just as Sarah was written off as sterile, Joseph was written off in prison, Moses against the Red Sea, David against Goliath, the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace, and Jesus in the tomb, I believe that God is going to work his purpose in this generation too.

Who would have thought 10 or 15 years ago that the then-powerful Soviet Union was on the verge of total disintegration and collapse? It seemed impossible. In 1983, even the most faithful Christian worker in Russia was overwhelmed with discouragement and exhaustion. It was in that year that Brother Andrew (God's smuggler) fell down on his face and cried out to the

Lord in despair. He said, "God, what are You doing to me? I'm working myself to death trying to smuggle Bibles into this country and bring Christ to these people, and the harder I work, the worse the resistance gets—the harder doors slam in my face." But God spoke to his heart that night and said, "You're building on the wrong foundation; you need to build on the foundation of prayer."

**T**hey generally have no time for the traditional denominationalism of our past.

From that point Brother Andrew's life and ministry changed. He began to surround himself with prayer warriors, first in the tens, then in the hundreds, then in the thousands, and today in the tens of thousands. By 1989, things had changed so abruptly and dramatically in the Soviet Union that Brother Andrew went to the Soviet officials and told them that he had one million Bibles in the Russian language that he wanted to take into their country, and they said, "Go ahead. We are through fighting you." They knew the wheels had come off the infrastructure of their country and they were impotent to oppose the work of God.

Now, people can attribute the fall of the Soviet Union to economics, politics, or a million other things, but to Brother Andrew and those of us who are counted among his prayer warriors around the world, the hand of God had clearly been moved by the power of intercessory prayer (God Changed His Mind Because His People Dared to Ask). It is this kind of simple faith and childlike dependence on God that will take many in a generation like the Xers and transform them from the ultimate underdogs to a final generation that will fulfill their destiny by joining the faith hall of fame in Hebrews 11.

**5. God is calling all generations.** As I bring this article to a close, I want to emphasize the point that it hasn't been written just for the sake of Xers. I do believe in Generation X and, more importantly, have faith that God is going to empower this generation like no other.

But God is not in the business of playing one generation off against another. What God is doing today, through his Spirit, transcends intergenerational differences. God is pouring his Spirit out on all flesh, young and old, male and female, black and white, rich and poor, Baptist and Adventist, wherever he finds people who are truly seeking him and are open to what he wants to do in their lives.

Institutional religions (Catholicism and Protestantism) are coming together as never before, an ecumenism that doesn't excite me. But there is also a "spiritual ecumenicity," God's Spirit touching lives and networking individuals across all denominational lines. I believe this is very legitimate and exciting. We as Adventists must be open to this move of the Spirit if we are to fulfill God's purpose for our community.

On our campus this year, we are having a Friday night worship service aimed specifically at Xers and those who are seeking a Spirit-filled experience with God. High school students, university students, and young adults are all coming together in this worship experience. We solicit your prayers and participation, for this is not a time for spiritual business as usual.

The Lord called me to a 21-day fast as we enter this school year. It's something I couldn't do on my own strength. It's like the unprecedented thing that God is doing in the lives of all who are opening their hearts to his Spirit—it can only come from above. If we look to our own strength, we stink. But God can cure that smell in a moment, and he will, when he unleashes his Lazarus Generation.

# The Sabbath as

# Play

by Bob Bretsch

**T**he God we see is usually the God we need to see. If I am a logical person, I need a logical God, and if I am a sensitive person, I relate best to a sensitive God. God shares portraits of himself as we need to see him. God also shares portraits of herself as we need to see her. For God to be God, he or she must be understandable. Amos attempted to convey this to us when he stated, "Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants..." Amos 3:7 (New International Version). The story of Sabbath is a story of God's revelation.

## Creativity

The Exodus 20 account is centered on God's creatorship. The Deuteronomy 5 account is centered on deliverance from slavery. Hebrews 4 suggests an eternal rest, centered on Jesus, which no one has yet totally experienced. Each portrait of Sabbath is a different portrait of God. It should not surprise us when some gravitate to one picture or the other because they understand, relate to, or experience the richness of God through divergent representations.

For me the creatorship is most evocative. I see a smiling, excited God who enjoys the creative event. Each day God expresses delight with the human words, "This is good!" Every day God gets more excited and more involved. The poetry of Genesis 1 and 2 expresses God's intimate involvement with creation and its effects—human creation. When humanity has been created, God expresses delight with, "This is very good!" Adam and Eve's first glances catch the excited glow on the face of their Creator God.

*Each portrait  
of Sabbath is  
a different  
portrait of God.*



Bob Bretsch is senior pastor of the Sunnyside Adventist Church in Portland, Oregon. Formerly he served as college pastor at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.

## Deliverance

I also resonate with the Deuteronomy 5 picture of God delivering helpless people from their slavery. These people, forced to be less than they were created to be, are like me. I know I never measure up to what God designed for me in the beginning. My highest thought does not begin to measure on God's scale of thoughts. I often feel trapped by the realities of my life and its limitations.

## Working Versus Remembering

These two portraits guide us into two major aspects of Sabbath activities, prayer and play.

Exodus 20 commands us to "consider" God. A better word would be "contemplate."

Prayer is the meaning of our considerations or contemplations. Prayer is acknowledging a great God in contrast to a created human being. Deuteronomy 5 reminds us that in Egypt, the Israelites were only valuable in so far as they could work. Social leisure was unheard of and unacceptable. Value was placed upon performance, and that was coerced. Social leisure—play—was the result of their deliverance.

These two aspects of Sabbath activity—prayer and play—are shared with us through biblical counsel as well as traditions in the Jewish community. For example, a traditional Jewish custom is to read the Song of Solomon as the Sabbath begins so the family can be reminded of a love that is exciting and sensual. Friday night was an opportunity for the father and mother to make love together within the confines of the Sabbath. At the close of the Sabbath, a Jewish mother may pass spices around her family circle, usually cinnamon and cloves. Because the Shabat is

almost over and the grief of that reality needs to be assuaged, sweet smelling spices symbolizing joy are shared with the family. This contrasts with my Sabbath-ending ritual in my childhood when I watched the clock for the last ticks of Sabbath so the fun could begin.

Sabbath reminds us that we're not machines, but live human beings who must be more than we are. Considering God and entering into play are vitally important. It is ironic that this commandment, which gives a reason for keeping it, is the one we tend to forget. Perhaps this is because we live in a world that values work and producers, not restful people who engage their lives with God. Psalm 92, a Sabbath Psalm, puts our busy lives squarely between these two bookends. The Psalmist portrays our lives: We are tossed between the foolishness of the world filled with enemies and our futile efforts to remember God's greatness.

### The Joy Business

The Psalmist (92:10) depicts Sabbath play by a wild ox leaping in the air. The Jerusalem Bible translates a key phrase: "you raise my horn as if I were a wild ox." Natural wildness is unfettered exuberance. We are drawn to animals given to carefree leaping, soaring and prancing. We laugh at dogs who chase tails, cats who bat balls of twine and oxen who jump in the air for no apparent reason. "Fine oils have been poured on me." Joy covers over my life experience.

Further, Psalm 92 discusses the contemplation of God. Placed in a musical context of song and instrument, the Sabbath is described in terms of discipline and delight. Playing a musical instrument looks so simple, but behind the act of playing is focused discipline. This discipline is not a legalistic endeavor to keep the Sabbath holy, but a necessary and important means to take us beyond ourselves into the very presence of God. It doesn't happen with intentionality. This is prayer.

John Calvin understood this. He lived both sides of the Sabbath commandment. In the morning, he led prayers for his congregation in Geneva. In the afternoon this man, renowned for humorless austerity, went among the people and played skittles (Edward Tilden, *Sabbath Time*).

W. H. Auden expressed alarm that we are losing two of our most precious qualities: the ability to laugh heartily and the ability to pray. He pleaded on behalf of a sane world for better prayer and better play (quoted by May Sarton, *Journal of a Solitude*, 1973).

George Sheehan wrote that "man playing is almost as difficult a subject as man praying" (*On Running*, 1975).

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Nehemiah declared, "the joy of the Lord is our strength" (Neh 8:10).

Jesus was the One who was accused of Sabbath breaking by eating and healing and clearly stating that the Sabbath was made for our benefit (Mark 2:27). We were not made to be slaves of the Sabbath.

Ben and Jerry, two college drop-outs, sent \$5 through the mail to learn how to make ice cream. Within a few short years, Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream was the third largest gourmet ice cream company in the country. But soon Ben and Jerry realized they weren't having any fun. Having fun is important for college drop-outs. They discussed their predicament and realized they were not in the ice cream business; they were in the joy business. So they hired a Director of Joy whose sole responsibility it was to create an atmosphere of joy and fun at work. They piped in fun music to the assembly line, handed out balloons, and found every excuse they could to throw a party for their employees. When the stock market crashed in 1987, Ben and Jerry were outside the stock exchange on Wall Street, handing out free samples of "economic crunch" ice cream (John F. Westphal, *Coloring Outside the Lines*, 1981).

Calling the Sabbath a delight is owning up to the playfulness of the spirit. We can laugh, leap in the air, jump for joy and take time to enjoy the bounties of God, the love of family, and the closeness of friends.

### "As it is in heaven"

"Man only plays when in the full meaning of the word he is a man, and he is only completely a man when he plays," wrote Friedrich Schiller (quoted by Norman Brown, *Life Against Death*, 1959). Christians must be in the avant garde of Sabbath keeping, creating delight wherever we live. Sabbath keeping is not rule keeping. It is entering into delight—spiritual delight. It is not delight for delight's sake. It is the delight of a musician making music. It looks easy, but behind it is immense discipline: the discipline of relationship and the cultivation of letting God be God and letting humanity stay human. We were made in God's image. We were not made to be God.

Sabbath keeping is natural and wild. Playing on Sabbath means expressing wild exuberance over a beneficent God who loves us, likes us, enjoys us, and wants nothing more than to spend eternity with us, as our oneness centers in eternal love. Throwing spices in the air, eating the sweet nourishment of salvation and rest, and celebrating a completed act of God's involvement in our week are the privileges of saved Sabbath keepers. Then and only then can we enter into the promise of Jesus' prayer, "Thy kingdom...on earth as it is in heaven."

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# The Challenge of the CHRISTIAN RIGHT

by Jan M. Long, J.D.

**S**eventh-day Adventists have deep roots in a theological perspective that focuses on end-time events. Some of my earliest memories of growing up in a small Midwestern town are of the annual visits of the conference evangelists. One could always anticipate a prominent feature of the series to include a portrait of end-time prophecy vividly painted with pictures from the beast of Revelation.

Historically many Adventists have been preoccupied with the understandings of Ellen White regarding the religious bigotry, intolerance, and persecution that God's people could anticipate in what she refers to as a coming "time of trouble." It was she who focused attention on the atrocities committed by the Christian church throughout much of its history, frequently through cooperating endeavors of civil authority. And with her understanding that history will repeat itself just before the end of time, the Seventh-day Adventist church has been a strong vocal proponent of separation of church and state.

Now I must admit that as a baby boomer growing up during the '60s and '70s, I found

a "time of trouble" incongruous with the age of love, peace, justice, tolerance, secularism, and civil and individual rights. After all, who would be religiously intolerant in a tolerant secular society?

In more recent years much of the church has moved past this former preoccupation with events of the end-time. Perhaps our theology has matured. Or perhaps our loss of innocence regarding the nature of inspiration has contributed to this shift in focus; Ellen White's portrait of the end of time doesn't pack quite the punch it once did.

But, whatever the reasons, this topic seems to be addressed with diminished intensity. It may still be covered to some extent in evangelistic series, but I do not recall the last time that I heard a sermon on this subject. Certainly, church/state forums no longer seem to have the draw in attendance that they once had, particularly from those under 50.

Meanwhile, during the past decade there have been major changes in church/state relations. Many of our church pioneers would find these changes to be of compelling interest if they were still with us. The Christian Right, through a network of groups, but particularly through the efforts of the Christian Coalition with its 1.6 million members and its \$25 million annual budget, has achieved a dominant role in the Republican Party. According to the May 15, 1995, issue of *Time* magazine, the Christian Right now completely dominates the Republican party in 18 states and exercises considerable influence in 13 others. They significantly influenced the 1994 Congressional elections by using churches to distribute 33 million voter pamphlets and are credited

with having played a significant role in the outcome of the election. And as is well known, they were able to exert controlling influence over the 1996 Republican Platform.

Many of the issues raised by the Coalition concern themselves with basic values important to most Christians, including Adventists: social moral decay, disintegration of the family, and gratuitous violence in the media. But agreement on the issues does not necessarily mean support for objectives and methods.

So I raise the question: Does the Christian Coalition or other politically oriented Christian movements pose any dangers? I will attempt to answer this by suggesting that regardless of one's perspective of traditional Adventist end-time prophecies, today's political drift presents at least four significant risks.

## GREATEST-GOOD-FOR-THE-GREATEST-NUMBER VS THE INDIVIDUAL

The first risk is posed by the present trend in the institutions of government moving in a more utilitarian ideological direction which, in a democracy, usually employs the majoritarian concept of the-greatest-good-for-the-greatest-number as embodied in the will of the majority.

The United States, however, is not just a democracy with majority rule.

We are a constitutional democracy with a Bill of Rights and a court system designed to protect such principles as criminal due process, privacy rights, and freedoms of religion, speech, and press among others.

But winds of change are blowing and have been for several years. For those who



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may doubt, the results of the 1994 midterm elections and the platform that the Republican Party voted recently in San Diego should be convincing. The fact is that a sizable and influential segment of society is shifting its focus toward utilitarian interests and away from individual rights.

In an ideal society individual rights and social interests must be balanced. At one end of the spectrum, individual rights can come at the expense of social cohesiveness and ultimately expand into anarchy. At the other end, however, society can become so focused on protecting and maintaining itself that, in the end, everyone loses, as individual values become compromised.

Consider, for example, the free exercise clause of the Constitution's provision for religious freedom. If social cohesiveness is the overriding goal, the utilitarian approach could begin to severely limit an individual's freedom to worship as he or she wishes—compromise necessitated by the interest of society as a whole.

Many recognize that this type of limitation happened recently with the Supreme Court's ruling in *Employment Division of Oregon v. Smith*, an action that largely neutralized the Free Exercise Clause. Even though Congress subsequently passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) to rectify the *Smith* ruling by putting back into law what the Constitution no longer protected in a meaningful way, the RFRA's future is shaky with legal challenges pending.

Although many groups and organizations have been involved in this societal shift toward utilitarianism, the Christian Right has been a well organized, highly influential catalyst in this shift. Although they are not always supportive of the logical consequences this utilitarian viewpoint yields, e.g. the *Smith* outcome, their position, nevertheless, is influencing the political process to adopt an increasingly utilitarian philosophy.

To the extent that the utilitarian philosophy takes hold of the political process, the shift could become an imbalance against many areas long associated with individual values. Hence, the first risk posed by domination of utilitarian interests.

## INTOLERANCE

Second, there are risks lurking in society's growing trend toward intolerance. It has

erupted on talk radio, in organized hate groups, in paramilitary organizations, and among some on the Christian right.

Legitimate concerns in society may, in fact, contribute to the growing intolerance. Many people feel under siege by crime and violence. They are tired of being dominated by dysfunctional elements of society. Additionally, many feel less economically secure than in times past. Intolerance may, in part, be a reaction to real or perceived diminishment of safety and well-being.

Meanwhile, people from both ends of the political spectrum are demonstrating a capacity for bigotry. Our public discourse has become more shrill and less reasoned. One might expect that Christians would be the exception to this trend, but several abortion providers have died because of perverted theology. We should be under no illusions.

## NOW WE STAND ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE 21ST CENTURY, AND WE'RE FLIRTING WITH THE IDEA OF TEARING DOWN THE WALL OF CHURCH/STATE SEPARATION.

Less tolerant branches of the Christian Right, particularly those associated with the Christian Reconstructionist movement, believe that God's will for government is that it be entrusted to Christians and that they have dominion over it (see *Why the Religious Right Is Wrong* by Robert Boston, Prometheus Books, 1993). Christian Reconstructionism has had a major influence on many conservative Christian churches in recent years as well as on many involved in the militia movements. They, along with others loosely tied to them, have as their objective to bring Christian theology to center stage in American political life. In other words, their desire is to move the country toward a theocracy in which law is biblically based—as interpreted only by those who are in touch with the will of God, of course!

I see a common thread running through hate groups and theocracy movements. That thread is an exceeding lack of tolerance for a pluralistic society and a dedication to impos-

ing sectarian beliefs on everybody under the threat of severe sanctions including, for some of these groups, a liberal use of the death penalty.

This imposition of beliefs, practices, and sanctions is the danger I perceive in intolerance.

## LACK OF HISTORICAL LITERACY

Third, a society that is functionally illiterate regarding history poses significant risks. At the very least it contributes to possible manipulation.

A popular book among today's Christian Right, *The Myth of Separation* by David Barton (1989), articulates the thesis that America was founded as a Christian nation and that the founding fathers never intended for there to be separation of church and state. Barton suggests, for example, that two of the most ardent proponents of church/state separation—James Madison and Thomas Jefferson—are really misunderstood. Barton supports this thesis by taking quotations from these historic figures, out of context, from the vast bodies of work which they authored over their lifetimes.

Though the book has been thoroughly criticized by historical scholars, it is nevertheless frequently touted by Christian Right luminaries such as James Dobson, Jerry Falwell, and Pat Robertson. It represents a sad commentary on the prevalence of historical ignorance, an apparent lack of critical thinking, or willful self-deception.

It also seems that historical illiteracy figures in the present drive to amend the Free Exercise provision of our Constitution's Bill of Rights under cover of the Christian Coalition's "Contract with the Family." Though currently stalled, if it is eventually adopted it would have the effect of significantly diminishing the Establishment provision by authorizing government agents to articulate religious values. They would be able, for example, to proselytize in the public school classrooms or other government forums.

Those who make the argument for tearing down the wall of church/state separation have evidently forgotten the reasons why it was erected in the first place. But lest we forget, much of the landscape of history is littered with sectarian warfare conducted in the name of God. To put it in the words of historian Edwin Gaustad, of the J. M. Dawson Institute

of Church-State Studies of Baylor University,

“Religion, theoretically an instrument of peace on earth, has in fact been a broad funnel into the bitterest and bloodiest of wars: in the East, in the West: in the first world, in the third world; in antiquity, in modernity. That’s the way it always has been.”  
(*Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 37, Number 1, 1995)

To the extent that we forget this history and the origin of church/state separation in the United States, we risk repeating some of its darker chapters.

### SNOWBALLING

The three factors above constitute what I believe to be core dangers of the Christian Right’s move to center stage in American politics. Separately, each of these three risk factors is less significant than when considered collectively. But there may be a fourth danger resulting from the snowballing, or synergistic, effect of these three risk factors.

Now we stand on the threshold of the 21st century, and we’re flirting with the idea of tearing down the wall of church/state separation. We’re doing this even though world history has told us it is a regressive idea, particularly when it is associated with a fundamentalist religious mindset.

Are we certain that political power fueled by religious authority is disciplined and tolerant enough to allow a pluralistic society to flourish? Will it resist the temptation to stifle individual freedoms on the altar of the greater social good? These are the challenges I see represented in the snowballing of the present trends.

In pointing out the above risks associated with the Christian Right’s political interest, I am not saying that the results of these trends are predictable or that they represent a pending “time of trouble.” But we would be remiss to ignore them, since they run counter to Adventism’s appropriate emphasis on the individual value of freedom of conscience.

Though the historical Adventist focus on end-time events and the “time of trouble” may have been misplaced, we still should maintain a sensitivity toward conditions breeding intolerance and bigotry—particularly in light of the history of human civilization.

## Dissonance on Church/State Issues

by Jan M. Long, J.D.

**S**eventh-day Adventists have, almost from their inception as a formal church body, been strong advocates of church/state separation. For North American Adventists this has been something approaching dogma, with active Religious Liberty Departments at the various levels of church administration.

It turns out, however, that large numbers of Adventists are not supporting this dogma in the political arena. The context for this conclusion arises in connection with the shifts occurring within the Republican Party that, for the past decade or so, have become increasingly hostile to the Bill of Rights principle of church/state separation in a number of public policy areas. Most of this shift is traceable to the growing influence of the Christian Right within the party.

In view of the long-standing Adventist position on church/state separation and the current drift of the Republican Party, one may be surprised to discover that predominantly Adventist precincts (in California) are registered Republicans over Democrats by over a 2.5 to 1 margin.

In a recent survey of precincts nearest the Adventist institutions at Loma Linda, Riverside (La Sierra), and Angwin, representing over 4,000 registered voters, I found that 67.3 percent of voters were registered Republican and 26.7 Democrats. (A 100 percent total is not achieved due to minor party affiliations.)

Whether or not this reflects the party affiliation of Adventists across North America is an open question. Such an assumption, however, may not be unrea-

sonable due to the fact that every precinct reviewed showed a clear, distinct preference for the Republican party—some by wide margins.

These party-affiliation statistics raise the question of whether the Adventist voter is silently favoring closer church/state relations by identification with the Republican party. If we draw this conclusion we fail to take account of the sizable number of Adventists who would describe themselves as church/state separationists, though admittedly at a diminished level of intensity from that of prior generations. We further fail to account for the lack of proactive, organized support for religious right organizations within the church.

One possible explanation has historic roots. The 19th-century historian Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in his classic volume entitled *Democracy in America* that the Republican Party was the “exclusive lover of liberty.” Clearly, Adventists have long identified with issues of liberty. Not only does the church publish *Liberty* magazine, but the church’s own spiritual founder, Ellen White, makes nearly 150 references to liberty-related issues indexed in her published works, while making only six references to egalitarian issues more frequently associated with the Democratic Party.

At the risk of oversimplifying the complexities of social evolution, I suggest that perhaps it was partly out of this type of context that Adventists came to identify with Republicanism. They transmitted these values down through the generations long before “Republican” became associated with issues that oppose church/state separation.

# God, the GARBAGE PICKER

by John McLarty

**M**y first job out of seminary was in The New York Center, an evangelistic center in Times Square. I was assigned an unfurnished apartment on the sixth floor.

Having arrived with all my possessions in a Volkswagen beetle, I was a little skimpy on furnishings. And being fresh out of seminary, I didn't have money to spend. So I ate off boxes. Used a sleeping bag for bedding. Made do.

One day there was a fire in the hotel restaurant next door. Soon a huge dumpster was parked in the street and workers began filling it with debris from the restaurant. From my window I could see into the dumpster. It looked like they were throwing valuable stuff away.

My first impulse to go treasure hunting in the dumpster was dampened, however, when I realized there was no way to get in and out of that dumpster unseen. In Times Square there is simply no time when the sidewalks are empty. Even after midnight people are still on the street. But I couldn't stand to think of all that useful stuff being hauled to the dump. Finally, after another day of hesitating, I went downstairs, looked both ways, saw no one who seemed to be paying me any attention, and climbed into the dumpster.

Sure enough, I found treasure: pewter pitchers, silverware, plates, bowls and cups, and even a chair and a table. I hauled them out, cleaned them up and installed them in my apartment.

This first adventure overcame most of my natural reticence. Eventually I furnished most of my apartment from the streets. My office is still furnished with treasures from New York trash.

God is a garbage picker, too. He finds treasure where others see only trash. Society may regard some individuals as worthless, but God sees those persons as having great value. God often contradicts not only society's valuations but the church's as well.

Growing up, I often heard stories illustrating God's capacity to take the worst sinners and make something good out of them. In these stories God wasn't a garbage picker; he was the great recycler who could take the most worthless reprobates and transform them into effective agents of divine love. In college and academy, a reformed drug addict, rock

musician, skirt chaser or alcoholic was the perfect week of prayer speaker. We had great enthusiasm for the notion of God as a recycler, as a Savior. But we seldom gave (or give) much attention to God as a garbage-picker, as One who honors moral courage even among people without religious credentials.

"God as recycler" drives our evangelistic enterprise: everyone who isn't one of us is lost. We must go into all the world because unless we do, there'll be no goodness there.

I still appreciate the stories of radical transformation. They exert a certain moral force. They help me deal with my own sense

of brokenness and my memories of moral failure. And I am not alone.

But there is significant risk in focusing exclusively on this kind of story. If the only stories we tell about

people outside "the church" feature broken, immoral people who find wholeness by coming among us, we will be unable to truly know many of the people around us. I believe we must honor the presence of goodness—perhaps a residue of creation goodness—that manifests itself here and there, sometimes in the unlikeliest places.

God's garbage picking habits, his treasure-finding amidst the trash, is highlighted in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus. Frequently God ignores primogeniture in the Messianic line. Each generation appears to reflect a fresh, sovereign choice of God. And two of his most surprising choices are Rahab and Ruth.

Rahab was a "lying prostitute." But in her lies God saw a commitment to goodness. He brought her into his household and gave her the honor of being a great, great, . . . grandmother of Jesus Christ. Rahab's story is not the record of a great sinner radically transformed by grace. It's a story of God's response to human goodness. Rahab was a Canaanite, a pagan, who at great risk to herself protected God's agents. And God honored her goodness. Scripture makes clear that Rahab is included in the Messiah's line not in spite of her wickedness but because of her good deed.

Then there's Ruth. She had no hope of acceptance among the people of God. Her husband was dead. She had no son. No brothers. Only a mother-in-law to take care of. She was a Moabite,

*...there was no way to get in and out of that dumpster unseen.*



John McLarty is writer and producer of the The Sunday Broadcast at The Voice of Prophecy. His special interests are spiritual formation, creation spirituality, systematics, and cities.

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## College Church Pursues Equality in Ministry

by Emily Tillotson, free-lance writer  
College Place, Washington

In the shadows of the ordination services at Sligo Seventh-day Adventist church and La Sierra University Church, the Walla Walla College Church is forging a new path in their quest for gender equality.

On September 28, the WWC church hosted the first Equality in Ministry service focusing on their resolve "that the male and female pastors of our congregation have full equality in every aspect of pastoral ministry" as passed by a business meeting on May 6, 1996.

The day's events began with a church service designed around the theme of equality. Terrie Aamodt, professor of English and history at WWC, wrote a special liturgy for the service. Ralph Martin, president of the Columbia Union Conference in Maryland, gave the morning sermon entitled "Equality: the Gospel Truth," followed by an invitation from Ernie Bursey, professor of biblical studies at WWC, to participate in the laying on of hands in the act of affirming each pastor's call to ministry. Members of the congregation streamed forward to their pastors: Bill Knott, Leslie Bumgardner, Henning Guldhammer, Gordon Pifher, and

John Cress during prayer offered by John Brunt, academic vice-president, and Helen Ward Thompson, chair of the two committees responsible for planning the service. Responses from the five pastors ended the service, and the congregation of 1,200 headed outdoors to the Sabbath dinner awaiting them.

The day's events concluded with a symposium on Women in Ministry in North America. The symposium focused on the idea of a common credential for both men and women and answered the audience's numerous questions concerning ordination hermeneutics. The panel participants included Ralph Martin; Pat Habada, chairperson for TEAM (Time for Equality in Adventist Ministry); Penny Miller, associate dean of the School of Nursing at Loma Linda University; and sophomore theology major, Holly Blackwelder; with Ernie Bursey as moderator.

The planning behind this service began one year ago. Following the General Conference session in Utrecht, the WWC church began searching for answers to the equality question through a series of forums and study committees. Through this process, a steering committee developed, and ultimately the church board voted on

December 4, 1995, to "support the ordination of qualified women to the gospel ministry." The church then voted to request Leslie Bumgardner be approved for ordination by the Upper Columbia Conference. The church business meeting later on that evening voted overwhelming support for these two actions and sent them on to the Conference Executive Committee.

No formal response has yet been received from the Upper Columbia Conference. However, the WWC church has continued in its resolve to pursue equality in ministry. The church has requested "that the Upper Columbia Conference recognize the equality of the pastors of the Walla Walla College Church by issuing to them a common credential that does not discriminate on the basis of gender." The College church also requested that this credential become available to all pastors, conference-wide.

The Steering Committee will continue to pursue equality in ministry at the WWC church as they move into uncharted waters. Terrie Aamodt concludes, "As long as we have this ethical problem, we aren't going to be able to do what we're supposed to do, and that's go to the kingdom."

## God, the Garbage Picker

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and according to the law (Deut 23:3), no Moabite could enter the assembly of the Lord down to the tenth generation. But God saw in her faithful service to Naomi something of value. Culture, tradition and the explicit statement of the prophet all excluded her. But God assigned her a crucial role in his grand strategy for saving humanity. God brought her into the very center of his operation, choosing her as the great-grandmother of King David, as an ancestor of Messiah.

God sees treasure where others see only trash, and it is our calling as his children to mimic him (Ephesians 5:1), to recognize and honor the treasure in people who are the wrong color, not pretty enough, not smart enough, lack the right accent, aren't the right gender, don't advocate the right theology. Moral and spiritual value are determined not by ecclesiastical shibboleths or social norms but by activity that is truly moral or spiritual.

We as Adventists need practice looking at the world through God's eyes. Without denying the value of our distinctive theology and spiritual disciplines, we need to

honor goodness as we encounter it in the unlikeliest places: Pagan coworkers who show us remarkable kindness; hyper-strict vegans with definite opinions about eschatology and lifestyle who are gentle with their children and generous with their neighbors; white, middle-aged, male church administrators who tell the truth; pentecostals, Catholics, secular humanists, or Muslims devoted to the orthodoxy of their group and engaged in compassionate service to people.

Goodness has no brand name. It has no guaranteed correlates. And sometimes the label "garbage" fits most aptly our misperception of genuine human treasure.