

OPEN LETTER TO G.C.

NEWS • ANALYSIS • OPINION

\$3.75

ADVENTIST TODAY

VOL. 5, NO. 6

NOVEMBER • DECEMBER 1997

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN CONFERENCE
TERMINATES PECK**

**DAMASCUS ROAD CHURCH
CLOSES LAND DEAL**

**MUSLIM RELATIONS
REVOLUTIONIZED**

**PHYSICS MAJOR THREATENED
AT LA SIERRA UNIVERSITY**

CHRISTMAS FICTION:

**It's Christmas and
All You Can Do Is Cry**



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But Is It Adventist?

Five seminary students were summoned to the president's office for a conversation with Grady Smoot, Andrews University president, and John Kronke, pastor of Pioneer Memorial Church. The topic of conversation: "Home Church," a gathering of about one hundred twenty-five people, mostly Andrews University students, on Sabbath mornings in a basement in the community.

Smoot led the conversation. What we were doing could hardly be called church—people sitting on the floor, guitars instead of an organ, offering basket by the door. Home Church endangered the students' future religious lives because they wouldn't find a church like it after graduation.

But all that was secondary. The real question was, "Is it Adventist?" The fact that we worshipped on Sabbath morning, that we preached the gospel, the Sabbath, the Second Coming and other Adventist doctrines, that the leaders of Home Church were all students in the Adventist seminary planning on careers as Adventist pastors, that Ellen White was

I'm not urging the abolition of the church organization, but a recognition of its limits.

regarded as a spiritual authority, that we saw ourselves as Adventists—none of that mattered. We still weren't a Seventh-day Adventist church, so our worship was illegitimate. We must cease.

The longer I listened the more amazed I was. I had attended countless evangelistic meetings throughout my childhood. I knew that we defined our church theologically and spiritually. The definition had something to do with the testimony of Jesus and the commandments of God. Finally I asked, "Dr. Smoot, just what is your definition of a Seventh-day Adventist church?"

"A Seventh-day Adventist church is a body of believers organized according to the constitution and bylaws of a local Seventh-day Adventist Conference." Period.

It was a tidy definition. One that could be used effectively in court battles over property or use of the name. But it ruled out effective ministry to an entire group of kids from Adventist homes. It didn't fit what I had heard from evangelists. Besides, if the church organization "owns" Adventism, then who's to say the Vatican doesn't "own" Christianity?

Church structure has its place. After several years, Home Church fell apart. We were unable to sustain our ministry over time. With every form of organization there are characteristic benefits and risks. I'm not urging the abolition of the church organization, but a recognition of its limits.



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Space and time converged on our planet as God gave us the greatest gift ever given, himself. This picture was created by Richard Tinker using several NASA photographs.

ADVENTIST TODAY

VOL. 5, NO. 6
NOVEMBER • DECEMBER 1997

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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.

Unsolicited submissions are encouraged. Payment is competitive. Send a self-addressed stamped envelope for writers' guidelines.

Annual subscriptions:
\$24 (\$40/2years) for individuals
\$18 for students
\$35 for institutions
(Payment by check or credit card. Add \$10 for addresses outside North America.)

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Adventist Today (ISSN 1079-5499) is published bimonthly for \$24 per year (\$18 for students, \$35 for institutions) by Adventist Today Foundation, 1845 S. Business Center Dr., Suite 140, San Bernardino, CA 92408. Periodicals postage paid at San Bernardino, CA. **POSTMASTER:** send address changes to *Adventist Today*, P.O. Box 1220, Loma Linda, CA 92354-1220.

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FIRST CLASS



Letters to the Editor
Adventist Today
P.O. Box 1220
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Cooper on the Kingdom

Douglas Cooper's "The Kingdom of God is Here NOW" sounds like a Utopian tirade against any and everybody lacking humanism's rose-colored-glasses optimism....

His mix of various Biblical concepts is confusing. He seems to be following the notable liberal theologian C.H.Dodd, using a few key texts while ignoring dozens of other crucial texts, to construct a fantasy-world of human ability to carry on an earthly Kingdom of God now....

How can there be a Kingdom of God on earth unless the King is present, visible and reigning over a world of willing subjects? I appreciate Cooper's optimistic hopes for joy, but this comes to us NOW in the free gift of salvation (hope) not in attacking eschatology (reality)....Never forget Jesus' words to Pilate, "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight. . . but now is my kingdom not from hence." John 18:36. Cooper's chart would be quite edifying if labeled "soteriology" and "eschatology," then harmonized with Paul's Romans and John's Revelation respectively. Doesn't it seem a bit narcissistic for mortals to make their conversion and community "far more important" than their resurrection and glorification—than the eradication of sin, death and Satan—than walking through gates of pearl to stand in the actual presence of God? Surely Adventists would agree that the latter is more important, and more certain, than Dodd's yet-to-be-fulfilled dream of a "realized eschatology."

*Norman L. Meager
Sonora, California*

Thank you for another superb issue of *Adventist Today*. Every article was unique, but especially the astounding contribution of Douglas Cooper, namely "the kingdom of God is here—NOW." Having been in the system as a Conference Bible worker a generation ago, I am particularly impressed with

the issues addressed; thoughts we had, but [which] at that time would have been misunderstood—or inappropriate had we voiced them. I've walked through every thought; I've been there; but Mr. Cooper said it all!—and in such a provocative and compelling way. His words were so carefully chosen, yet dynamic—truly eloquent. We should be chanting this one from the rooftops because it is so fundamental, so biblical and honest. This is a remarkable picture of God, and it is vital.

*Phyllis Williams-Vineyard
Anaheim, California*

Spirit-Seeking

Bernard Brandstater's recommendations re: Spirit-seeking is, to me, nothing more than flim-flam.

The editors would do well to dismiss any further "Looks from the inside." Flim-flam is still flim-flam whether it is inside or outside.

*Don Shasky
Oceanside, California*

Another Side to the Sunnyside Story

After reading the letter by Mrs. Hall about Bob Bretsch in the May/June issue I decided to wait and see if you print a viewpoint by someone who knows the facts. Surely you realize that in any given situation there are those who are uninformed, those who are badly informed, those who do not care to become informed, and those who are careful to become informed. Journalists fall into these same categories.

Of course anyone has a right to express their opinions and journalists are free to publish them. But I should think you would value your reputation enough to check the facts before you rush to judgement. Perhaps you are so anxious to print something that is critical of church leaders that you are willing to risk your integrity and resort to tabloid journalism.

*H. Lloyd Leno, A. Mus. D.
Member Sunnyside Church
Member of Music Committee
Conductor, The Advent Trombone Choir*

Ministry to Obscurantists

It is always with great joy that I take *Adventist Today* out of my letter-box and that I immediately start perusing it. Each issue has been a blessing. I am so grateful to Southern-California Adventism for the thoughtful and refreshing research it has been publishing concerning our faith, among other places, in the pages of your magazine.

At the General Conference in the Netherlands, Adventism's obscurantism reached Dark-Age proportions. We need your ministry very very badly!

*Freddy Koopmans
Geneva, Switzerland*

Heart Searching About Lifestyle

The article, "Lifestyle: the Great Equalizer" by John McLarty of "It is Written" (July-August 97 issue) may go superbly well with ardent Adventists, but deserves further thinking and heart-searching on our part. I know the feeling: the author was so uplifted by spending the Sabbath, "the metonymy of salvation" at Zion National Park with a set of like-minded Adventists, who were also doing the whole "structure of Christianity: Sabbath-keeping, morning devotions, eating vege, abstaining from alcohol, making prudent choices re videos and movies, counting ten percent of income as God's, holding family worship." Far be it from me to question that degree of discipleship.

However, too often, this lifestyle has made us feel spiritually lofty. It is not the way to salvation, as the author has correctly pointed out.

An uncanny level of discomfort I experienced in reading this article reminded me of

a passage in C.S.Lewis' famous *Screwtape Letters* where the chief devil is instructing a young neophyte devil in the art of deceiving Christians. The chief tells the trainee: "He (meaning the tempted person) must be made to feel how different we Christians are" and by "we Christians" he must really, but unknowingly, mean "my set"; and by "my set" he must mean not "the people who, in their charity and humility, have accepted me," but "the people with whom I associate by right. Success here depends on confusing him."

In paraphrasing and substituting "Adventist" to the word "Christian" used in his advice, *Screwtape*, the chief devil, says "If you try to make him explicit and professionally proud of being an Adventist you will probably fail, the Enemy's (meaning God's) warnings are too well known. On the other hand, if you make him complacent about 'his set' you will produce not true spiritual pride but mere social vanity which, by comparison, is a trumpery, puny little sin."

Here is the summary: "What you want is to keep a sly self-congratulation mixing with all his thoughts and never allow him to raise the question 'What, precisely, am I congratulating myself about?' The idea of belonging to an inner ring, of being in a secret, is very sweet to him. Play on that nerve."

No criticism of McLarty's genuine feelings is intended. I am just pointing out the need to stop and re-think similar sentiments expressed by Adventists.

George Thomas
Cerritos, CA

Church Needs Correction

You are carrying on an important service in putting out such a significant publication.

Our church needs correction in several areas, at least. Someone must define or highlight the problems.

How can anyone object to the process when so much is at stake? Let us all keep an open mind and a healing spirit so we can yet have the privilege of proclaiming present truth in the right spirit.

Viola Gelford
Bayport, Montana

AT a Platform

Sometimes I enjoy *Adventist Today* and other times I wonder why it exists. I am

against giving a platform to [those] who want to...air their gripes.... I'm retired going on my 91st year.

Alten A. Bringle
Lakewood, Colorado

Constructive Honesty

We appreciate so much your constructive honesty.

Alan and Alike Collins

AT's Positive Attitude

I had just about decided not to renew my subscription to *Adventist Today* but the last issue was very positive toward the Adventist church and its doctrine so have decided to resubscribe.

I especially like the background news articles that give one greater insight into the church problems and issues. I do not like articles that create doubt about our doctrine unless both sides of an issue are presented.

Robert Merchant
Collegedale, Tennessee

Enjoy AT

Enjoy *Adventist Today*, more each time. Thanks again for all your work.... Don't want to miss an issue.

Dixie Hile
Jensen Beach, Florida

Accuser of the Brethren

I have not been happy with *Adventist Today*... The name *Adventist Today* might encourage some to think it was a journal to tell what was happening in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Apparently it is not. Its editorial policy seems to have been to tell about everything negative or faulty in the Church but say nothing about anything good or praiseworthy...

It seems to be too much like the "Accuser of the brethren" (Rev. 12:10). I know the Church has many faults, but the discussion of them should be only to help the Church improve. I think *Adventist Today* has, on the contrary, often tended to make them worse. I see no evidence that Jim Walters' goal "to present a robust spirituality" has been pursued. One issue had one article encouraging observance of the Seventh-day Sabbath, and several articles that tried to show it was not important!....

Hopefully next year will be a little better,

so I am continuing my subscription for another year to see if there is a change....

Rocklyn Rouse
Pendleton, Oregon

Editor's note: Adventist Today's intent was not to encourage non-Sabbath keeping (see July/August issue, 1996). It was, rather, to present the current reasons against as well as for the Sabbath so readers' conversations and conclusions can be thoughtful and informed.

Dangerous Communicators

I've decided to re-subscribe to *Adventist Today*, even though your renewal letter of October 20, 1997, just about convinced me otherwise.

You stated, "a small but growing number of conscientious and talented gospel-oriented pastors are leading independent Sabbath-keeping congregations." This implies that those pastors who choose to remain within the SDA denominational structure may not be "talented," "gospel-oriented" and "conscientious." Being well-acquainted with one of these independent bodies and its leaders, I know that there may be other reasons for such a break-away than conscience. Perhaps it could be a spirit of rebelliousness, or talent without a co-operative conscience, or personal and leadership dysfunctions that cannot tolerate other leadership.

You also make it sound like the "denomination" exercises some sort of ultra-control over these "conscientious gospel-oriented pastors." In some cases, in spite of a spirit of understanding and reconciliation on the part of conference or union leaders, the rebellious or dysfunctional pastor seeks his own path.

The greatest danger we face within our church, as in the world, is the influence of talented and powerful communicators who are self-centered, i.e., Hitler and James Jones. These communicators are prone to toss around words like "grace," "conscience," and "spirit-led."

I look forward to balanced and in-depth journalism in *Adventist Today*.

Robert Natiuk
Battle Ground, Washington

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Rocky Mountain Conference Terminates Peck

COLLEEN MOORE TINKER

On November 2, 1997, the Rocky Mountain Conference executive committee, meeting at Glacier View Ranch, voted to release Clay Peck from his employment as a minister in the Rocky Mountain Conference and to suspend his church, Christ Advent Fellowship (CAF), from its status as a company.

Christ Advent Fellowship has been a company in the Rocky Mountain Conference since September 14, 1996. It was the result of months of prayers offered by a core group of couples near Fort Collins, Colorado. These people wanted to start a congregation that would attract people who were disenchanted with typical church. They didn't know where to begin or how to accomplish their dream, but in December, 1995, they began to pray that God would help them find someone to help them.

Several in the group agreed to research the matter. They questioned pastors, friends,

had to give the dream to God. "It was starting to eat me up," says Peck.

On August 2, 1995, he went to his computer and wrote down all of his ideas. He made lists of everything he would do if he had the chance to start a church. He even listed his dream location: a bedroom community near the Front Range in Colorado. When he was done, he closed and stored the file.

"No one knew it was there except my wife and God," he remembers. "I gave him my dream and stopped letting it consume me." At that time he was an associate pastor of the Damascus Road Community Church in the Potomac Conference, and he decided that he would use his vision to serve that congregation.

In February, 1996, he got a call from the aforementioned Colorado couples asking if he would consult



Clay Peck

Even before Peck arrived in Colorado the original founding couples (now the Leadership Team) told Brauer that their vision would probably require that they push all four edges. Peck confirmed their original vision by saying they were going to build a community in which the gospel was central, and they weren't going to "water it down" among 27 other statements. He further said that the typical

Adventist structures would have to change in order for them to accomplish their goals.

The Rocky Mountain Conference agreed to establish Christ Advent Fellowship as an experimental company and to support it as such for at least three years. In July, 1996, Peck and his wife and son moved to Colorado, and on September 14, 1996, Grace Place celebrated its first official service as it began its ministry to "the burned, the bored, and the bypassed."

In the last fourteen months Christ Advent Fellowship has gone from being a dream to being an established congregation with a weekly attendance of about 400. It meets in Berthoud High School, and its services are typical praise services with a worship team leading singing, drama, multimedia, and a sermon. They are not charismatic but are very contemporary and seeker oriented. Many of the members are not Seventh-day Adventists, but they are loyal in their attendance and support.

Their support is not only for Christ Advent Fellowship. At the time they founded CAF, Peck and the operating board also established CAM, Christ Adventist Ministries. It is a nonprofit corporation which they founded as an equipment-holding entity. As the months have passed, however, many members have specifically supported CAM. The result is that CAM has taken over the payment of the staff employees, including the secretary and business manager. It will also hold any property purchases the church may make in the future.

...[Brauer] wouldn't worry about parishioners wearing jewelry or about their serving coffee during fellowship time.

and acquaintances who might know someone skilled in establishing a "seeker-sensitive" congregation. When their research was complete, they reconvened and compared notes. The only name to appear on all of their lists was Clay Peck.

Meanwhile, Peck had been praying also. For ten years he had dreamed of planting a church that would attract people who were burned out or put off by typical congregations. He wanted to start a church that focused on the gospel and that fostered an atmosphere sensitive to people who had given up on Adventism.

After a decade of praying for an opportunity to plant a church, he decided that he

with them in preparation for starting a new congregation.

He flew to Colorado, and after meeting with the couples, he and they realized that they could help each other make their mutual dream a reality. Jim Brauer, president of the Rocky Mountain Conference, met with them before they started the church. He stated that there were four edges of the envelope that they could push: worship, lifestyle, structure, and theology. He further stated that he couldn't support their pushing all four of those edges, but he could support their pushing two: worship and lifestyle. (In other words, he wouldn't worry about parishioners wearing jewelry or about their serving coffee during fellowship time.)

"We have not asked people to support CAM," Peck says. "They have done it on their own. We have never told the people where to give or where not to give."

The relationship between Grace Place and the Rocky Mountain Conference has been bumpy. President Jim Brauer has been nervous about the independence of the congregation both structurally and theologically. More than once he recommended to the conference Executive Committee that Peck be terminated and Grace Place removed from its company status. The committee, though, voted down his recommendations.

In consummate irony, the action to terminate Peck and the congregation's company status came just days after the *Adventist Review* featured CAF, known as Grace Place, in a collection of vignettes showcasing a cross-section of congregations employing a variety of creative worship styles. According to Peck, the article gave an accurate picture of Grace Place. (*Review* editor William Johnsson, however, sent an apology to all conference presidents for running the piece, and he has written an editorial cautioning Adventists against congregationalism.)

"It was God's timing," Peck says; "it felt good to have a clear statement go out to the world about who we are and what our best intentions have been before the rumors started to fly."

According to Peck, the *Adventist Review* was going to run a major feature article about Grace Place last spring, but the Rocky Mountain Conference asked the editor not to print it. At that time Jim Brauer was running for reelection, and he felt that the presence of Grace Place in his jurisdiction was a political liability. Besides asking the *Review* not to feature the church, Brauer also recommended that CAF be "cut loose" and Peck be terminated. The executive committee, though, did not approve the recommendation, and Grace Place continued as a conference company.

After Jim Brauer was reelected, the tension between Grace Place and the conference subsided—until the termination of Richard Fredericks and Bob Fournier of the Damascus Road Community Church in the Potomac Conference became imminent. After Fredericks and Fournier had received their ultimatum either to resign or be fired, Brauer asked to meet with the CAF coordi-

nating team and staff. The meeting convened on October 14, the night before Fredericks and Fournier were to be fired. Brauer's main concern was the existence of CAM, the nonprofit corporation, and he told Peck in advance that he wanted to discuss the ways in which CAF was similar to Damascus Road Community Church.

Peck wanted to be open and to make sure everything was "out on the table," so he prepared a list of eight items that summarized CAF's commitments. They were:

1. Christ Advent Ministries (the nonprofit corporation) is not going away.
2. CAM will be audited by an independent auditor regularly and the results shared with donors and conference.

3. CAM is more than an equipment-holding company. It is now side-by-side with CAF on the budget.

4. CAM now pays staff employees.

5. CAM will own any land or buildings purchased in the future.

6. There are and will be non-Adventist participating members in CAF.

7. CAF does not intend to teach that the conference is the "storehouse."

8. CAF's 10-point statement used in its membership class is a sufficient summary of the essence of evangelical Adventist theology.

Peck and his leadership team acknowledged that they would be willing to negotiate these points with Brauer.

Peck also asked that the conference allow them to continue as a regular company, stating that the church "needs experiments that operate differently, outside of standard policy and procedure."

Nevertheless, the conference voted to terminate Peck's employment and the congregation's company status on November 2, 1997.

At a follow-up meeting with the CAF members, Jim Brauer was pastoral and reassuring. During the three days following Peck's firing, the conference office had been besieged with calls and e-mail from people requesting that their names be removed from the church books. On the evening of

November 5, Brauer assured the people that they would not be disfellowshipped, urged them not to act in haste, and encouraged them to leave their names in the membership books. He stressed that the friction between CAF and the conference had been simply differences of opinion regarding questions of structure and methods.

In a public e-mail the following day, however, Brauer cited theological differences as being a significant point of conflict. He specifically mentioned Peck's "understanding of: last day events, role of the Adventist church in prophecy, hermeneutical interpretation of the

Peck admits he is disappointed that the conference did not honor its commitment to support Grace Place for a three year trial period.

Spirit of Prophecy, investigative judgment, the Sabbath as the discipleship seal of God, and role of the Spirit of Prophecy in providing lifestyle principles."

Additionally he said, "The straw that figuratively broke 'the camels (sic) back' came when administration pled with CAF leadership not to follow in the footsteps of Richard Fredericks and the Damascus church....In this context, CAF's leadership team responded by outlining eight additional issues, [listed above] which made further discussion impractical."

Brauer further stated that "the Executive Committee asked administration to bring back specific plans for up to two new targeted church plants...options are being considered for another attempt in the Ft. Collins region [the area Grace Place serves]."

Peck admits he is disappointed that the conference did not honor its commitment to support Grace Place for a three-year period. Its support lasted 14 months.

But, he acknowledges, at least the tension with the conference is finally over.

On the first two Sabbaths following the firing, Grace Place attendance was close to 400 each day. Morale is strong and enthusiastic, and local giving on the first independent Sabbath came to \$22,000.

Peck says, "Our plan now is to continue the ministry that God has called us to do."

Rocky Mountain Conference Addresses Christ Advent Fellowship

COLLEEN MOORE TINKER

In an e-mail update posted on November 5, 1997, Jim Brauer, president of the Rocky Mountain Conference, wrote the following report concerning Christ Advent Fellowship:

“With absolutely no joy, and a great deal of sorrow, the committee deliberated carefully for five hours on Sunday afternoon before finally deciding to end endorsement of the CAF experiment.

“The action reads as follows:

“CAF: Voted the recommendation of the Administrative Committee as follows:

1) CAF is no longer recognized and endorsed as a company of the RMC as of November 5, 1997, 2) The name CAF is the property of the Seventh-day Adventist Association of Colorado, and may be used only as authorized by the Executive Committee & Association Board. 3) The membership of CAF is encouraged to transfer their membership to a church within the RMC. Members of CAF who do not transfer their membership to a church will remain members of the conference church in regular standing.

“Clay Peck: Voted the following recommendation from Adcom: Whereas CAF is no longer a company of the Rocky Mountain Conference and, whereas Clay Peck has indicated his unwillingness to meet the conditions of employment by returning tithe to the conference, and, whereas Clay Peck has indicated in writing, and verbally before this committee that he is unwilling to accept a transfer to another position in the RMC, he be terminated as of 11/5/97, and receive termination pay according to denominational policy.

“Clay Peck Credentials: Voted that upon Clay Peck’s termination day the

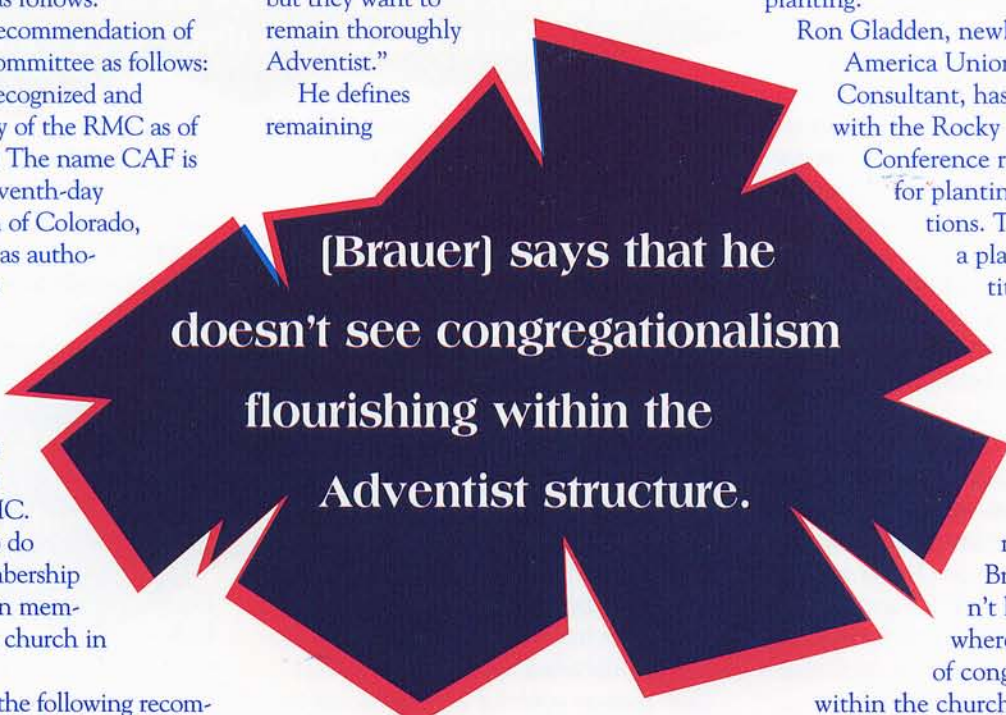
conference will withdraw his credentials, and thus he will no longer be carrying active ministerial credentials.”

Jim Brauer Interviewed

In a November 24 interview with *Adventist Today* about Christ Advent Fellowship, Jim Brauer said, “As an administrator I want to figure out how to be gentle with people yet define [boundary] lines.

“I really want to see creative ministries flourish. In fact, we have four new groups similar to Christ Advent Fellowship which are forming, but they want to remain thoroughly Adventist.”

He defines remaining



[Brauer] says that he doesn't see congregationalism flourishing within the Adventist structure.

thoroughly Adventist by referring to the four edges of the Adventist envelope: worship, lifestyle, structure, and theology. A congregation can push two of the edges, depending upon which edges, and still be considered Adventist, he says. If it pushes three, its standing in Adventism is shaky; if it pushes four, it's no longer Adventist.

Theologically, he said, Peck questioned some of Adventism's beliefs. Peck promised that he would not preach his

questions to the church, and he didn't.

“Eventually, though,” Brauer says, “people noticed what he wasn't preaching.”

“Clay said he had to push all four edges,” Brauer continues. “I had to say, ‘I still love you, but...’”

He hastened to add, however, that Peck has been completely professional and that he and Peck have a good relationship.

Brauer says he is committed to experimenting. “Lay people are getting excited,” he says. “They're buying into church planting.”

Ron Gladden, newly appointed Mid America Union Church Planting Consultant, has been consulting with the Rocky Mountain

Conference regarding its plans for planting new congregations. They are proposing a plan whereby the tithe collected from the newly planted churches will go into a special conference fund exclusively for use in planting the next new church.

Brauer says he doesn't know exactly where the ground swell of congregationalism within the church will go. “Many of the baby boomers don't trust the organization,” he said. “I don't know if this phenomenon is a result of Vietnam or the Nixon era or what. The interesting thing, though, is that many of the younger generation do trust.”

He further says that he doesn't see congregationalism flourishing within the Adventist structure. “We're supposed to be a worldwide church with a mission of taking the Three Angels' Messages to the world. We can't do that if we're divided into independent congregations.”

Damascus Road Church Closes Land Deal

November 5, 1997, marked the day when the Damascus Road Community Church in Maryland made its down payment and officially closed the deal on its new property purchase.

"We are now the proud and trembling owners of 225 acres," says Richard Fredericks, senior pastor.

This land purchase was the final straw in a series of events and concerns that resulted in Fredericks and Bob Fournier, associate pastor, being fired from the Potomac Conference on October 15, 1997. (See *Adventist Today*, September–October, 1997.) After an ultimatum in which the conference asked Fredericks and Fournier to resign or be fired, they were terminated just three weeks before they were to complete their fundraising and negotiations for their new property.

After the pastors' termination, 90 percent of the church congregation went with them instead of staying with the conference church and its new pastor, David Newman. According to Fredericks,

280 people signed statements saying they wanted to be members in the new non-conference church, and the church staff was in addition to that number.

"We have a solidly committed core of 300 people," Fredericks says. "We also

were working," Fredericks said, "and I could hear them building walls outside my door. They were talking and laughing, and they worked day and night. I realized how blessed I was. My wealth is my congregation."

The only thing that could stop us now would be our own apostasy.

tracked the giving list of the original congregation, and of the 100 single adults and families who were consistent givers, 98 have stayed with us."

The church has moved its offices into an old medical suite in the center of town. Church members working day and night renovated the suite. They built walls, installed paneling and sheetrock, installed carpet, bought pictures, and created a beautiful reception area and office complex.

"I was sitting in my office while they

Fredericks also acknowledged that the move to the center of Damascus from the outskirts of town was more than a physical change. "Moving made me realize that it was time to quit dissipating energy by struggling with the church and instead get on with our mission," he said.

"By seeking to be faithful and by getting on with our mission, we will have a far greater impact on Adventism than we would by continuing to struggle," he observes. "The only thing that could stop us now would be our own apostasy."

GC Releases 1996 Statistical Report

ALBERT DITTES

The latest Statistical Report for 1996—just released by the General Conference—shows little change in the North American Division for the year. North America still funds most of the denomination; of the \$929.25 million in tithe,

capita for the world church hit its highest point in Adventist history in 1981, the year the Davenport scandal became public. The all-time high then stood at \$202.32. (In 1863, the first year official records were kept, tithe-per-capita was \$2.29.)

According to this report, the amount of tithe has increased since 1981, but tithe-per-capita has decreased. It stood at

If Adventist tithing had increased at the same rate since 1981 as it had during the two preceding years, the entire tithe from the world field would have amounted to \$2.819 billion in 1996! Instead, the real tithe figure is \$1.889 billion—32 percent short of what it could have been.

The Southern California Conference, the scene of the Davenport event, shows the lowest tithe intake among the white North American conferences. At \$461.82 tithe-per-capita, Southern California trails way behind the NAD average of \$612.09.

Black Adventist tithe-per-capita is still low; regional conference tithe figures show average incomes of \$3,000 to \$5,000 a year per member. Tithe figures also indicate that Central States Conference members earn only \$2,975.80 per year.

The 1996 average tithe-per-capita for the North American Division (\$612.09) still lagged behind that of the Mountain View Conference of West Virginia (\$689.35).

The figures suggest that the church has never recovered financially from the Davenport scandal.

North American Adventists gave \$507.4 million in 1996.

Worldwide giving per member has been flat during the past 15 years and remained so in 1996. The figures suggest that the church has never recovered financially from the Davenport scandal. The tithe-per-

\$170.31 at the close of 1996, down from \$172.14 the previous year. Simultaneously, North American Division membership increased from 838,898 to 858,364 in 1996. These figures suggest that many members are not giving through the official channels.

Muslim Relations Revolutionized

COLLEEN MOORE TINKER

Editor's note: Christianity (including Adventism) has never been very successful in penetrating Islam. Traditional evangelism does not seem to work with Muslims, and there has been a sense of hopelessness in Adventist circles about ever reaching the Muslim population. In October, 1995, Jerry Whitehouse, Dr. P.H., was asked to be the director of The Global Center for Adventist Muslim Relations operated by the General Conference Global Mission Committee. He took the job with the understanding that he be allowed to try a completely new evangelistic approach. The General Conference also wanted to see what would happen if some new methods were tried, so they agreed. Early results of Whitehouse's paradigm shift show great promise of success.

“Adventists (like most Christians) have greatly misunderstood Islam,” says Jerry Whitehouse, director of The Global Center for Adventist Muslim Relations, currently located in Loma Linda, California. “Consequently, we have tried to evangelize Muslims the same way we evangelize non-Adventist Christians. We have taught them our Adventist doctrines and pointed out how they needed to change their lifestyles in order to live as Adventists. This approach has not worked.”

It doesn't work, he explains, because Muslims consider western culture to be evil. They see Christianity as part of the evil culture that does not respect their traditions and religious convictions, and they believe Christianity seeks to destroy what they consider to be Truth.

The cultural distrust has not been one-way. Christians haven't trusted Muslims, either.

“Some of our own [Adventist] literature characterizes Islam as Satanic and Muhammad as a false prophet,” Whitehouse says.

Insults Induce Attacks

These beliefs root deeply in our convictions. During the last two years, one American Adventist pastor was killed and

three others were attacked and wounded by Muslims. The assaults were provoked by outright insults to Islam and by disregard for Muslim customs. One of the unfortunate pastors precipitated his attack by stating that Muhammad's visions resulted from epilepsy.

“We cannot continue to poke our finger in their eye and expect them to welcome us,” Whitehouse says. “We cannot insult Islam and get away with it. If we do, we not only will fail to influence them, we will be attacked.

“I don't believe Islam is either Satanic or inherently evil. Muslims worship the one true God, the God of Abraham, and they believe in a final judgment,” asserts Whitehouse.

Muhammad Taught Monotheism

Muhammad, he explains, had his visions during the “Age of Ignorance” (known in the Christian world as “The Dark Ages”), and as a result called his people out of the polytheistic Hinduism and polytheistic Christianity that were developing on both sides of them geographically. (During the early centuries following

sticking point which causes controversy with those who believe evangelism must call people not only to Christ but also out of their “pagan” cultures.

Real Life Success

Two communities in two separate Muslim countries serve to illustrate Whitehouse's convictions. In these communities American missionaries have gone into the towns and assimilated the culture. They have not gone in and lived in missionary compounds where they continued to look and live like Americans. Since Muslims don't trust Americans, these missionaries have taken up the Muslim lifestyle. They dress like Muslims (the women even wear veils); they eat like Muslims; they observe Muslim calls to prayer; they attend the mosques; they participate in many of the major feasts and celebrations such as observing the fast of Ramadan; they show respect for the Qur'an and for Muhammad; they observe the Muslim social customs.

As these Americans live side-by-side with Islam on the Muslim's terms, they have built up trust. The results have been unprecedented. As the local people have begun to trust the foreigners, they

Muslims consider western culture to be evil. They see Christianity as part of the evil culture...

Christ, some Christian theologians taught the Trinity as three Gods and advocated including Mary in the Godhead.)

“I believe Muhammad was sent to call his people to monotheism, to return them to their roots, at a time when polytheism was flourishing all around them,” Whitehouse declares. “He didn't establish Islam as a reaction against any particular movement or belief. Rather, he established it to call the people to the one true God.”

Whitehouse further believes that since their religious heritage is not evil, Muslims should not have to give it up in order to become Adventists. That belief is the cornerstone upon which he builds his evangelistic approach. That belief is also the

have asked them to teach their women to read. Sheiks have begun asking the Adventist men to teach them the Torah. (The Qur'an teaches that people should study the Torah. It also names and reveres all the Old Testament prophets and teaches that Jesus was perhaps the greatest prophet of them all.)

The Adventists have been able to use the Qur'an to build a bridge to scripture. By respecting Islam's religious and cultural traditions, they have been able to introduce the people to Jesus as Lord and God. But the introduction has been in the context of Islam, not in the context of conventional Christianity. In fact, hundreds of Muslims who have heard Christ presented in their

own context have believed, and they have also accepted the Sabbath. But they still live and act and look like Muslims. In short, they are Adventist Muslims, not typical Seventh-day Adventist converts.

Creative Approach to Baptism

The Islamic social customs have necessitated creative ways to handle rites

“The church is struggling with what to call these converted Muslims,” Whitehouse admits. But there is increasing acceptance of such diversity as part of the process of meeting people in context and of moving them in spiritual growth and in the establishment of the kingdom of grace in their hearts.

It’s not easy to determine which practices are strictly cultural and which ones

words to the Corinthians are as true today as they were in A.D. 55 when he wrote, “Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. Were you a slave when you were called? Don’t let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so. For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord’s freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ’s slave...Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to.” (I Corinthians 7:20-22, 24 NIV)

Just as the Greeks were not required to adopt Jewish customs when they became Christians, so the Muslims should not have to stop being Muslims, Whitehouse maintains.

The successes these two communities of expatriate missionaries are experiencing by presenting Christ within the context of Islam confirm Whitehouse’s conviction: the power of the gospel is that it can go to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people without extracting people from the values and cultures in which they live.

...since their religious heritage is not evil, Muslims should not have to give it up in order to become Adventists.

such as baptism. Muslim women may not touch any men except their own husbands. Consequently, pastors cannot baptize Islamic women. Instead, they baptize the husbands, who, as spiritual heads of their houses, baptize the women in their homes.

“We don’t teach them human rights and women’s equality the way we perceive those things in America,” says Whitehouse. “They would dismiss the ideas. The gospel reaches people in their culture, and we must learn to teach it in their culture. We have to take Christ, not Christianity, to the Muslims.”

In fact, Muslim families which have accepted Christ begin to have growing, changing attitudes about each other. Whitehouse sees the Holy Spirit as being responsible for changing the hearts and attitudes of these new believers.

“No one has ever tried to create an Adventist theology within a Moslem setting before,” observes Whitehouse. “But this isn’t a human idea; it’s what God has been doing down through the years. We must bring Christ into the existing culture if Christianity is going to work.”

Adventists or Not

Because of volatile political attitudes, it’s not always possible for the missionaries to organize the new believers into companies or churches, much less to report baptisms. Additionally, some would question whether these new Adventists really fit under the rubric “Seventh-day Adventist.”

are spiritual. But Whitehouse is firm in his belief that no one can make arbitrary central decisions which will apply to every situation.

“We need to trust the body of believers in other cultural settings,” he says. “We need to support those who are teaching the Muslims about Christ.”

Evangelism within a culture is not a new idea. Whitehouse believes that Paul’s

Record Enrollment in SDA Higher Education System

DALLAS KINDOPP, NAD ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

The SDA higher educational system has set a new record in enrolling students with a head count of 19,932 students and a full-time equivalency (FTE) of 16,743 students.

The following table compares the enrollment figures of 1996 and 1997 for the 14 institutions in the North American Division:

COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY	HEAD COUNT/FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT			
	1996	1997	1996	1997
Andrews University	3,133	3,152	2,522	2,534
Atlantic Union College	711	695	498	534
Canadian Union College	347	317	269	279
Columbia Union College	1,172	1,212	828	779
Florida Hospital College	327	451	187	229
Kettering Coll. of Med. Arts	549	514	387	369
La Sierra University	1,607	1,496	1,442	1,414
Loma Linda University	3,327	3,454	3,080	3,136
Oakwood College	1,666	1,756	1,449	1,561
Pacific Union College	1,544	1,801	1,475	1,534
Southern Adventist Univ.	1,625	1,695	1,382	1,456
Southwestern Adventist U.	1,030	1,106	836	860
Union College	553	630	475	540
Walla Walla College	1,763	1,653	1,585	1,518
TOTALS	19,354	19,932	16,415	16,743

It's Christmas and All You Can Do

Is-Cry



Max Gordon Phillips holds a BA in theology from Loma Linda University, La Sierra campus, and degrees in theology and Christian philosophy from the SDA Theological Seminary at Andrews University. Currently he is a medical writer and editor in the Northwest.

MAX GORDON PHILLIPS

Around the universe, around the universe. Swimming in a celestial coral sea. Only faster than light. 109 light years per second.

You thread your way through the super-clusters of galaxies till you spot a certain spiral burning with hundreds of billions of infinitesimal points of light, each a sun.

Plowing through the central black hole that holds together this immense city of stars, you travel out into the suburbs. There, on Hercules's spiral arm, a striking blond sun cradles in her gravitational arms nine fledgling worlds. You choose the third one.

Emerging from hyperspace, you descend through the clouds and hover just above an equatorial savanna. The sunset sky is running red with the blood of the dying day. A hint of sulfur in the air betrays a distant volcano.

The ground below is stripped bare of grass by root-pulling teeth and trampling feet. A fitful breeze kicks up dust devils here and there.

Several dozen 100-ton longneck dinosaurs are busily shearing off the tops of trees five stories high. Around their heads swarm flesh-eating insects. Web-winged serpents cruise the rising hot air columns.

These animals are not the reason for your visit.

Sisera is.

Suddenly he appears. Around him is a halo of other high-ranking exiles from Eternity—Afreet, Barghest, Dybbuk, Eblis, Gyre, Shedu, Typhon... You knew them all well, once, as friends. How they've changed. Now none will look you in the eye. They only cringe and draw back.

Not Sisera. Before you can greet him he says, "You've got a hundred billion habitable planets per galaxy, times fifty billion galaxies per universe, times an infinity of universes. All at your command. I have but a single solar system. And you've come to take that away."

"No, Sisera, my friend, I've come to see you."

"I'm not your friend," he says. "Just leave me alone with my creation."

You long for him, feel his aching

hunger to be something he isn't. "Your creation?"

"My creatures. My experiments. My idea. Natural selection acting on genetic variation. Evolution." He points toward the west. "Look."

From out of the wounded horizon comes the sound of a T-rex pounding the earth like a drum. The longnecks turn their heads and bellow to one another. The cracking of their 40-foot whip-tails sounds like cannon fire. They begin to run, setting off an earthquake.

"Watch," Sisera says.

A baby longneck is running in terrified circles on a crippled leg, screaming for its mother.

You hurt for it, but choose not to interfere with Sisera's experiment.

The T-rex spies the baby, turns on it, bites into its neck, falls full weight on it, holds it down till its struggling ceases.

"See?" Sisera says. "Survival of the fittest."

"Survival of some requires the death of others," you observe.

"Precisely. Death defines the fittest. It cuts off the slow, the stupid, the clumsy, the crippled, the sick, the aged—the weak—so that the strong can survive and reproduce. This way I can evolve strength, speed, dexterity, and most importantly, intelligence in my creatures. In time, I'll evolve a species that will achieve space flight."

"And then?"

"They'll master hyperspace and higher-dimensional travel. Their spacecraft will carry them from star to star, from galaxy to galaxy and from universe to universe until they populate the whole multiverse. They will destroy any civilization that stands in their way."

"Why?"

"To restore me to my rightful place in Eternity. I was wronged, driven out, humiliated, exiled." His eyes narrow, his jaw tightens, his fist clenches. "But I will see this all through to the end."

"Sisera," you begin, "if only you would..."

Dismissing your entreaty with a wave of his hand, he goes on. "This time it will be different. With the forces of the infinite multiverse united behind my command, I'll invade Eternity. All creatures there will recognize my power and shift allegiance to

me. Your trinity will be left alone, isolated, without subjects. What will you do then? Wipe us all out?"

"So what are you trying to prove?"

"It's simple: my hypothesis, might makes right."

"Right makes might," you say.

"If you really believe that, then put it to the test. Give up your power and face me, alone, here, on my planet, on my terms, without help from your father."

Then, without waiting for a reply, he motions with his head to his entourage and leaps off into hyperspace.

The Forest World

You leap away in a different direction.

An instant later, traveling forward in time, you're zeroing in on a star 10,000 light-years distant. Two of its planets—one blue in aura, the other green—are orbiting each other as together they dance their way around their sun.

You choose the green one, the forest world, planet of the Seraphians. As you wind downward through the oxygen-rich atmosphere you change form to look like one of them—a dozen feet tall and clothed in silver-gold down.

Their little ones see you coming.

"King! King!"

They climb on you, pull you down onto a living fabric of vines woven over the tops of trees a mile in height. With wide grins and nonstop laughter they roll you over and over, jump on you. "Throw me! Throw me!"

You pick them up, toss them high and catch them gently on the way down. They stroke you, pet you, hug you. "King! King!"

From pole to pole this world is blanketed with interconnected plants. Miles deep in places, this living fabric holds most of the planet's water, much of it stored in open, living pods miles across. Fruits and nuts and animals and birds of endless description abound—all peaceful.

Within this planet-wide forest are arboreal cities powered by living electricity-conducting vines. High on the surface photovoltaic leaves keep their faces turned continuously toward the sun on its daily journey across the sky. Other leaves radiate excess heat away into space to maintain energy balance. Rainbow flowers illumi-

nate green cathedrals. From city to city the Seraphians travel on peristaltic force fields through green tunnel freeways.

The elders point to the twin blue orb that hangs like an ornament in the sky. "Blue Moon," they say, "Tell us about Blue Moon."

"You know it's an ocean planet."

"Yes, from spectrographic analysis, but does anybody live there?"

"The Cherubians. The gravity of our world raises gigantic tides on theirs. There you can surf nonstop completely around it. You'll enjoy them, conversing, sharing your technology, joining with them in space travel to other worlds in other solar systems and other galaxies."

The grin. "When?"

"In good time, my Friends. You're already starting to grow the necessary rockets, aren't you?"

In reply they only grin more widely.

As you bid them farewell, rise into the clouds, and slip into hyperspace, the echo of their parting chant, "King! King!" fills you with delight.

Rescue on Dura

An instant later, again leaping forward through time, you've arrived back at Sisera's planet. You ease down to the northern hemisphere, to a continent close to the equator, to a strip of land between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, a land called Mesopotamia.

Coming out of hyperspace you plummet on down through a cloud of Sisera's hovering spirits. You hail them—Asmodeus, Belial, Daeva, Lilith, Loki, Mainyu, Putana...

They don't reply, but whisper among themselves—"He's back!"—then shrivel away and disappear.

On down to the plain of Dura. It's nighttime. In the fierce light of an open furnace shimmers a giant gold image cast in the likeness of the king of this land, a mortal called Nebuchadnezzar. He stands beside it, feet planted wide apart, arms folded, looking frustrated, angry.

In front of him stand three young men fettered at the ankles and wrists.

"So, you still won't bow?" he asks. "If you will, you will prove your allegiance to me and my gods, and you will rule with me in my kingdom."

"O king, live forever," says the one on the right, Shadrach. "It's not that we won't, we can't."

"Because your gods won't let you?"

"Our one God, your majesty," he says.

"But if you serve him, how can I trust you to serve me and my gods?"

"We will serve both our God and you, but not your gods."

"Impossible," says the king. "Can't be done." He turns, jerks his head toward the furnace and orders the lead guard, a huge man named Arioch, "Throw them in."

As the guards hurl them in, one by one, headfirst, you throw around each a cushioning, oxygen-supplying, heat-shedding force field. It clings to them and their clothing, but not to their binding cords, which quickly burn off. Then you leap in with them and assume visible human form.

Wide-eyed they stare at you.

"Who...who are you?"

"Don't worry," you say. "You'll be all right."

You watch their king's face, gone suddenly white, peering in. "Didn't we throw three men in there?"

"Yes, O king, live forever," answers Arioch.

"But now there are four. And nobody's getting burned!"

"We're sorry, we apologize, your majesty."

"That fourth one—has to be a god. Only a god could keep those men alive in that thing. Look at him! Stronger than all my gods! Get them out of there!"

"But, O king, live forever," says Arioch, "the heat will kill us if we go in there."

Brushing Arioch aside, Nebuchadnezzar rushes up as close as the heat will permit. "Shadrach! Meshack! Abednego! Come out!"

They emerge unharmed. "Thank you, O king, live forever."

"All right," says Nebuchadnezzar. "Your god is stronger than mine. Prostrate yourselves to him. Tell him I'll serve him from this day on." They turn toward you, but you've already disappeared into hyperspace.

Sisera's Challenge

Only to be confronted there by Sisera, his face contorted in fury. "See? You've just proven my hypothesis. You resorted to might to make right. You used superior force to protect your men and intimidate mine. And as a result you've won their king."

"You really think I've won King Nebuchadnezzar?"

"Absolutely."

"For how long?"

"As long as you continue to demonstrate my hypothesis. Same with Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego. Remove your protection from them, and you'll see how long they stay true."

"I removed my protection from Job," you say. "And he stayed true."

"Always somebody else, isn't it?" he says. "You wouldn't dare remove it from yourself."

To emphasize his point, he departs without waiting for reply—faster than light.

Decision in Eternity

You leap again, through higher dimensions that take you out of the universe, out of the multiverse, out of time. And into a place that holds all universes and all times. A place called Eternity.

You emerge into Effervescent Garden. Here an infinite number of universes—relativistic quantum bubbles—big bang out or big crunch in all the time. Here yet-to-be-born universes are tailored to suit the infinitely precise conditions necessary for infinitely specific varieties of life. Here the inhabitants of a contracting universe approaching a big crunch could be transferred into an uninhabited expanding universe, if such action should ever prove necessary, all in less than an attosecond.

There you find him; "Abba!"

"Over here, I am." He appears under a tree of life. He looks good; his embrace feels good, like home. "How was your trip?" he asks, as if he didn't know.

"Abba, about Sisera's planet..."

"They're all hurting," he says.

"I need to go, without my power. But I can't go unless you send me."

"You're not doing this just to prove Sisera wrong." He gazes intently into your eyes. "There's a deeper reason."

"Job, Shadrach, Meshack, Abednego. I just can't let them go."

"And Nebuchadnezzar?"

"It's true he was swayed by the power, but after he was humbled and ate grass like an ox, he gave his heart to me out of love."

"And Arioch, who didn't?"

"Yes."

"And the slow, the stupid, the clumsy, the crippled, the sick, the aged, the weak?"

"Yes."

"The drunks, the prostitutes, the drug addicts, the street people, the thieves, the murderers?"

"Yes."

"And all the outcasts, the pariahs, the abandoned and the shunned?"

"Yes."

"And those who will never love you, who will only hate you and kill you?"

"Yes."

"You don't have to do this," he says.

"I know."

"Then I will take you, son."

The Descent

Your father's face fades...

Your mastery of dimension, time, space, matter and energy disintegrates...

You IQ spins dizzily down from infinity to zero...

Your infinite memory and knowledge shrink and vanish...

Your habitation of every particle in every universe dwindles to nothing...

Your consciousness ceases...

Unaware of your father's mighty leap from Effervescent Garden...

Carrying you in his arms...

Unaware of the faces of all the beings in Eternity as they watch in stunned amazement...

Of the journey down into the one universe out of all the infinities of universes... and on down to the one supercluster...the one galaxy...the one solar system...the one planet...continent...country...river valley...small town...family... person—a teenage virgin girl...

Of the mysterious act...of the purpose and reason...

Aware only of the birth pain...

The donkey braying for its dry grass breakfast...

The calf bumping up against the creaky wooden wall and bawling for its mother...

Here, wrapped in coarse cloth and lying in a wooden box full of dry grass...

Hungry for your mother's breast...

Wetting yourself...shivering...

It's Christmas, and all you can do is cry.

Christmas

Spirit

JOHN MCLARTY

I called good night to the last three board members as they headed down the street through the snow toward the subway. I trudged wearily back through the church to my study.

Ten thirty. Should I call Karin? Surely she'd be asleep by now. But if she wasn't, she'd worry.

I dialed. She picked up on the fourth ring.

"How's it going?"

"I've been up ever since you left." She sighed wearily. "Bonnie didn't go to sleep until 9:30. Garrett was asleep for a while, but he's so stuffed up he can't breathe. I've nursed him, but I can't get him to go down. What's taking you so long, anyway?"

"We just finished. I'm sorry it's so late."

"What can I say?" Her pause was heavy. "I'll be here. Hurry as fast as you can. I feel terrible."

I tidied my desk, locked up and walked to my car. Crossing the George Washington Bridge I was enchanted as usual by the lights of Manhattan above the

dark surface of the Hudson River. Tonight dancing curtains of light snow added to the magic. But once off the bridge the magic faded. Traffic was light, but the gathering slush slowed me, sometimes to a crawl.

Two Weeks and... Nothing

Only two weeks till Christmas. Two weeks. And no Christmas cards purchased, much less addressed. No gifts squirreled away on top shelves of closets. No cookies baked. No tree. No decorations.

I'd wanted this Christmas to be a special one—at home and at church. I'd had big dreams for doing something special for all the single people in our congregation. I'd hoped to find just the right gift for Karin... and something imaginative for Bonnie, in spite of my incompetence in toy buying. Instead, two weeks to Christmas and—nothing.

Then day before yesterday Karin went to bed with a low fever. So I didn't go in to the church yesterday or today. Two days playing nurse and baby-sitter. I left the house tonight just in time to make the board meeting. It was the story of my life lately. I was never home enough to get

anything done; I was home too much to do my job as a pastor.

The longer I drove, the more morose I became. The snow didn't help, imprisoning me in a tiny, cold world. All the everlasting one-and-a-half-hour drive home, protests, complaints, and self-pity swirled in my head. I tried to think of pleasant stuff, but I was too tired to be cheerful.

A sick wife. Sick kids. A needy congregation. I wasn't really doing any of them justice.

If only I could force my mind to think about something else. Where was the Christmas spirit? We were getting Christmas cards and letters—comically long-winded ones and others packed with the warmth of old friendship. But thinking of them brought me back to the cold hard

John McLarty is editor of *Adventist Today*.



facts: I hadn't done our Christmas letter yet. Hadn't bought gifts.

Finally our driveway appeared out of the whirling wash of snow. Lights blazed in the kitchen and bathroom. I opened the door and found Karin standing in the middle of the living room. Garrett drooped pathetically in her arms. She looked almost as bad as he did. Taking the baby, I felt her forehead. She was feverish. I kissed her on the cheek and wished her sleep. She shuffled down the hall.

I walked around the room with Garrett. His breathing sounded terrible. No wonder he couldn't sleep. I willed him to sleep on my shoulder. But no luck. Finally, I put him in his swing, cranked it up and hoped.

Again the misery in my mind. Only two weeks to Christmas. No gifts, no cards, no church plans. And no time or energy to change it.

The swing worked its spell. He dozed. Easing him out of the swing, I laid him in his crib.

I got my sleeping bag from the basement. Lately, Bonnie, our three-year-old, had been getting up two or three times a night wanting to snuggle in with Mommy and Daddy. So I unrolled my bag in the hall between our bedroom and the kids' room where I could hear Garrett if he had difficulty and could intercept Bonnie. Maybe with a good night's sleep Karin could fight off this flu or whatever it was.

I was too tired to feel the oak flooring under my sleeping bag but not tired enough to fall sleep before the tidal wave of complaints and protests again swamped my mind. I fought desperately to shove my brain into neutral so I could sleep.

Just as I dozed a little voice woke me. Bonnie was standing by my head, rubbing

her eyes. "Daddy, I want to sleep with you."

I crawled out of my bag and picked her up. Felt her head. She seemed all right. I set her down and we headed to the kitchen for a drink, the vinyl feet of her sleeper lipping along the floor. Three sips of water and I carried her back to her room. "Bonnie, I want you to sleep in your room. Your room is nice and warm, and the vaporizer will help your cough. Out here in the hall it's too cold for you. I don't want you to get sick like Garrett."

She protested weakly as I tucked her in. "But I want to sleep with you."

"Some other time, Bon Bug, but not tonight. You stay here in your own bed." I

didn't bother explaining that Daddy would sleep much better without a squirming three-year-old in his sleeping bag.

She hugged her stuffed owl to her, snuggled into her pillow and closed her eyes. I checked on Garrett, shut the door and wriggled back into my bag.

Again the misery in my mind. Only two weeks to Christmas. No gifts, no cards, no church plans. And no time or energy to change it.

Again, sleep had just managed to drown my complaints when tugs on my sleeping bag woke me.

"Daddy, I want to sleep with you."

On automatic pilot, I unzipped my bag, picked up Bonnie and aimed for the kitchen. She took a couple swallows of water before shoving the glass away. I glanced at the clock. 3:15.

I put her back in bed and tucked Owl into her arms, crawled back into my bag

and closed my eyes. I had just found sleep when a little voice began the ritual all over.

As I slithered back into my bag after watering and bedding Bonnie, the effort to sleep seemed utterly futile. I'd awakened too many times. The endless litany of complaints would not be quiet. And now sleep itself was beyond me.

But then suddenly like a visitation of angels, an astonishing revelation flooded my mind. This is Christmas! Sleeping on the floor, cuddling a sick boy, tucking in an insecure little girl. This is Christmas!

It was a wild and crazy vision. But somehow the fact that I was awake at 4:00 a.m. with scant prospects for any good sleep before sunrise lost its sting. I closed my eyes and the miserable complaints were gone. A subdued, astonishing euphoria displaced the aching fatigue. I was doing Christmas. Turning on my side, I settled into my pillow, smiling.

The night wasn't over yet. I was still savoring my new vision of the glory of this miserable night when Bonnie opened her door again. I beckoned. "Do you want to sleep with Daddy? Come on."

She snuggled in against me. We slept.

At 4:30 I heard Garrett's whimpering. Slithering out, I left Bonnie asleep in my bag. Lifting Garrett from the crib and putting my lips to his head, I started. Hurrying into the bathroom, I started water in the tub, then took his temperature, afraid any moment he might go into convulsions. Then I set him in the tub and began dipping tepid water over his chest and back.

Karin staggered into the bathroom. Flu or no flu she was still a mother.


"What's his temperature?"

"A hundred five point three."

"Have you given him any Tylenol?"

"No. Not yet."

She got the medicine while I continued to dip water. After the medicine, he drank a few swallows of cool water. Gradually his temperature dropped. Karin diapered him and nursed him. Then I sent her back to bed and took the little guy into the living room to rock him. At six o'clock he finally dropped off to sleep.

As I laid him in his crib and covered him, I whispered, "Good night, Garrett. Merry Christmas, Boy, just a little early." 

Fredericks Responds to Adventist Review

William Johnsson, editor of the Adventist Review, wrote an article in the November, 1997, North American Edition of the magazine in which he warned against congregationalism. The following article is excerpted from the open letter which Richard Fredericks wrote in response to William Johnsson.

Dear Bill,

The Apostle John writes, "Let us love one another, for love is from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7,8). He isn't trying to be emotionally mushy and devotional, but hits us with God's marching orders to all his children, especially during times of relational tension. I want that spirit as I reflect on your perspective and concerns.

Because you made our situation a world-wide issue by featuring it in the *Adventist Review's* NAD edition (while simultaneously claiming it has little significance world-wide), my response is shared with several hundred folks on our Weekly Update list and whoever they care to share it with.

Let me try to offer my perspective on three key issues.

We Were Fired

Your report reflects Adventist journalism's handling of denominational differences. Your opening paragraph is misleading. It

Bob Fournier and I were fired. We did not resign.

implies that the split is just a bunch of groupies following a "charismatic leader" in his misguided choice to leave a grieving mother church.

First, I am not very charismatic. Many times I can be downright boring and befuddled amidst this congregation of very strong, highly professional leaders with gifts equal to or greater than mine. Many of them enjoy Bob Fournier's preaching more than mine.

Second, Bob Fournier and I were fired. We did not resign.

Third, our healthy, committed congregation was amputated from the body by the Potomac Conference Executive Committee for the sole reason that our success as a congregation was perceived as a serious threat to the stability of the present financial system (which it is).

Our Union President made a very clear speech that the only real issues were about preserving policy. Our Conference President, in answer to the direct question of why he felt the need, in the space of just one week, to suddenly ask us to resign or be fired—and then, in fact, to fire us—answered that he wanted to do it

quickly before we closed the deal between Damascus Road Community Church (DRCC) and Mr. White on 225 acres of land (169 acres of which is being given as a gift). I believe Elder Broeckel hoped it would help funding for that land to dry up. It didn't. Over \$150,000 was given during the next three weeks.

For the record, Bob and I were already complying with the mandatory "tithe to Conference" policy for months prior to being asked to resign. For years before that, I had always given approximately 30 percent or more of my tithe to the conference, plus giving to the global SDA work. I do believe in supporting God's work around the world. I do not believe in primarily supporting four bureaucratic layers of administrators in an age of instant telecommunication at a time when most local SDA churches are stagnant and dying.

The Real Issue Should Be Effectiveness

It is wrong to imply that DRCC or Grace Place is fueled by the "charisma" of a single pastor. Our people are driven by our single-minded passion to reach the bored, the burned and the bypassed with consistent and clear presentations of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Your article expresses concern about people such as us having scant interest in theology—maybe even sliding into New Age or Eastern religions! Over 75,000 sermon tapes have gone out from DRCC. They stand as witnesses that we are neither preoccupied with ourselves, nor worried about our karma, nor theologically fuzzy. We are crystal clear on the authority of the Scripture, the centrality of Christ and on dozens of core Biblical issues.

Above all, somewhere in each of those messages, whatever the topic, you will hear the truth that all men and women come to God through Christ, based on his sin-bearing sacrifice alone. Plus nothing. Period.

Richard Fredericks is the senior pastor of Damascus Road Community Church in Damascus, Maryland.



Grace Place and DRCC offer Adventists a new model of strong, healthy congregations. Twice our administrators warned us that if we were allowed to continue on our course within Adventism, scores of bright young pastors would line up, wanting to do the same thing. I agree—they will. They are.

Since my firing, five bright young pastors, and a few older ones as well, have requested that I contact them when we have future staff openings. They are dedicated people who want out of underfunded, understaffed, stagnant churches that burn out pastors and

Grace Place and DRCC offer Adventists a new model of strong, healthy congregations.

close out the community. Eight years ago a conference president told me that 50 percent of the churches in his conference didn't have a single active member under the age of 30! Is this a model worth preserving?

Instead of cutting off and closing down, why not open up a healthy discussion among Adventist thought leaders on how to radically alter non-sacred policies concerning the leveraging of resources in order to rapidly create stronger, more effective local churches? I am not a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but here is my prediction: you will either manage this change or be run over by it. Lopping off congregations and pastors won't stop it.

What on Earth Is "The Church?"

Your final paragraph is, in my mind, the most Biblical and beautiful part of your entire piece. Every phrase could be backed by a multitude of clear Scriptural support. But how one interprets your two closing sentences, Bill, is a major source of our differences.

Here is your quote: "But he—Christ—is Lord of the church. He loves the church and gave himself for the church, to bring together and perfect a people for himself—a body from every nation, kindred, tongue and people."

The great tragedy, in my mind, is that you are not referring to the true Church of Jesus Christ at all, which Scripture clearly teaches is comprised of everyone, everywhere who, in genuine faith, bends the knee to Christ as Lord and Savior. Whenever you say "the Church" in this final paragraph, you clearly mean only those who are members of the SDA denomination. Where Scripture is so inclusive, you use its words to be exclusive.

You invoke Biblical language and authority to support an anti-Biblical view that, in the eyes of God, only Adventism comprises his true Church. Thus, you imply that any threat to our denominational structure becomes an assault on God's one true Church. And because you hold this view, you boldly assert, even threaten with (to quote you) "tough words," that any who leave or are put out of Adventism are very likely on a fast track to eternal perdition.

The day of denominational affiliation as a key factor is waning, just as you said. More and more people will choose their local congregations by how well they help them truly live as men and women of God—not by their claims that "we are, and there are no truly legitimate others." Those who believe their salvation rests in simply "staying on the denominational ship" because "the ship is going through" are on a spiritual Titanic.

A Challenge

Here is my final challenge: Do you have equal courage to write "tough words" about all the spiritual catatonics that are produced by staying in Adventism? Do you have the courage to ask why attendance is dwindling in a denomination that claims it has the last great message for the world, even as genuine revivals of godliness are occurring all around us? Do you have equal courage to ask if organizational policies and structures might be contributing to this picture of weak local churches in which two generations of young people are largely absent and unconverted?

I will take your admonitions to heart. The conference leaders (to quote you) "felt they had no choice but to call for Fredericks' resignation" (which again, for the record, I didn't give—so they fired me). But I honor both their perspective on policy and their desire to preserve the organizational system. I did break policy in a desire to be more effective in achieving our mission to the bored, burned and bypassed. So they did their job. No contest. They are my friends.

The denomination has drawn a circle that excludes us over these non-Biblical, non-sacred issues.

But please know this. The denomination has drawn a circle that excludes us over these non-Biblical, non-sacred issues. But our circle is still open. We welcome into full fellowship at DRCC all who know their need as sinners, who seek their hope and security in Christ alone as their Savior and who determine to follow him fully as Lord. And as we go on, we will seek, in all we do, to live as men and women of God. I know I speak for Clay's congregation as well.

So keep watching with an honest heart. And maybe someday, by the grace of God, because of Grace Place and DRCC, you'll have to revise your perspective of life after Adventism. That is my prayer.

Though we see things differently, I do love your final statement and will close with it, giving you the last word in this epistle as well:

"Our security is in Christ alone. But he—Christ—is Lord of the church. He loves the church and gave himself for the church, to bring together and perfect a people for himself—a body from every nation, kindred, tongue and people." Amen.

An Open Letter to Adventist Conference Officials

BILLE BURDICK

Dear Leaders:

The unfolding saga of the Damascus Road church interests me.

I wonder why administrators respond to this development so differently from the way others did to such incidents as the founding of Madison College in 1904. In an overt act of rebellion Edward A. Sutherland and his associates resigned from the faculty of the newly created Emmanuel Missionary College. Church leaders assumed he was in error. They also assumed that the school he launched was illegitimate and unworthy of support.

Ellen White took a different view of things. In spite of the fact that Sutherland established the school outside the organized work, Mrs. White not only helped him find a location for his school but also told the leading brethren that Sutherland felt called of God to this work. She said they should assist him.

Since that time scores of enterprises have proliferated under the benign umbrella of the Adventist denomination. They vary widely in focus—medical, lifestyle, educational; some have remained small, but some have grown so large that they have their own worldwide networks of institutions. All of them are considered fully Seventh-day Adventist, even though they are neither supported nor controlled by the organized church.

All of these organizations own their own property. All of them are either incorporated or are owned by incorporated foundations. In the larger of these, fully recognized Seventh-day Adventist congregations worship every Sabbath in church buildings which the institutions own. Although conference-employed ministers serve some of these, many have provided their own ministerial services.

In addition to these precedents of allowing independent incorporated units to function as Seventh-day Adventist institutions, Ellen White strongly advocated principles of local self-governance and consistently resisted the brethren's efforts to centralize power.

In spite of these precedents, however, we are witnessing an increasing emphasis on centralizing and concentrating authority and control in one central "worldwide headquarters" rather than on giving the reins of authority and control into the hands of churches in geographical locations where they are able to sustain themselves. This trend has dismayed many, including those who are not pressing for congregationalism but strongly believe in the advantages of a benign, overarching denominational structure. Astute observers have warned us that if this centralization of authority continues to increase, it might lead to a backlash of growing pressure for a complete overthrow of central authority and a strong push toward extreme congregationalism.

We have already seen indications of this backlash. Not only are churches forming using congregational styles of governance, but conference-owned churches are experiencing changes in giving patterns. More and more people give increasing percentages of their offerings to local needs as they become aware of the use of money in ways they see as wasteful, unnecessary, and wrong.

Meanwhile, when local congregations follow the example of their forefathers by forming corporations to hold and administer their own local funds and assets, they are now refused the same cooperative inclusion in the Seventh-day Adventist Church that other types of independent institutions enjoy.

I call for those in authority to take a second look at what they are doing in the light of Adventist history and in the light of the current acceptance of independent Adventist health and educational ministries. Shouldn't the organized church be big enough to allow congregations to operate as fully Seventh-day Adventist churches in the same way that it allows health ministries to operate independently of Adventist Health Systems?

There are now two Sabbath keeping churches in Damascus. I am not suggesting that the actions that formed them be repealed. What I am very strongly urging is that the conference organizations adopt a corporate mindset that would allow congregational churches to exist peacefully within the conference boundaries as fully Seventh-day Adventist, even though not under their administrative control.

Pastors of these churches should be treated not as "separated brethren" who are grudgingly recognized by conference administrators as fellow Christians, but as "tentmaker pastors." There is precedent already for this in some conferences. These self-supporting workers should be fully recognized and credentialed even though they receive financial support from sources other than conference treasuries. They should be allowed to form their own networking organization, much as ASI (Adventist Laymen's Services and Institutions) originally did. Other than in administrative and financial matters, they should be treated as full-fledged Adventist ministers. They should be invited to attend ministerial meetings and supplied with all materials that are available for conference-employed ministers.

We stand at a very important crossroad. At this moment, you conference officials still have your hands on the wheel. One route leads to increasing centralized control and equally increasing dissatisfaction on the part of local churches. This route might result in a solid, tightly knit worldwide church, but there would be an enormous price to pay in lost members, in more and more independent congregations (with no denominational affiliations and thus no stabilizing ballast outside their own church walls), and in huge amounts of lost revenue. It is doubtful that the church can actually realize this route, given the financial loss compared with the ever increasing cost of maintaining such a centralized power.

The alternate route is frightening to some, especially to those who do not trust each other to make good decisions unless they are forced to do so by some centralized authority. But this route is the one which many of us believe is the only one which will keep the Seventh-day Adventist dream alive, well, and prospering as we move into the next century.

This is the route of giving the church back to the people and letting them decide for themselves what form of governance best suits their situations and preferences. Doubtless most Adventists would continue to prefer being a part of a worldwide empire of churches and would continue giving to support that empire. Many prefer letting others do the planning and execution of the church mission while they stand by in support.

But allowing an "alternate track" of congregationally owned and operated churches for those who feel called to the mission fields on their doorsteps could be a great blessing to the church in North America. The church could increase its membership by reclaiming those who once worshipped with it but are not comfortable with authoritarian governments. Such an attitude of goodwill would greatly enhance the likelihood that the conference-owned churches could retain and add members.

For most of our denominational life we have been able to accommodate both conference and individually owned educational and medical institutions. I don't think it is revolutionary to suggest that we now extend those policies to church congregations. It's time, I believe, to recognize a new class of churches whose members and pastors enjoy Seventh-day Adventist fellowship and standing as fully as those in conference-owned churches.

Sincerely yours,

Bille Burdick

Bille Burdick lives in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference. She has been a board member of the internet's SDAnet for three years and is a regular correspondent on it. She has done extensive research in Adventist history.



Into the Future With

NEWS • ANALYSIS • OPINION

ADVENTIST TODAY

Adventist Today

Campmeeting

Sabbath, March 21, 1998 • Riverside Adventist Church • 4850 Jurupa Avenue • Riverside, CA

10:00 A.M. SMUTS VAN ROOYEN, "A Robust Spirituality for Today's Adventist"

11:00 A.M. CHARLES SCRIVEN, "Wanted: Enthusiastic, Open-Minded Believers!"

12:00-1:30 P.M. Potluck Dinner (bring a salad or dessert if you can, but come even if you can't!)

2:30-4:30 P.M. "Adventism's New Congregationalism: What Gives?"

Panelists: ERIC BAHME, New Life Fellowship, Seattle

FRANK KNITTEL, pastor, Riverside Church

BJ CHRISTENSEN, North American Division (invited)

4:30 P.M. JOHN MCLARTY, a vesper message

(This schedule is subject to change.)

Raymond F. Cottrell

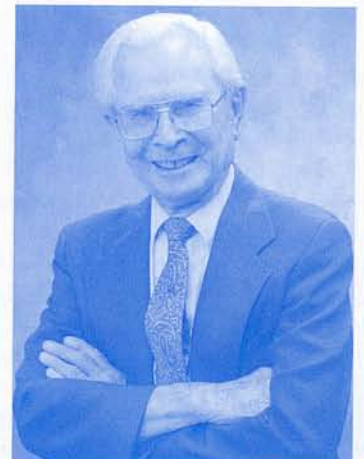
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Founding editor Ray Cottrell's vision of a vital, open-minded church is why *Adventist Today* exists. An endowment, in the name of our octogenarian editor emeritus, will ensure the future of this publication. A \$500,000 endowment is the goal (first phase). The return on this endowment will provide a financial base that supplements the subscription income (it covers only 60% of costs). Commitments of over \$200,000 have already been made.

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Raymond F. Cottrell

Editorial: But Is It Adventist?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

The Adventist Church is not merely a denomination owned by a legal entity headquartered near Washington, D.C., capital of the most powerful empire in history. It is a spiritual reality, a people who share a history, belief system, Biblical hermeneutic, common traditions and a social network. The Adventist organization is called to serve that spiritual reality, not define it.

Within the denomination there are constraints that hinder innovative ministry; those same restraints may protect congregations from the personal dysfunctions of the leadership core. Outside the denominational structure congregations may be less stable, but they are freer to develop a sharply focused ministry to reach people not well served by the denomination. Neither congregationalism

nor a strong centralized denominational structure is intrinsic to Adventism. Neither is the perfect tool for every ministry objective.

Historically Adventism has benefited from the (often unintended) synergy of independent ministries and the denominational structure. We'll do better work for our Master if we cultivate that synergy.

In the coming issues of *Adventist Today*, we will examine church organization and theology, lifestyle and worship style. We'll look at institutions and individuals. We'll hear from the left and the right. We'll publish articles by those who lean toward congregationalism and by those who are convinced a centralized hierarchy is God's ideal for the church. We'll feature analysis and firsthand testimony regarding different ways of think-

ing, living, and sharing Adventism.

We are Adventists, you and I. The definition of Adventism that matters most is the one we live. And the greatest proof that Adventists are Christians is that we show respect when we listen to each other.

I invite you to be part of the discussion. Write us with your vision of the church, your report on what it looks like in your congregation. Share with others through the pages of *Adventist Today* the very best of your spiritual life.

But don't substitute words for action. Don't wait around for permission. Don't sit and wring your hands. Get out of your rocking chair; ditch the remote and demonstrate your answer to the question, "But is it Adventist?" Show your neighbors something good.

John McLarty, Editor

Christian Record Services Ends Ministry to Deaf

CONTINUED FROM BACK

together in one operation. The blind cannot read the signs of the deaf nor the deaf hear the voices of the blind. But they had expected the deaf department and its services would be transferred to another area of the church, as was recommended in a General Conference Taskforce Report released in December, 1996.

CRS began work for the deaf in 1980. While funding for the blind work comes mostly from the non-Adventist public, an adequate source has never been found for the deaf department. (The annual budget for the blind is over 4.5 million dollars; for the deaf, approximately \$150,000, of which \$60,000 came from the NAD.)

In all but one year since 1980, the deaf work has run a deficit which was made up by subsidies from the blind work of CRS and from the NAD. Because of internal financial pressures, CRS asked the NAD to increase its subsidy for the deaf work of CRS. When the NAD declined, CRS voted to end its deaf work.

The NAD had proposed redirecting its annual subsidy to CRS to local groups involved in deaf ministry, but deaf advocates argued a continent-wide organization serving the deaf would be better than a grant program. They proposed forming a new organization under NAD auspices to expand the deaf work previously done by CRS.

A committee appointed at the November 24 meeting has begun meeting via the Internet to create a proposal for an organization whose board will have a majority of deaf members. The NAD is expected to consider the proposal sometime in 1998.

The need for this kind of ministry arises out of the deaf experience. The average profoundly deaf person who became deaf before learning to speak reads at only a grade 4-5 reading level. Many deaf need the Easy English publications that CRS produced. The main language of most profoundly deaf is Sign Language, so the deaf need many video productions in their language.

The deaf world has its own culture, clubs, sports organizations and even churches. The deaf are hard to find, and hearing people can seldom, if ever, truly become part of the "Deaf World." Some feel that the work for the deaf is the most difficult and complicated the Adventist church faces because they live as subgroups within other cultures. For every "hard group," whether Native American, Muslim or Hindu, there is within that group an even more difficult-to-reach subgroup. Even if deaf people could be found and invited to church, who would interpret for them?

There are only about 650 known deaf Adventists in the U.S., 20 in Canada, and 2000 worldwide. The estimated global population of deaf is 50 million; they use some 75 different sign languages.

Christian Record Services began in 1899 as The Christian Record Braille Foundation. It takes its name from its magazine for the Blind, *The Christian Record*, the oldest continuously published magazine for the blind.

JOHN BLAKE PASTORS THE ONOWAY, ALBERTA, SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH AND IS COORDINATOR OF ADVENTIST DEAF MINISTRY IN CANADA.

Moses and the Baby Galaxies

CHERIE ROUSE

It was really dark, outside his tent, and inside his mind, when Moses began the climb up Sinai for his morning meeting with God. As Moses reached the top, breathing heavily, he saw that the millions of stars crowded upon the great vault of heaven were fading gradually like beautifully aging wallpaper. God hadn't touched down yet, but Moses could see that an angel, a minor aide de camp, had already arrived. Moses told him eagerly, "Today I want to hear about how it all began."

The aide drew himself up to his full height, threw out his chest, and looked down at his audience-of-one as he spoke: "I know about this," he said. "I just studied it recently. When it all started, God said, 'Let there be mass—let there be antigravity—let there be axions—let there be furious, nuclear heat, and bitter, crystalline cold, and baby spiral galaxies!'"

The angel threw his arms outward in a grand gesture as he continued. "The cosmos exploded, in less than a trillionth of a trillionth of a second, from a point smaller in radius than a millionth of a proton, to become the lumpy collection of galaxies, clusters, and superclusters that now stretch across the sky for millions of light-years."

He looked pleased at Moses' amazement. Then he went on: "And then, through our own lonely herd of planets, chasing each other around our dim, little sun, at last zoomed a huge comet, a mass of ice that melted, providing Earth with water and a soft blanket of protective atmosphere. And THAT is why human life can flourish on this planet."

Moses was stunned and confused. In the Egyptian court, he had been taught nothing about an explosion, nor a blanket, nor antigravity, nor baby galaxies. He pointed out to the angel, "You can see with your own eyes that there is a great ceiling above us, and across this ceiling march the tiny stars. Also, we see the great sun and moon, and the bright stars that run faster. Beneath this, we live on our large, round disk. Just look—from here you can see the farthest edges!"

The angel looked pityingly around the horizon, then sat down on a rock and patiently started over. "Before the initial explosion, there was no universe, just a tiny point of radiation, electrons, and ions. After the explosion, the universe cooled. Atoms formed. Light and matter separated, and the microwave radiation was not so scattered. You can tell this, Moses, by measuring the variations in temperature of background radiation between adjacent patches of sky. Look at the equations of general relativity—look at the cosmological constant."

The angel pointed out that "the rapid expansion took quantum mechanical variations and blew them up to macroscopic proportions, and so you can observe the slight underdensities or overdensities in mass that gravity has molded into the present-day universe."

Moses, now greatly distressed, had begun to pace back and forth, his feet bumping rocks and stirring up a little dust.

The angel didn't notice. He gazed, enraptured, into the distance, then went on: "Of course, ordinary matter makes up only 5 percent of the critical density, the other 95 percent being cold, dark matter. This cold, dark matter has determined the formation of..."

Suddenly his voice trailed off and he seemed to shrink. A moment later, he and Moses fell to their knees as God approached slowly and silently. But God had already overheard. He looked gently at Moses's frustrated face, then told him, "My learned assistant is right, but let me put it another way: In the beginning, (and his huge, musical voice rolled to the valleys below as the dawn warmed the sky with rose-gold) God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form and void, and darkness covered the face of the deep...And God shouted,

Let
There
Be
LIGHT!!!!"

Suddenly, a huge, fiery whirlwind engulfed the mountain. Moses and the angel, blinded and shaking, yanked off their sandals and prostrated themselves.

At last, the dust settled and the sun once again splashed its glory calmly on the mountain. After an awful silence, God continued the story. "I made the first woman and man in my image. We all saw that this was very good, and I loved to walk with them each evening in their garden."

Moses finally raised his dusty face, glowing with terror and delight.

He whispered, "That's what I wanted to know. I wanted to know if you were there in the beginning. I wondered if you wanted us, and if you're still with us."

For a summary and discussion of the inflationary theory of cosmic origins, I am indebted to Ron Cowen, Science News, June 7 & 14, 1997—CR.

Cherie Rouse has taught freshman writing and is an assistant editor of *Adventist Today*. She and her husband have a teenaged daughter and son.



Physics Major Threatened at La Sierra University

On December 1, 1997, Gary Bradley, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at La Sierra University, sent a letter to Ivan Rouse, chairman of the department of physics. This letter stated that the university "...finds itself in the difficult position of adjusting to significant decreases in enrollment in the last two years," and consequently must reduce its budget by nearly 2 million dollars for the 1998-99 school year.

The College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), he said, was responsible for cutting out \$250,000. As part of its assignment, Bradley suggested that CAS close admissions to physics and biophysics majors and reduce the physics staff from four to two. He further recommended that, beginning July 1, 1998, the physics department reduce its class offerings "...to entry level physics courses and possibly those needed for engineering articulation."

He stated that if the department wished to respond to the proposed action they should do so before December 10, 1997, "...since the Academic Affairs Committee will review this recommendation on that date. Decisions regarding faculty associated with the department will be made subsequent to this action."

Between December 1 and December 9, colleagues from La Sierra as well as from Walla Walla College, Southern Adventist University, Andrews University, and friends from other locations wrote letters to La Sierra University President Larry Geraty, pleading for the administration to reconsider its decision.

A professor from Andrews University wrote: "If it becomes widely known that La Sierra has dropped the physics major, then [students'] degree(s) will have diminished value. I am reminded of a discussion which I had with Arthur Bienenstock at Stanford in the mid 70's. Finances were tight everywhere and he, as Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, had the responsibility of cutting Stanford's academic budget

by nearly 10%. He said to me, 'If physics is not the most expensive program at Andrews University, it should be.' He went on to assert that it is a most important program and that one measure of the overall quality of the university program is the value placed on the physics program."

A faculty member at Walla Walla College wrote, "I know that economic concerns are very important and must be dealt with, but I believe that the current proposal regarding the Physics Department will have a significant negative impact on the liberal arts basis of your institution. Presently you have a strong and capable faculty in physics. This is recognized in the physics community of the

church. I hope that there is some middle ground which will prove viable..."

A La Sierra colleague wrote, "Physics is an essential part of a university basic sciences program. I have trouble with a basic sciences program at a university that completely lacks majors in physics. We are aspiring to be not just an average university, but one with a quality basic sciences component and a strong research component. Those goals cannot easily be met by dissolving a basic sciences program as fundamental as physics."

Meanwhile, Bradley agreed to take the departmental response against the proposed cuts to the University Academic Affairs Committee, which will make a decision before sending it to the University Council. The University Council will make a final university decision and send it on to the Trustees for their approval the second week of January, 1998.

Christian Record Services Ends Ministry to Deaf

JOHN D. BLAKE AND JOHN MCLARTY

On November 6, 1997, Christian Record Services (CRS), the Adventist organization devoted to serving the blind and the deaf, voted to end its work for the deaf and to terminate its two full time workers for the deaf, Thompson Kay and David Trexler.

For most deaf Adventists and their friends, this came as a terrible shock. They had known the denomination was considering restructuring its deaf work, but they were totally unprepared for the complete closure.

On November 24, a sizable group of deaf and deaf leaders from around North America traveled (most at their own expense) to a special meeting at the

North American Division (NAD) headquarters in Maryland. In this meeting with NAD representatives, Manuel Vasquez and Monte Sahlin, the deaf and their friends attempted to help the church officials comprehend the concerns of the deaf. For the deaf, closure of the deaf work of CRS, though small to the church at large, was like the General Conference closing the Media Center and the Review and Herald, and giving severance pay to the NAD and Conference leaders. The Christian Record office was their publishing house, their media center, their Bible Correspondence Center and their world leadership—all dropped at once.

The deaf advocates agreed that ministry to the blind and the deaf did not fit

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