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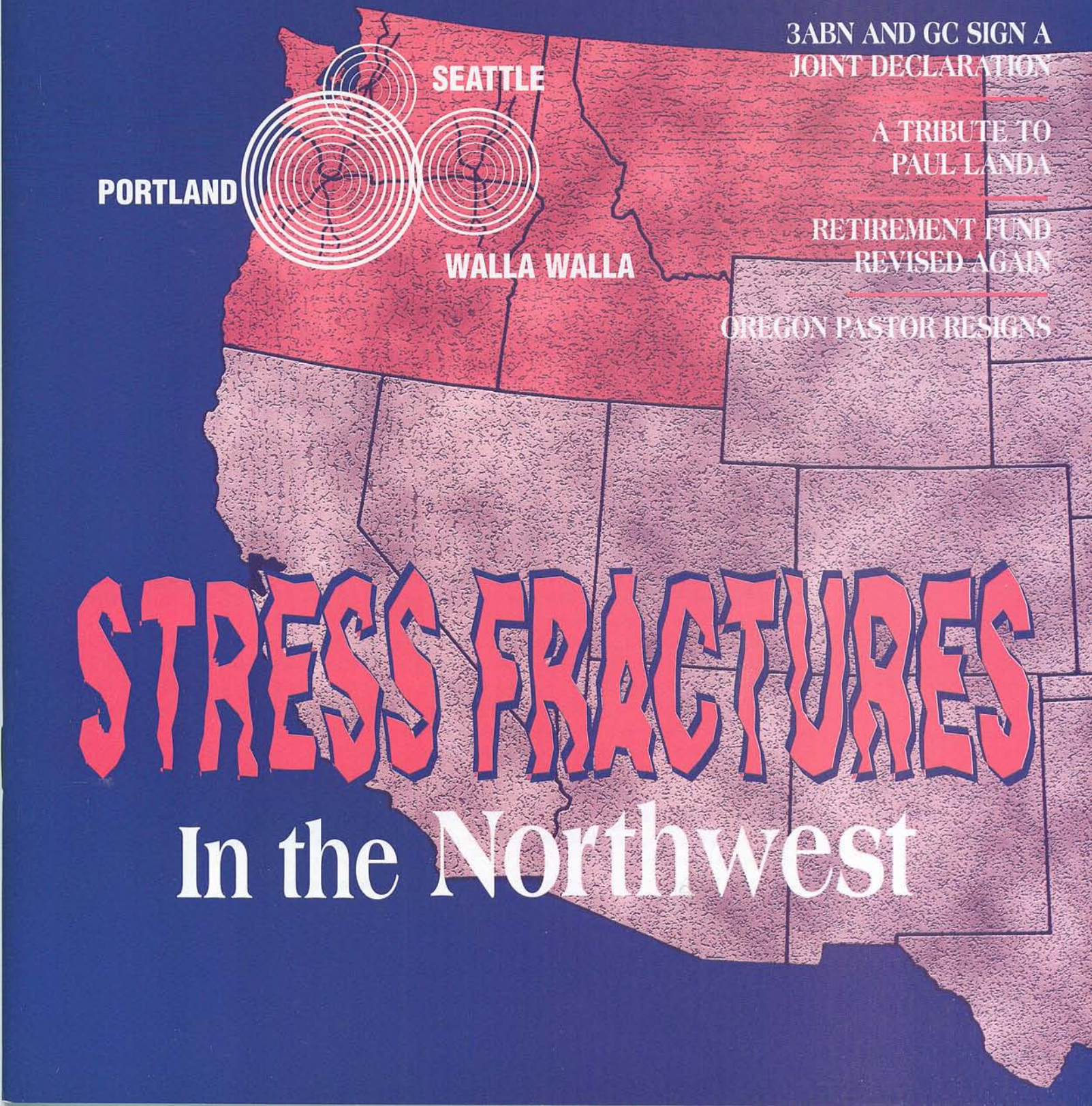

3ABN AND GC SIGN A JOINT DECLARATION

A TRIBUTE TO PAUL LANDA

RETIREMENT FUND REVISED AGAIN

OREGON PASTOR RESIGNS

STRESS FRACTURES

In the Northwest

Talking With the Enemy

There are plenty of conflicts in the Adventist Church. Liberal vs. conservative. Women's ordination vs. males only. Short geochronology vs. long. The meaning of the seals and the trumpets. Health nuts vs. junk food junkies. Canonization of Ellen White vs. Bible only. Evangelicals vs. Maxwellians vs. Vendians vs. 1888ers vs. Hartlanders vs. Charismatics vs. Knightists vs. Congregationalists vs. hierarchs.

What to do? One easy solution would be to have a prophet or church council issue a once-for-all definitive statement of belief. Anyone who disagreed would be shown the door. There are several problems with this approach. First, God has never operated this way in the past. Even though God spoke with Moses "face-to-face," (Exodus 33:11) the Pentateuch was not the definitive, once-for-all statement of truth. Isaiah came along, and Jeremiah and Daniel, and added substantially different material.

The church council report quoted in Acts 15 says nothing about the Sabbath, the sanctuary, the second coming or what happens when people die. And Ellen White gave no explicit guidance regarding lawsuits over the denominational name, Christian participation in Amway, or the use of baboon hearts in humans.

God doesn't answer our questions ahead of time. Which leaves us to study, argue, discuss, pray, listen, meditate. And this brings us to a second problem with the "just give us a definitive statement" approach: our characters develop through struggle. If God dispensed ready answers we would fail to reach our full potential, individually and corporately. We need the growing that happens as we respond to conflict honestly and courteously.

And Ellen White gave no explicit guidance regarding lawsuits over the denominational name, Christian participation in Amway, or the use of baboon hearts in humans.

As a pastor I didn't know how to resolve all the conflicts in my congregation. As a parent, I can't eliminate all the arguments among my children. And there is no tidy process which can effortlessly resolve all the conflicts in our denomination. But there is one ingredient of congregational and familial conflicts that is too often missing from denominational battles: face-to-face interaction.

How often do proponents of women's ordination invite an opponent home for Sabbath dinner? How often do Maxwellians and Evangelicals sit down and talk one-on-one? We talk about each other but not to each other. We avidly listen to rumors about "the opposition," but we don't go to lunch with them.

If we're going to make the present conflicts an occasion for spiritual growth, we must emphasize face-to-face contact. Secret meetings which exclude one party or another in a conflict are power plays that have no place in God's church. Even the simple failure to seek out those who are known to disagree with us is a failure to treasure the "at-one-ment" which is God's ideal for his people. If we are going to have a healthy church, we must insist that believers who disagree with each other talk with each other, listen to each other.

This kind of direct interaction will not magically extinguish all animosity. It certainly will not automatically resolve all disagreements. But it will change the nature of the discourse.

Have you ever sat down with someone who had bad ideas, asked them, "Why do you think the way you do?" and then just listened? Without arguing, without correcting? Have you ever just listened?

You'd be amazed at what you can learn, even from crazy people, heretics and fanatics. Yes, even from your enemies.

Given the complex nature of people and the universe, the disagreements won't go away. We won't find a common statement that perfectly expresses the faith of each of us. But through face-to-face communication and stubborn insistence on regarding others more highly than myself (Romans 12:10), we can build a community in which our disagreements will lead us closer to the truth and closer to each other.

John McLarty, Editor

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Can the Seventh-day Adventist Church survive the diversity which is breaking out in different areas of the United States?

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Schilt on Small Groups

I appreciated the courage and honesty of Clarence Schilt's appraisal of small groups. His disappointment has been repeated in many SDA churches. The small group idea of prayer, Bible study, fellowship and outreach is excellent and can be the basis for many ongoing applications, such as Sabbath School classes. But as a total superimposed program for the whole church it has built-in time limitations that should be recognized. In a typical medium-sized church (300–600) it takes 6 months to organize, promote and get going. A 50% participation is good; 70%, excellent: 100%, unheard of. With pastoral encouragement the next 18-30 months will be the most successful. Then while the program is going strong and people are still enthusiastic, it should be discontinued as an officially promoted project. Of course, if some groups want to continue, they may do so. But allowing members to drop the program before it becomes a burden helps them to rejoice and rally for it the next time around several years later. The above scenario also applies to the Parish Plan, which is another time-limited application of the small group idea.

Rolland Ruf
Collegedale, Tennessee

It could be that Clarence Schilt 's disappointment with small groups ("Small Groups: Dynamic or Not" (*AT* 5:5, pg. 14) stems from his desire to use them as an instrument of church growth. Persons who seek the intimacy of community in a small group are typically resistant to becoming the fuel for the fires of pastoral ambition.

The church growth movement that has captivated SDA clergy such as Schilt takes a "one size fits all" approach to small groups that sees the groups working in unison as "cells" of the larger congregational "body." The result is something like a unit of a pathfinder club complete with the same regimentation and a "counselor" to supervise. This is not acceptable to spiritually-starved adults looking for an alternative to the institutional diet.

I am a member of one group (12 members) that has faithfully met every other week for over seven years, and another (10 members) that has met for over six years. We have discussed over a dozen books in each group and have spent a year discussing the Sermon on the Mount. Members serve in a variety of tasks such as soup kitchens, literacy programs, working with at-risk adolescents, children's ministry, outreach to business associates, and missions. We have sponsored banquets for the homeless, financially support ministries, and support each other in prayer between meetings. These groups have also spun off three other flourishing groups. In summary, we seek Christ together and he has given us community and led us to service. We have come to understand that we must become Mary before becoming Martha.

I have heard and read many formulations for small groups including Pastor Schilt's. None of them mention the one essential ingredient that experience teaches is necessary for a successful small group—the hunger of each member for God. It can't be manufactured and you must come to the group with it. Seeking leads to finding, and believing leads to belonging. It doesn't work the other way around.

The first rule of a strong small group is to show up and shut up and wait for God. To come in to the circle with an agenda of anything but prayer is to come in with hands too clenched for the Holy Spirit to fill and use. Contrary to Schilt's thesis, it isn 't the group that is dynamic—it is the Holy Spirit. As the story of the road to Emmaus teaches us, Jesus loves to visit women and men questing and hungry for Him. To draw near to Him is to draw near to each other in accountability. Small groups last if they are built on the desire for lives anchored on the Rock. Those built on the sand of institutional expediency fail. The real threat to small group health is a desire to use them to build a big group.

Kent Hansen
Corona, California

Contrary to Schilt's thesis, it isn 't the group that is dynamic—it is the Holy Spirit.

Branson Heart Attack

Quoting from the first full paragraph of the middle column, "A close friend of Branson speculated that his heart

problems are the result of his absorbing the wrath of certain denominational leaders who have objected to some of the articles published in Spectrum."

Even though James gives Branson's response that shows such a comment is entirely out of place, why is such a statement published when the facts show that it isn't true? As the saying states, "once you ring a bell, you can't unring it." Why attempt to demean some unnamed leader of the S.D.A. church by quoting some unnamed so called friend of Branson?

I have known James since he was in grade school at Collegedale; he doesn't seem like the kind of person who would lower himself to use such a tactic as was used in this article. I personally feel some one else did this dirty trick by inserting this sentence in James' article.

I really think an apology is in order; such things should not be used for any so called benefit for any cause!

Lyle Hamel
Yucaipa, California

Jim Walters replies

I happily respond to Mr. Hamel.

I appreciate Lyle Hamel's generosity in giving me the out of blaming the supposedly problematic sentence on a dirty trickster. But the ethicist within me won't allow this.

Rather, I must kindly disagree with the criticism. I do not quote Branson as disagreeing with his friend's point; I portray Branson as agreeing, but saying that this is only one of the causes of his heart attacks.

Please allow me to quote the two relevant sentences in full: "A close friend of Branson's speculated that his heart problems are the result of his absorbing the wrath of certain denominational leaders who have objected to some of the articles published in *Spectrum*. Branson, however, says that the reasons for his problems are more complex than simply strain related to *Spectrum*. . . ." Then I list other factors he mentioned to me in a phone conversation.

Incidentally, to ensure that no error crept into this brief news story on a leading thought leader in the church, I ran the original article by Branson before publication.

Present and Future of the Church

I have enjoyed reading your unique magazine because it challenges me to think about the present and the future of my church, and because it covers hot current issues not found in other SDA publications. . . . I would like to state in black and white the main subject I would like to see included . . . partial-birth abortions.

Nic Samojluk
Loma Linda, California

Worthy Objective

I am writing to express my appreciation for the magazine and to tell you I look forward to each issue in '98. Your stated goal ". . . to give readers spiritual nurture that will feed the soul of today's educated, well trained professional—an Adventism for the open-minded thinking person"—this is a most worthy objective.

Kathleen Sroner
Potomac, Maryland

Integrity, Open-mindedness, Spirituality

We like *AT* very much, and value what we perceive as integrity, open-mindedness and spirituality.

H. Helmersen
Seattle, Washington

Open Forum

I appreciate the great work you are doing in providing an open forum for people to voice their opinions.

Herb Beck
Moberly, Missouri

Unbiased Articles

Appreciate the unbiased articles in your magazine.

Richard Dolph
Salem, Oregon

New Twist in Adventist History

Thank you for the nearly accurate article, "Rocky Mountain Conference Terminates Peck" by Colleen Moore Tinker (November-December 97 issue). One correction is necessary. But first a correction is needed in Tinker's companion article, "Rocky Mountain Conference Addresses Christ Advent Fellowship." The action voted by the Rocky Mountain Conference Executive Committee concerning Clay Peck's firing did not state that Peck had indicated an "unwillingness" to return tithe to the conference. The voted action, as publicized by Rocky Mountain Conference President Jim Brauer, correctly recognized that Peck had indicated his "willingness" to meet the conditions of employment by returning tithe to the conference.

Concerning the first article, Peck did not establish Christ Advent Ministries (CAM), the non-profit corporation formed to hold and lease church equipment to Christ Advent Fellowship (CAF). CAM was created by CAF's lay core group before Peck moved to Colorado from Maryland and in spite of Peck's warning that CAM's establish-

I personally feel some one else did this dirty trick by inserting this sentence in James' article.

ment probably wouldn't sit well with conference administrators. CAM was founded in response to Brauer's prediction that the experimental congregation might in the future have to pursue its mission of reaching "the burned, the bored and the bypassed" as an independent ministry "outside of the denomination."

CAM was capitalized with direct donations from its founders. It leased sound and video equipment, children's ministry supplies, and a truck and trailer to the portable congregation at below-market lease rates, enabling CAF to creatively and professionally produce seeker-sensitive, gospel-focused worship services each Sabbath at Grace Place from the start. No monies, except lease payments pursuant to the written lease agreement, were ever transferred from CAF, the conference-sponsored company, to CAM. Nor were monies belonging to these separate organizations ever commingled. Separate books and bank accounts were maintained. CAM offered to let the conference review its independent audit. CAM is a Colorado non-profit corporation recognized by the IRS as a tax-exempt religious and charitable organization. As its existence became public knowledge, some members of the congregation began contributing donations directly to it of their own initiative. This seemed to distress some conference officials.

Brauer asked that CAM's board of directors (on which Peck did not sit) dissolve the corporation, cease doing business with CAF or at least discontinue acquiring assets, while he acknowledged that a number of churches in the North American Division have set up 501 corporations like CAM to hold gifts of significant inheritances, trusts and estates. He also mentioned the Adventist health system and various independent ministries as having their own non-profit corporations. CAM's board of directors declined to dissolve CAM or stop acquiring church assets—possibly to eventually include real estate—whereupon Brauer informed the board that he could not support CAF's continued relationship with CAM and proceeded to ask the conference executive committee to dismantle CAF which resulted in Peck's termination.

This created a strange new twist in Adventist history. Whereas pastors have previously been fired for their own insubordination or apostasy, this perhaps marked the first time that a pastor has been terminated because laypersons in his congregation disobeyed a conference mandate.

Kent Campbell, J.D.
Loveland, Colorado
Co-founder, Christ Advent Fellowship/Grace Place
President, Christ Advent Ministries

...this perhaps marked the first time that a pastor has been terminated because laypersons in his congregation disobeyed a conference mandate.

Burdick 's "Open Letter"

What an excellent issue. The selection of articles and their variety, the format, the attractive layout, and the substance of the issues discussed all deserve a word of appreciation and commendation to the *AT* staff.

Bille Burdick's "An Open Letter to Adventist Conference Officials" merits special citation. Not only has she alerted us to some aspects of our history which may not be featured in our college denominational history courses nor in regular reporting in the *Review*. But these pages of history need to be made public! I would strongly recommend that Bille Burdick be invited to expand her brief report into a full-fledged article to be published in *AT* or *Spectrum*. We need to know the background for some of the "independent ministries;" their origins, their missions, the affiliation with the organized church.

Keep up the great work, and our special best wishes to John McLarty as he assumes the editorial helm.

Jim Kaatz, President
San Diego Chapter
Association of Adventist Forums

No Easy Answers

Your Nov-Dec issue has just arrived and as usual is thought provoking. Such problems. No easy answers that please everybody. Keep up the good work.

Carl Aagaard
Morehead, Kentucky.

Capitalizing Pronouns

I'm wondering why Jesus' Name and pronouns referring to God and Jesus are not capitalized in articles in your magazine?

Incidentally, I've read your magazine since its beginning and "think on" its articles. . . . Please answer my "English Composition" question.

Editor's reply: Years ago pronouns referring to the Deity were capitalized in most publications. Now, however, it is much more usual to capitalize only proper nouns. The distinction between upper and lower case, of course, did not exist in Biblical Hebrew and Greek.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
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3ABN and General Conference Sign a Joint Declaration

JIM STIRLING WITH ALBERT DITTES

After many months of uneasy efforts at reconciliation by representatives of the 3ABN TV network and the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, the two have been brought together and have signed a "joint declaration of commitment." In meetings held on November 9 and early February, the two groups aired their differences and then settled on the things they could agree on. Instrumental in the peacemaking process was the ASI—the Adventist-laymen's Services and Industries, to which the 3ABN and more than 100 other supporting ministries belong.

Dan Houghton, president of ASI, related in an interview how the reconciliation process took place. 3ABN (acronym for Three Angels Broadcasting Network) has been producing and airing programs since 1985 from its headquarters in West Frankfort, Illinois, with an independent funding base. For the church's evangelistic thrusts called "net 95" and "Net 96," the 3ABN organization provided extensive equipment and programming in the presentation and downloading of the programs from satellite. As the church's vision of world communication grew, evangelism leaders looked ahead to beaming TV gospel programs to ever larger audiences including not only America but also Europe and other parts of the world. General Conference leaders like Robert S. Folkenberg, president, relished the prospect of worldwide TV presentation but had misgivings about 3ABN's control of what was presented and wanted a stronger vote. In turn, the 3ABN staff, led by Danny Shelton, president, felt that General Conference interference would weaken their operation. The 3ABN board members are all Adventists. The board includes the Illinois Conference president and one representative each from the North American Division and the General Conference, but the board is dominated by people who are not employed by the denomination.

A number of sources indicated that the problem centered in mutual distrust. According to Houghton, Folkenberg was advised by church leaders in other parts of the world that TV programs prepared for American audiences would not fly in their countries. If the country was mostly Buddhist, for instance, then the programming would have to be "contextualized," adapted to the culture. Folkenberg thought the 3ABN group would insist on its own agenda, and the 3ABN staff thought the General Conference wanted to appropriate the whole operation.

But Houghton saw that at base the two sides were really aiming at the same goal—presenting the gospel to the world. So he arranged for small, confidential meetings at which representatives from both groups came to spell out their hopes and fears. The conflict was intense, the distrust deep. But the participants were able to forgive each other and build a measure of trust and respect. One of the participants attributed the success to prayer. The participants agreed on new policy and issued a joint declaration of commitment. The declaration said in part, "We believe that our shared commitment to world evangelism compels us to seek ways to cooperate in the task of reaching the world for Christ. We believe that more can be accomplished to hasten the Lord's return through cooperation in an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence." The declaration spells out the expectations of both groups, including the endorsement of the General Conference for the programming and distribution work of 3ABN, and a mechanism for working out the resolution of issues where there might be differences of opinion.

Given the strong personalities involved and the months of rumor and real disagreement, the reconciliation is a noteworthy achievement. There are certain to be disagreements in the future, but this peacemaking process sets a healthy precedent for handling conflict between Adventists.

General Conference Makes Global Satellite Links

ALBERT DITTES

Besides recently signing an agreement with 3ABN, The General Conference is also establishing other media connections. Recently the GC signed on as official supporter of Safe TV. Safe TV is the motto of KSBN-TV based in Springdale, Arkansas, and serves the northwest corner of the state including Fayetteville, Rogers, and Bentonville. The Governor of Arkansas recently proclaimed a statewide "Safe television for all ages day." Its nationwide distribution package offers religious and secular programs, 20 percent of them Adventist.

Safe TV operates on a different philosophy from 3ABN. "Our approach is to penetrate the secular market with [programming for] family needs," says Carlos Pardeiro, president and CEO of Safe TV. "That is the way to open doors to spiritual matters. I feel this is excellent strategy because a large segment of the population has not yet been penetrated. My show-business background tells me people not yet ready for spiritual things won't watch religious programming. *Lifestyle Magazine* is the only ministry we [the church] have to the non-Christians. The General Conference is not interested in taking over Safe TV. They strongly believe we preach the gospel to the world."

Pardeiro plans to run what he calls "the best the Adventist Church has to offer"—*It Is Written*, *Lifestyle Magazine*, Dwight Nelson, Doug Batchelor and the Spanish *It Is Written*. He describes his network's programming as 80 percent

secular and 20 percent religious. He says his relationship with the General Conference is a "mutual commitment to accomplishing the global mission of the church" signed in a "harmonious, cooperative spirit."

"We have no official General Conference blessing," he says. "They know us as committed Seventh-day Adventists."

Pardeiro himself serves as head elder of his local congregation, as president of the Southwestern Union chapter of the Association of Self-Supporting Institutions (ASI), and as vice chairman of both the Spanish Voice of Prophecy board and the North American Division Spanish Media Committee.

Recent issues of the *Adventist Review* and several of the union publications have run advertising sections describing Safe TV and explaining that Echo Star Satellite Company will distribute its programming. To receive it, one must buy two 18-inch digital satellite dishes from Echo Star. Thereafter the monthly fee is $29.95 each for the sacred and the secular packages. Included in the secular package are The History Channel, CNN, and Discovery.

"I don't want to be in a religious ghetto," Pardeiro says.

He receives about 40 calls a day from questioners and subscribers. People can order the service by dialing 1-888-SAFE-TV1. An answering service at Andrews University processes the requests.

"We relate to Safe TV like we do [to] all other supporting ASI organizations," says Cyril Miller, vice president for evangelism, North American Division. "They agreed to carry 16 hours a week of Adventist programming on one satellite, most of it from our media center. One [of the satellites] carries entertainment, the other religious programming on Sunday afternoons. We regard [Safe TV] as complementary. We produce the programs, they transmit. They bought advertising space in the Review and union papers. ASI organizations do that all the time."

The General Conference has also been establishing new international broadcasting contacts. It began with a cooperative agreement with 3ABN in which 3ABN transmitted Net 96 to Europe. "They provided a room for the translators, we provided the equipment," says Philip Follett. "We paid the transportation, board and room for the translators to go to the 3ABN studios. They used their services to transmit the signals."

Follett expects that this station will eventually carry the official name of Adventist Satellite Services (ADSAT).

The second step in the global communication program began in September, 1996. A major Brazilian donor made possible the signing of a 10-year contract with a company owning satellites over the equator and capable of transmitting hemisphere-wide signals. "We can own an uplink station," Follett says, "but very few people can afford a satellite."

The Brazilian donor leased a transponder, then helped provide an uplink station on property which his company owned. Operating the satellite uplink and transponder 24 hours a day proved to be too costly for the South American Division to manage. Consequently, the three divisions in the hemisphere—South America, North America, and Inter America—are operating the uplink station now. Follett expects that this station will eventually carry the official name of Adventist Satellite Services (ADSAT).

Receiving ADSAT programs requires a dish and digital-system receiver for decoding, according to Follett. The church and the Brazilian donor are sharing the costs of equipping churches with the proper satellite dishes.

With the equipment in place, ADSET will promote evangelistic meetings in the churches. "We plan to reach the public through the church," Follett says. "We invite them to come to church. Once they start coming to church, they are more committed. That's not to diminish the distribution to the homes. We are not abandoning it. But baptisms are greater if the people come to church."

Follett further says the system has already been effective in evangelism. He tells about a South American layman who invited people to meetings received by a local satellite dish. He raised up a 50-member church as a result.

Immediate plans for ADSET include the following:

- In May, 1998, an uplink station in Soweto, South Africa will broadcast evangelistic meetings to 400 downlink sites spread all across Africa.
- An uplink station transmitting to a satellite hovering over the equator distributes programs like *It Is Written*, *Amazing Facts*, and documentaries about ADRA to the entire Western Hemisphere 24 hours a day. These programs will eventually be done in four languages simultaneously.
- Another uplink will send the Dwight Nelson Net '98 meetings—originating in Berrien Springs, Michigan—to an earth station in Europe. This transmitter will then bounce the signal on to another satellite over the Indian Ocean, directing the gospel to Africa, India, Central Asia, and the Middle East and on to a Pacific Rim satellite covering Australia, Japan, China and the Pacific Islands.

Follett also envisions the system to conduct workshops for local churches and even in offering formal education degrees—especially in places like Africa where political upheavals have closed several Adventist schools.

Retirement Fund Revised Again

ALBERT DITTES

The North American Division Retirement Fund would be in good shape if North American Adventists were giving $650 million a year in tithe. The reality is, however, that the 1996 NAD tithe amounted to $507.4 million. Consequently, only $52 million of the needed $65.8 million went to the retirement fund. Investment income paid the balance.

Chronic monetary shortfalls have forced a freeze on the present retirement plan by the year 2000. The next generation of retirees will experience some retirement plan downsizing, giving them the option of investing their own retirement account and making personal contributions to it.

In an effort to compact the retirement fund, the following measures are already in place:

- Educational assistance to dependents of newly retired conference workers has been cut.
- Starting in 2003, the normal retirement age of 65 will gradually roll back in the same way the Social Security system is rolling back. In 2003 the retirement age will be 65 years and two months, and each subsequent year the retirement age will increase two months until it levels off at age 67 by 2024.
- Early retirees—those quitting work at age 62—will not receive health care benefits until they are eligible for Medicare. Besides, retirees will be penalized .5 percent in benefits for every month they are short of normal retirement age or 40 years of service, "whichever yields the greatest monthly benefit," according to the policy. "In cases where an employee qualifies for an early retirement prior to January 1, 2000, but does not retire until later, no reduction in benefits due to early retirement shall apply."

Under the old plan, an employee could be entitled to benefits based on 25 years of service, and service over 40 years yielded an increase in benefits. Now, additional years of service over 40 years will not mean extra money.

The North American Division approved these changes at its 1997 year-end meeting.

"We must meet our retirees' needs from within our flow of funds," says Del Johnson, associate administrator of North American Division Retirement Plans. "If the tithe would go up to $650 million, that would make a huge difference. But we aren't counting on that. Instead, we have adopted this new plan to stop the spiraling increase in costs."

During 1996, 766 people checked into the retirement plan, and 503 went off the plan. Because a big influx of people entered denominational employment in 1970, a bulge of new retirees will join the system in 2010. To meet the increased needs, conference contributions to the fund have increased .25 percent a year since 1992 and will maximize at 8.55 percent of tithe at the end of 1998, according to the working policy figures. "We don't want to go above 8.55 percent," Johnson says. "We hope for a reduction in costs in 2000 when the plan freezes." (An additional two percent of the tithe goes to pay medical benefits for retirees. In 1996, conferences thus contributed 10.25 percent of tithe to the retirement fund.)

Those retiring before 2000 will continue to get paid under the present system, which is funded by tithe contributions from all conferences and employing institutions. After that, the new retirees will be "fully funded" under a new system. Employers will put money based on employees' salaries into accounts designated especially for them. The employees will then have the option of contributing a certain percentage of their salaries to their retirement fund if they wish, and the conference will match these personal contributions up to a certain percent.

"This will put us on a firm footing," Johnson says. "Retirees can be assured the funds are there and will have total control over investing them. If the investments work out, they could get more than they would under the present system."

The conference calls this a "defined contribution plan." To qualify for the benefits, a person will start work for the denomination before reaching age 55 and serve at least 10 years.

Division administrators estimate the new plan will streamline things over the long haul, with models indicating that the old plan costs will decline after 20 years.

"For the immediate future, the curve is working against us," Johnson says. "Our tithe base is already broad. We just need to make it broader."

Now, additional years of service over 40 years will not mean extra money.

Correction

The following is a correction to the article "GC Releases 1996 Statistical Report" by Albert Dittes in the November/December, 1997 issue of *Adventist Today*.

The figure $170.31 designated tithe-per-capita should read tithe-and-offerings-per-capita. Similarly, the all-time high figure of $202.32 in 1981 was also tithe and offerings per capita for the world church. Also, the $1.889 billion figure designated total tithes for the world church should read $1.371 billion total tithes and offerings for the world church.

We apologize for the errors.

A Tribute to Paul Landa

RAYMOND COTTRELL

On November 10, 1997, the world lost Paul Landa, a person who modeled love for God and his fellow men. It was a pleasure to be his friend. He reflected sincere concern for the well-being and happiness of everyone he encountered on his journey through life.

Paul Landa was a world-class scholar and an internationally recognized authority in his field, the history of Christianity. He was supremely dedicated to his church and to La Sierra University, where he taught for twenty-two years. He was a teacher's teacher who earned the respect and appreciation of his students and made his classes never-to-be-forgotten learning experiences.

In addition to his responsibilities at La Sierra University, Dr. Landa did strategic planning consulting for Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, United Church of Christ, and Seventh-day Adventist colleges and universities. He did guest lectures, visiting professorships, and extension course offerings for the University of California as well as for twelve overseas colleges and universities. He conducted history study tours in Europe, Australia, and the Near and Far East. He published several books and contributed chapters and articles for scores of publications. He was a member of eighteen professional organizations and the recipient of eight professional awards.

Dr. Arthur Patrick, a fellow Australian and colleague in church history, writes of Paul Landa: "We were thrilled with his passion for Christ and the gospel, intrigued by his insights into great minds, and moved by his profound knowledge of pivotal events. Adventism and La Sierra owe Paul Landa much, for the way in which he mined biblical and historical truth, and the debt is even greater for the integrity and skill with which he shared his findings as a teacher and scholar."

Faith

BY G.A. STUDDERT KENNEDY
REVISED BY PAUL LANDA, AS READ AT HIS FUNERAL

How do I know that God is good? I don't. I gamble like a man. I bet my life
Upon one side in life's great war. I must; I can't stand out. I must take sides.
The man who is a neutral in this fight is not a man.
He's bulk and body without breath. I want to live, live out, not wobble through
My life somehow, and then into the dark.
I must have God.

This life's too dull without, too dull for aught but suicide. What's man
To live for else? Well—God's my leader, and I hold that He
Is good, And strong enough to work His plan
And purpose out to its appointed end. I am no fool; I have my reasons for
This faith, but they are not the reasonings,
The coldly calculated formulae of thought divorced from feeling.
They are true, too true for that. There's no such thing as thought
Which does not feel, if it be real thought that pleads and pulses in my very veins,
The blue blood of all beauty, and the breath of life itself.

I see what God has done, what life in this world is.
I see what you see, this eternal struggle in the dark. I see the foul disorders,
And the filth of mind and soul, in which men, wallowing
Like swine, stamp on their brothers till they drown
In puddles of stale blood and vomitings of their corruption.

This life stinks in places, 'tis true, yet scent of roses and of hay
New mown comes stealing on the evening breeze,
And through the market's din, the bargaining
Of cheats, who make God's world a den of thieves,
I hear sweet bells ring out to prayer, and see the faithful kneeling by the
Calvary of Christ. I walk in crowded streets where men
And women, mad with lust, loose-lipped and lewd,
Go promenading down to hell's wide gates;
Yet have I looked into my mother's eyes,
And seen the light that never was on sea or land,
The light of Love, pure Love and true,
And on that Love I bet my life. I have to choose. I back the scent of life
Against its stink. That's what faith works out at
Finally.

I know not why the Evil. I know not why the Good, both mysteries
Remain unsolved, and both insoluble. I know that both are there, the battle set,
And I must fight on this side or on that. I can't stand shivering on the bank.
I plunge headfirst. I bet my life on Beauty, Truth, and Love, not abstract but
Incarnate Truth, not beauty's passing shadow but its Self,
Its very self made flesh, Love realized. I bet my life on Christ—Christ Crucified.

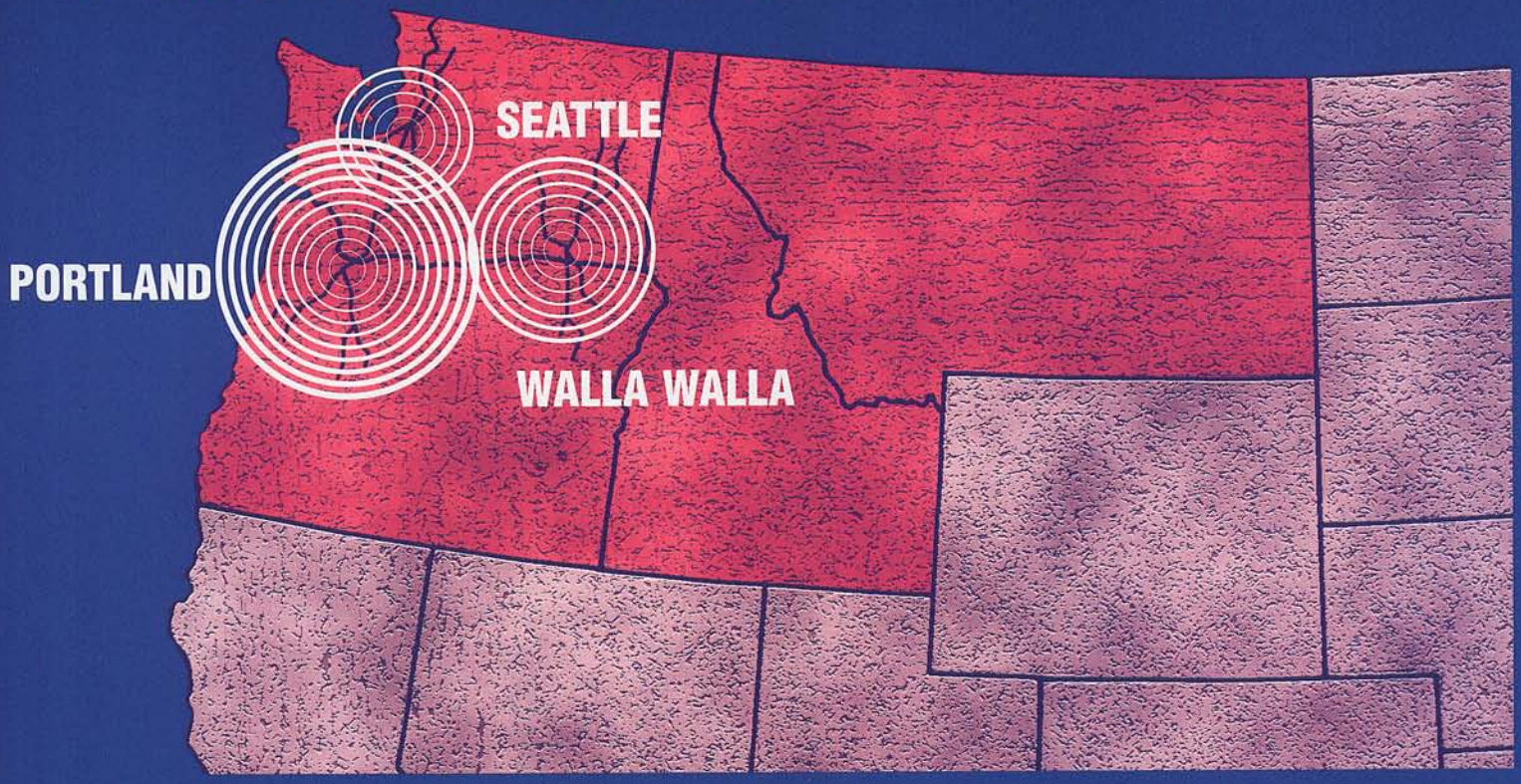
I look upon that body, writhing, pierced
And torn with nails, and see the battlefields of time, the mangled dead,
The gaping wounds, the sweating, dazed survivors straggling back,
The widows worn and haggard,
Still dry-eyed because their weight of sorrow will not lift
And let them weep. I see all history pass by, and through it all
Still shines that face, the Christ Face, like a star
Which pierces drifting clouds and tells the Truth.

They pass, but it remains and shines
Untouched, a pledge of that great hour which surely comes
When storm winds sob to silence, fury spent
To silver silence,
And the moon sails calm and stately through the soundless seas of peace.

So through the clouds of Calvary—there shines His face, and I believe that
Evil dies, and Good lives on, loves on, and conquers all—
All war must end in peace. These clouds are lies. They cannot last.
The blue sky is the truth. For God is Love. Such is my Faith, and such
My reasons for it, and I find them strong enough.

And you? You want to argue?
Well, I can't. It is a choice.
I choose the Christ.

STRESS FRACTURES In the Northwest



During recent years, controversies over doctrine, practice, theology, and church structure have rocked the Pacific Northwest. These controversies have had various results ranging from investigating the theology faculty at Walla Walla College to pastors leaving denominational employment and leading independent churches.

But the Northwest is not the only place these upheavals are happening. Pastors, laypeople, and conference officials across North America are struggling to maintain denominational identity while allowing for diversity in personal theology and practice. And in several cases, such as the Congregational Seventh Day Adventist Church in Wahington, Bridge City in Oregon, Grace Place in Colorado, and Damascus Road in Maryland, these struggles have resulted in ruptures.

In this issue we examine two recent events that characterize the strain in the North Pacific Union and reflect the struggles across the North American Division. These two events are the publication of the final report from the commission appointed to evaluate the Walla Walla College religion faculty, and the publication of NPUC Jere Patzer's "State of the Union" address.

These events give a context to the news story also in this issue about an Oregon pastor resigning over theological differences with the church.

THEOLOGICAL CONTROVERSY

Strains in North Pacific Union

JAMES WALTERS

A year ago the North Pacific Union's top administrators and the Walla Walla College (WWC) religion faculty met in two emotionally charged sessions to discuss differences. Then last spring the WWC board set up a subcommittee of the board (known as the Commission) to examine specific charges. The board accepted the Commission's report last fall, and asked the college to respond by March of this year.

Meanwhile, Patzer gave a most significant "State of the Union" address entitled "The Challenge We Face," which was published in his union's official organ, the *Gleaner* (January 12 issue), and has since had rather wide circulation beyond the North Pacific Union (NPU).

The Commission's report, given its unanimous endorsement by its 9 members who span the ideological spectrum of Adventism, is necessarily moderate in tone and substance. By contrast, the Patzer paper is a classic study in impassioned conservative rhetoric. The Commission report is conciliatory and dialogical in tone; Patzer's tone is strident and dogmatic.

Although both pieces have their origin in the Religion Faculty controversy, neither—to the credit of each—makes the faculty the single focus. Rather, their focus is the larger issue of differing ideological views within the church.

Commission Report

Context. Although the origin of the controversy is rumors about the religion faculty, the Commission document only gets to those specifics on page 29—and exonerates the faculty of all charges (e.g., agnosticism, alcohol use, support of homosexuality, a pizza and soda communion). Rather, the Commission states that the anecdotal incidents are merely "symptomatic of much larger trends."

Not restricted to Adventism, it cites similar concerns in other academic settings and in the larger Christian church. And significantly, the first and largest section (7 pages) is labeled "historical context." This portion of the report charts society's transition from modern to postmodern times. [See "The Commission" on pages 14–15.]

Modernity rested securely on science as a source of true knowledge. The postmodern era emphasizes how the coincidences of history have influenced everything that we used to call sacred or even true—even science—and now society accepts a pluralism that "obliges people to respect all views and honor no truths" (p. 7). The Commission sees this postmodern stance as particularly strong in religious studies programs across America. They quote one religion scholar:

> "Even tentative judgments between various conceptions of the sacred are ruled out in the name of academic and constitutional scruples against religious indoctrination."

Theological Ambivalence

The Commission contends the WWC religion faculty have been influenced by such contemporary relativistic thinking, in that such thinking is part of today's academic ethos. However, what the Commission draws from this stance is paradoxical. On the one hand it faults the faculty and calls it to resist and be "immune" from such thinking; on the other hand it suggests the fault lies with the "ultra-conservative" wing of the denomination and with "Biblically illiterate" and "spiritually immature" students who aren't ready for serious religious study. (the Commission states that the majority of students are enthusiastic about their religion classes, and that some are "extremely appreciative.")

The Commission underscores that Adventism does not have a formal creed, and it has a more liberal view of inspiration than inerrantists, but it calls for the religion faculty to distance themselves from the critics of inerrantists. Further, it calls for the religion faculty to "inculcate" traditional Adventist beliefs and possibly even to practice "religious indoctrination" (p. 21). Yet it also contends for "the need to wean people away from a verbal inspiration model of Bible study" (p. 16).

Call it fence-straddling or compromise, but by whatever name the Commission report does portray a realistic moderate position—it is more characterized by ambiguity than stridency and unequivocal pronouncements.

Reconciliation

Above all, the Commission report is a clarion call to Christian reconciliation. It advocates dialogue between the two parties as the "only way for the controversies to be brought to closure" (sic).

However, mere resolution is not enough. "There must also be reconciliation and restoration of trust....There is a broad climate of suspicion, and a climate of suspicion causes all parties to put the worst interpretation on data." The dispute will remain unresolved until "those who may have developed suspicions or animosities between them, have had the opportunity to make personal reconciliations and amends, and have, in fact, done so."

The Inquiry and Recommendations

Although the Commission's basic philosophical/theological content is fundamental, its specific inquiry and recommendations are notable—and revealing.

The board is a college's final authority, and it may—if it so chooses—examine serious accusations about college faculty. However, such action is unusual because such scrutiny is generally done by the college administration, leaving the board to concern itself with more global issues.

"The governing board of an institution of higher education, while maintaining a general overview, entrusts the conduct of administration to the administrative officers, the president and the deans....The board should undertake appropriate self-limitation" (*American Association of University Professors, Policy Documents and Reports*, 1984, p. 108).

Perhaps the WWC board took this inquiry into its own hands because it lacked confidence in the college's administration, given that the administration has stood by its faculty of religion in earlier discussions. The Commission recommends the college recognize that a majority of its graduates will work for employers other than the denomination, and therefore needs to update its mission statement. However, other recommendations, if followed, would involve the Board in highly unusual activities. The Commission recommends the Board "oversee clarification and restatement of its expectations of the religion department." That is customarily an administrative function. And it is quite unusual for the Board to see that its goal is accomplished by setting up a task force, even specifying its members (mostly conference administrators and laypersons).

It would be even more unusual for the Board to delve into intra-department business and specify a biennial rotation of the chairperson and mandate a non-faculty search committee (only the religion chair would be included) to fill future vacancies. The stated need is to hire more theologically conservative faculty members, so the department more adequately reflects the pluralism of the Union constituency. Standard procedure is for a department faculty to search for and recommend a new faculty member to administration, then if administration agrees, the name goes to the board for a vote. For the Commission and Board to delve so deeply into the college's procedures shows either a lack of knowledge or a deep distrust. Such behavior is particularly surprising since faculty governance at WWC is stronger than at any other Adventist institution of higher education.

The State of the Union

President Jere D. Patzer's address, originally preached to his executive committee and pastors throughout the union, is rhetorically strong. He touches on favorite Adventist themes—for example, unquestioning belief in the Bible, Adventist specialness, and deception in the end-time. However, in print the address is less impressive. It is conceptually weak.

For instance, Patzer begins by citing a CFO who says that knowledge will double every five years. Change is also affecting Adventism. A cited scholar says Adventism has struggled to preserve traditional beliefs in a changing world. Patzer: "If being aware of change is of number one importance, then responding to it must be the logical next step. Meanwhile, from within, the authority and integrity of the organization are being challenged, and theological counterfeits and aberrations are multiplying."

With Patzer's observation that change is accelerating in the world, you might expect that he would have something to say about how we should lead that change. Instead the rest of the article sounds like a plea to resist all change. We have the truth. We have a divinely inspired organization engaged in a vital mission. Change nothing. Full speed ahead.

According to Patzer his thesis is simple: "I believe God raised up our prophetic church by—

*inspiring its theology,

*which drives its mission,

*made possible by its organization."

"All three of these elements are intrinsically linked. All three are divinely ordained. Diminishing any part will cause the whole to collapse or possibly implode with drastic consequences."

The rest of the address is a delineation of these three themes. The major point of Patzer's first theme, theology, is the need to accept the Bible simply as it reads. Patzer acknowledges some would label him a fundamentalist, but he neither agrees or disagrees with such a label as he goes right on to another topic.

In his discussion of theology, besides the authority of the Bible and Ellen White, Patzer refers to creation and the flood, Sunday laws, "the 27 fundamental beliefs" and the remnant church. Conspicuously absent is reference to Jesus, salvation, the gospel, justice, grace, the atonement, peacemaking or relationship with God. Still Patzer is confident that God has given us "a unique, unified and precious theology."

Patzer is less sweeping in his claims regarding organization. He says that God gave us a practical organization. And he affirms that "the organizational structure was inspired by the same Designer that inspired our doctrines." Yet he acknowledges that Adventism can "become bureaucratic and over institutionalized."

Patzer does acknowledge that the church is "faulty and defective," but he never suggests any area where change might be appropriate. Instead he challenges his reader: "Just try to name a denominational structure of which you would rather be a part."

Mission

Patzer does not clearly define what the mission of the Adventist church is. The mission program "is phenomenal" and includes colleges, academies, elementary schools, and youth camps, but there is not much talk about the spiritual content of that mission. In spite of "critics," "cynics," "obstructionists" and "revisionists," God's church is "standing in the gap, making a difference. It's tough. These are difficult times."

Patzer's address can be faulted as long on assertion and short on cogent argument. More importantly it appears to be rooted more deeply in concern to preserve the organization than to serve the world. However, one big strength is its tone of conviction: he offers hope in a cynical age and he offers the surety of long-held beliefs. Adventist moderates and particularly liberals are strong on insightful, cool analysis of the church and her beliefs, but they lack the passion that stirs the world-weary soul.

It would be a miracle if the moderate Commissioners' plea for genuine dialogue between antagonists in the North Pacific Union could come about. I pray that it will, and that contemporary Adventists will demonstrate that miracles still happen.

The Commission Reports

On Walla Walla College Investigation

Ed. Note: The conclusions of "The Commission" at WWC are significant for the college and its friends. The Commission's placement of the controversy at WWC within a larger historical/philosophical context is significant for all of us who wrestle with the tension between faithfulness to "The Truth" as we have received it and commitment to truth wherever it leads us. The excerpts below exemplify The Commission's understanding of the historical/philosophical issues.

This report constitutes the final report of the Walla Walla College Board appointed subcommittee known as "The Commission." The primary reason for the establishment of the Commission was to study complaints and issues surrounding the Theology Department....

It is true to say that the Commission found some very significant issues. Most of them have been in process over considerable lengths of time. Few of them are new, and few unique to WWC. The issues found can generally be found in other academic settings, and in the Christian community at large....

A major reason for the problems that led to the establishment of the Commission is failure to find a way to work through issues of disagreement to a point of satisfactory resolution. This statement is not the assigning of fault as much as it is a statement of fact. None of the sides in this controversy were able to find a process that allowed progress to the point of resolution. Some of the issues are thorny and complicated, but dialogue to the point of resolution is the *only* way for the controversies to be brought to closure.

The Commission is also quite persuaded that for Christians, there is a higher standard for which to strive than merely describing and resolving issues. There must also be reconciliation and restoration of trust between those who have been caught up in the controversies. There is a broad climate of suspicion, and a climate of suspicion causes all parties to put the worst interpretation on data. Only the restoration of trust will allow confidence to return. Therefore, the Commission believes this matter of contention cannot be regarded as resolved until those who may have developed suspicions or animosities between them have had the opportunity to make personal reconciliations and amends, and have in fact, done so. There is concern on the Commission that parties on the edges of the controversies who have no firsthand knowledge, who have never spoken to the principals, will not accept its report and findings if the findings do not fit their preconceptions, choosing, instead, to perpetuate the controversy. This would be a most unfortunate happenstance as it will put the well-being of the College in jeopardy....

Our church has not been immune from the influences that have impacted the larger Christian church, particularly in the United States during this century. Modernism and pluralism have impacted all of us to one degree or another. The secularization of society provided the church with the opportunity to provide mean-

The prospect of adopting the pluralism rampant in society poses the prospect of destroying Adventism as we have known it.

ing, hope and purpose in a world whose despair is expressed in the final words of a recently released song, "I am looking for the truth, and there is none." It also faces the Church, and those who educate within its bounds, with some considerable challenges. The Church claims to represent Christ as the answer to this world's need in the context of a movement that holds to the Word of God as truth. Society, led by academia, often contends there is no such thing as truth, that any search for it is vain. This context the Commission found significant in a fundamental way....

We are living in what has been characterized as the postmodern era. The impact of modernism on Western thought has been felt in every area of life and in every academic discipline. The Enlightenment provided a scientific world view that for a time provided security in the certainty of science. This certainty is waning today and has left a prevailing pluralism in its wake that suggests that there is no objective truth to pursue. This has implications for approaches to biblical study. D. A. Carson in his book *The Gagging of God* says:

> This is by far, the most serious development. Philosophical pluralism has generated many approaches in support of one stance: namely, that any notion that a particular ideological or religious claim is intrinsically superior to another is necessarily wrong. The only absolute creed is the creed of pluralism. No religion has the right to pronounce itself right or true, and the others false, or even (in the majority view) relatively inferior.

The implications of these developments are many and varied....A look at recent developments may shed light on some of the potential things that may be driving the issues that we are confronting in contemporary Adventism. The current climate in our postmodern era is clearly one in which pluralism obliges people to respect all views and honor no truths. While Adventists have deep respect for others' views we nonetheless cherish biblical truths and believe they are to be proclaimed. The prospect of adopting the pluralism rampant in society poses the prospect of destroying Adventism as we have known it. This prospect is particularly alarming when we observe the experience of some other Christian communities, to which we now turn our attention....

In his introduction, Bradley J. Longfield [*The End of Liberal Theology*, 1995] describes the serious crisis facing the mainstream churches in America. Citing the huge membership losses that have occurred during the last few decades, he concludes:

"Though the reasons for this hemorrhage in membership are many and complex, one contributor to the decline noted by analysts is the nebulous doctrinal identity of the churches. In a quest for inclusiveness and relevance to the increasingly secular American culture, the mainstream churches have adopted a policy of doctrinal pluralism, thereby blurring their theological identities...Without clear theological boundaries distinct from the ideals of the surrounding culture, the churches have been increasingly subject to cultural currents. Moreover, in the absence of a clearly articulated faith, many individuals can see little reason to join or stay in the mainline churches...The doctrinal diversity in the churches makes it difficult for the mainstream bodies to articulate clearly their theological beliefs. Adherence to doctrinal pluralism, while maintaining institutional unity, has left the churches devoid of a clear theological voice."

Two of the key players in the Presbyterian controversy were William Sloane Coffin and J. Gresham Machen.... While for Machen history was a record of facts that remained true for all time, historicist thinkers understood history to be profoundly colored by the historian's perspective...

The two views of history did, in fact, impact doctrinal understandings and belief systems. Those like Machen believed the "facts" of the past were not merely interpretations but events that actually happened. Coffin and his colleagues, on the other hand, believed that the past, as such, was gone and that what contemporaries had were only memories of the past. History was necessarily a matter of interpretation...

These two views were obviously incompatible. Machen claimed that the facts of the Christian religion remain facts no matter whether we cherish them or not; they are facts for God; they are facts both for angels and for demons; they are facts now, and they will remain facts beyond the end of time. Variant interpretations of the virgin birth [for instance] were absurd. But Coffin argued just as adamantly that the description of events in the biblical narrative, historically conditioned as they were, were open to interpretation within the bounds of 'evangelical Christianity.' Thus, while he affirmed his belief in the incarnation, atonement, and resurrection, he insisted that this did not necessarily imply belief in the virgin birth, substitutionary atonement, or bodily resurrection. Operating with such different paradigms, the two simply talked past each other....

The point of this historical review is to point out there is a context to the disagreements being voiced. In the Commission's opinion, the matters outlined above are a significant part of the conflict surrounding the WWC Theology Department and contribute to the controversy.... Any solution to the theological controversies within Adventism will require some discussion and agreement on the issues touched on above.

Walla Walla College Religion Faculty Exonerated

AMY FISHER

Concluding seven months of work, the Commission on the Walla School of Theology presented their final report to the Walla College (WWC) Board of Trustees on December 16 in Portland, Oregon. The report absolved WWC faculty of all the specific charges against them, while at the same time identifying a number of significant issues that require attention and action.

The Commission was formed May 5, 1997, by the WWC Board of Trustees to investigate the controversies swirling around the WWC School of Theology. The conflict has a long history.

In the spring of 1994, Bruce Johnston, then president of the North Pacific Union Conference (NPUC), chaired a meeting between church officials and WWC faculty to discuss concerns about instruction in religion classes.

As a result of concerns expressed by church officials, several changes were made in the requirements for theology majors and incorporated in the 1994-95 WWC Bulletin. This year's senior theology class will be the first class to graduate under this new curriculum. "The test is the class that graduates this year. We need to be patient to let the new curriculum work things out," said Doug Clark, Dean of the School of Theology

According to Jere Patzer, current NPUC president and president of the WWC Board, since 1994 there has been an increased number of concerns voiced by former students, parents, constituents, and church leaders about the theology department of WWC. In response to this concern, on January 23, 1997, W. G. Nelson, WWC president, presided at a meeting in Portland, Oregon, which included the NPU conference presidents and WWC administrators and theology faculty. "That [meeting] was probably one of the hardest experiences that any of us went through," said Clark. For two hours the conference presidents detailed their concerns; then in the final half hour the faculty were asked to respond.

Amy Fisher is the editor of the the Walla Wala student newspaper, *The Collegian*.

April 15, 1997, the same individuals met again. Most participants felt this meeting was more balanced than the previous one. The WWC faculty suggested Patzer and Bryce Pascoe, secretary of NPUC, come to the WWC campus, visit classes and talk to the faculty individually. This happened April 29, 1997.

Clark cites this campus visit as the most helpful in the series of meetings between the two groups. Patzer and Pascoe discussed their concerns with individual faculty members. In this process, the faculty asked that the church officials question individuals only about what he/she believed and not about other faculty.

Ernest Bursey, professor of Biblical Studies, said "on the whole [we] had positive feelings about the personal interviews." Patzer, too, found these conversations helpful, but both he and Nelson felt that a Commission was the best way to resolve lingering misunderstandings and tension. According to Patzer, the Commission was set up "to confirm what is good, to correct what isn't and to determine what is rumor."

The nine-member commission included seven appointed by Patzer and Nelson with two additional people recommended by the board. The members were: Ron Anderson, businessman in Mountlake Terrace, Wash.; Alf Birch, Oregon Conference president; Wilfred Geschke, physician in Portland, Oregon; Jon Kattenhorn, physician in Boise, Idaho; Esther Littlejohn, business woman in Squim, Washington; Steve McPherson, Idaho Conference president; Bryce Pascoe, secretary of the Pacific Union Conference; Carlyle Raymond, pastor of Woodburn Spanish Church; David Thomas, senior pastor of the Walla Walla Village Church.

Between June and December, 1997, the Commission met 10 times to interview members of WWC faculty and staff, read letters of concern and investigate the issues surrounding them.

The meetings between the Commission and the WWC theology faculty were said to be very positive and productive. "Our conversations were positive, intense, and direct," Clark reported in an all-college meeting. According to Bursey, "the Commission did not come across as hostile. They were meeting with us to listen and to understand."

A few months into the investigation the Commission voted to "request of the theology department faculty voluntary written individual statements... attesting their beliefs in the basic core of Adventist beliefs to include the following: biblical authority, the creation week, the atonement of Christ, the prophetic remnant role of Adventism, the role and function of Ellen White, the

investigative judgment, the eschatological significance of the Sabbath, the Second Advent, the principle of tithing as practiced by SDAs. Though not a core belief, a personal statement on homosexuality is also requested."

The request puzzled the theology faculty. Clark told the faculty in an all-college meeting, "[The request] seemed out of character... we wondered how [our statements] would be used. We wanted to avoid a creedal statement." Patzer says the request was a tool to clear up misunderstandings. "We were not asking them to sign a creed." He said. These statements would simply provide more specific information.

In a meeting with the faculty, after the Commission's report had been published, Patzer said it is not enough for one to claim to believe in the 27 Fundamental beliefs as a tradition of the Adventist Church; it is necessary to make a personal statement that specifically outlines one's beliefs on the 27 Fundamental doctrines.

Patzer said it is not enough for one to claim to believe in the 27 Fundamental beliefs as a tradition of the Adventist Church; it is necessary to make a personal statement that specifically outlines one's beliefs on the 27 Fundamental doctrines.

October 15, 1997. In response to this request for voluntary individual written statements, the theology faculty wrote a letter to the Commission. The letter states: " . . . we are somewhat surprised, now, at the reception of this request for written responses. It doesn't seem to represent what the Commission has to this point been doing so carefully. We have been and continue to be willing to respond to all questions. At the same time, it concerns us how written responses . . . might be used in the future." The letter continues by requesting that the Commission accept the following statement as an expression of their beliefs.

"With profound respect and humility, we hold, with Ellen White and our other Adventist forebears, the Bible is our only creed. To the Bible and to the God who speaks through it, especially by means of the salvation offered through Jesus Christ, we are deeply committed. Our lives personally and professionally are wrapped up in and surrounded by the Seventh-day Adventist Church and our love for it, especially for its collegiate young men and women. We continue in our commitment to Seventh-day Adventist belief and practice as outlined in the 27 Fundamental Beliefs and their Preamble, including the church's prophetic mission to the world."

The letter was signed by all ten members of the WWC theology faculty and sent to the Commission and the board chair.

When the Commission released its report, the nine Commission members were unanimous in their findings of fact and their recommendations for future action.

Patzer declared the Commission "definitely did what we hoped for." The two major accomplishments he feels the report provided were to "reopen communication" and "bring a higher comfort level to the constituency" by "reestablishing WWC's credibility."

Reaction on campus was mixed. Following is a sampling of comment in the WWC student newspaper, *The Collegian*.

Roland Blaich, professor of history at WWC: "When people of sound reason and goodwill disagree, there is good reason for hope... We need to talk, we may disagree but we may understand each other... But the growing entry of fundamentalism into our church makes dialogue ever more difficult. Indeed, no dialogue is possible with fundamentalists because for them reason is not an option... If we are going to be a church community we need to come together as a community."

Beverly Beem and Dan Lamberton, professors of English: "If the Commission does nothing more than establish protocol and accountability for handling rumors, accusations and disagreements, it will have done a great service... It calls us to go beyond 'merely describing and resolving issues' to 'reconciliation and restoration of trust.' When we do this we can move from investigation to dialog, from Commission to conversation."

Dawn Lloyd, senior theology major: "I am afraid because the situation is unresolvable. Regardless of any decisions made, there will be people offended and/or disillusioned."

Jeremy Duerksen, junior theology major: "It makes me mad that teachers here are under the gun for being too liberal. I want an environment where questions are encouraged and I am forced to study for myself and not just slosh through school being spoon fed the fundamental doctrines of the Adventist church."

Doug Clark dissented from the Commission's definition of "Biblical Studies." For Clark using a "Biblical Studies" curriculum means immersing yourself in the text, letting the authors of the Bible help to guide one's study. Clark also corrected statements about how much "Adventist" course work was available. He reported there are four lower division classes that deal with and use basic Adventist beliefs, in addition to two upper division classes.

On January 9, 1998, a seven member Commission Response Committee was assigned to draft a response to the Commission report. The committee members are: Ernest Bursey, professor of Biblical Studies; Doug Clark, Dean of the School of Theology; Nancy Cross, assistant professor of English; June Ferguson, Student Activities Director; Glen Greenwalt, professor of Theology; Scott Ligman, assistant professor of biology, and Stephen Payne, vice president of admissions and marketing, who will serve as the committee chair. After the first three meetings, Shelley Schoepflin, senior humanities major, was added to the committee in response to several requests to allow student input.

"At the very heart of it," says Payne, "the response committee is asking the question; 'what is God's will for this school.'" The committee has clearly mapped out their mission: "To encourage the college to clarify its commitment to God's will, purpose and mission for this school as a Seventh-day Adventist Christian institution of higher education in light of the Commission Report."

The Board requested a response be presented at the WWC Board meeting on March 2, 1998.

The Challenge We Face

JERE PATZER

Ed. Note: This article is excerpted from a printed version of the "State of the Union" address delivered by Jere Patzer.

The Biblical account has never been more accurate when it says, "The Devil goes about as a roaring lion" (1 Peter 5:8). In fact, I noted with dismay recently the words of Ellen White: "The power of Satan now to tempt and deceive is ten-fold greater than it was in the days of the apostles" (White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:277).... As we realize that there is dynamic change taking place, we as a church must also have a whole new way of thinking. If being aware of change is of number one importance, then responding to it must be the logical next step. Meanwhile, from within, the authority and integrity of the organization are being challenged, and theological counterfeits and aberrations are multiplying....

Jere Patzer is president of the North Pacific Union Conference.

The challenges of today demand a timely responsiveness like never before. As church members, you and I better be prepared—despite the complexity and difficulty—to respond to the changes taking place in our church....

My thesis is simply this: I believe God raised up our prophetic church by inspiring its theology which drives its mission, made possible by its organization. All three of these elements are intrinsically linked. All three are divinely ordained. Diminishing any part will cause the whole to collapse or possibly implode with drastic consequences.

Let me defend this thesis:

OUR THEOLOGY

Our Protestant heritage gave us an inspired and corrected view of inspiration and revelation. This view was not complex or hard to understand.

I can never forget the classic line from the famous Green Bay Packers coach, Vince Lombardi, as he stood before his team, hoping to motivate them by emphasizing the basics. "Gentlemen," he said, "this is a football." He taught his players superlative execution in the context of basic fundamentals.

To adapt Lombardi's words: "Ladies and gentlemen, this is a Bible." This is God's inspired word. It doesn't merely contain His word to be evaluated, critiqued, dissected, or adapted because of scientific or archeological data—no matter how plausible, intellectually stimulating, or ego-gratifying that may appear....

Being led by the Holy Spirit and adhering to the authority of Scripture are never mutually exclusive. Furthermore when we need additional amplification, I know where we can find it. Most of us have a shelf full of those red books that need to be dusted off and used again. Admittedly in the past they have been abused and misused. But now they are unused, or as the author herself predicted, "made of none effect." It is a tragedy that when a conference president recently interviewed a senior theology major and asked him about Ellen White, he said, "Who is Ellen White?"...

Certainly the times have changed. Names and cities and people are different. But the core issues and the basic principles are identical. Do we really think that the God who inspired the great visionary Ellen White with the knowledge to start our health-care institutions, our educational institutions, or our church could somehow miss giving us sufficient knowledge for their current and future success? It was He who asked—actually commanded—us, to be the head not the tail. And he reminded us that those of this world are sometimes wiser and more sensitive to the truth than those who are supposed to be of the light.

Within God's word and the writings of Ellen White, I have found counsels and philosophies that will indeed make us the head—if we follow them. These are counsels that guarantee us success even when it appears that we are going against the most advanced or conventional human wisdom. They contain better information than any theological, archeological, or psychological book written.

Let's not apologize. Let's read them, get back to them, and yes, publicly quote them.

I sincerely believe that as we get back to the Bible and the works of Ellen White that we will find that they clearly and in a unified way predict our unique role in the challenge we face.

Today there are those who advocate a conditional eschatology, minimizing, if not eliminating, the threat of Sunday laws. They propose that the Sabbath will not be the final test and also that the beast of Daniel 7 has other more contemporary explanations than the

Catholic Church. Incidentally, not too many years ago, some of our people applied the beast to communism.

The facts are that anyone reading current literature like *The Keys of This Blood* or *The Woman Rides the Beast*, or who has traveled in Catholic countries can see the validity of Ellen White's statement in *The Great Controversy* that the Catholic Church remains unchanged. "And let it be remembered, it is the boast of Rome that she never changes...stealthily and unsuspectedly she is strengthening her forces to further her own ends when the time shall come for her to strike." (White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 581)....

Emphatically, the Lord gave this church its doctrines—yes, all 27—in a marvelously connected body....

God didn't just arbitrarily label us the Remnant. We have become the Remnant by the fact that virtually all other evangelical denominations have embraced or are in the process of embracing these views [higher criticism and pluralism]. Thus, they have, by default slid into modernism, post-modernism, and neo-orthodoxy. At the risk of sounding arrogant, we may be positioned as the only ones left to guard some of our unique and precious truths. Yet some forces in our church are strongly and intentionally pushing us to forsake our unique and sacred calling.

D. A. Carson, in his masterful book entitled *The Gagging of God*, addresses the issue of modernism/post-modernism as it relates to the increasingly popular theories of pluralism.

"In the religious field, this means that few people will be offended by the multiplying new religions. No matter how wacky...the media will treat them with fascination and even a degree of respect. But if any religion claims that in some measure other religions are wrong, a line has been crossed and resentment is immediately stirred up....

"Exclusiveness is the one religious idea that cannot be tolerated. Correspondingly, proselytism is a dirty word. Once cannot fail to observe a crushing irony: The gospel of relativistic tolerance is perhaps the most 'evangelistic' movement in Western culture at the moment, demanding assent and brooking no rivals." (Carson, *The Gagging of God*, p. 32-33)

OUR ORGANIZATION

Today the term "post denominationalism" is gaining credence. At the October 4, 1997, Promise Keepers Rally in Washington, D.C., nearly a million men cheered as Max Lucado proclaimed sectarianism a sin....

If as a church we were once guilty of emphasizing Adventism at the expense of a love for Christ, we must not now fall into the other ditch of raising a generation of Adventists with no commitment to the God-given role of Adventism.

But friends, this church, even with its theology intact, would not be a great church without its organizational structure. One cannot work or even travel around the world church without seeing the necessity of our organization and monetary system.

God raised up the Adventist church to accomplish something no other denomination is prepared to do. You see, when God gave our church its theology, he also gave us a practical organizational structure. Should it be adapted to reflect the use of modern technology? Absolutely. We should streamline, eliminate duplication and "right size" our organization wherever practical....

I am painfully aware that we can become bureaucratic and over institutionalized. There is a possibility that our corporate church can become overly corporate in appearance and function. With world-class education and medical institutions, publishing houses, and conference/union offices, there is the danger that we begin getting our self-image from our institutions rather than our mission. And these outstanding and irreplaceable institutions become an end in themselves rather than a means to an end....

So there are cautions we need to hear, but the words of Ellen White in 1893 are still valid: "Let none entertain the thought, however, that we can dispense with the organization... It has been built up by his direction through much sacrifice and conflict. Let none of our brethren be so deceived as to attempt to tear it down, for you will thus bring in a condition of things that you do not dream of. In the name of the Lord, I declare to you that it is to stand, strengthened, established and settled." (*Bulletins*, Jan. 29-30, 1893)

OUR MISSION

When God had given our church a clear system of theology and guidance in the erecting of the organizational structure, we were poised for our prophetic mission. Yes, a mission that is different from that of any other denomination....

So here we are as God's last day remnant church, standing in the gap, making a difference....

I praise God for his plan. He raised up our prophetic church by: inspiring its *theology*, which drives its *mission*, made possible by its *organization*.

And incredibly he has entrusted all that into feeble hands like yours and mine. I am humbled and eternally grateful for this realization. I pray that we will be willing to accept this challenge.

I close with a thought from Ellen White:

"In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and his teaching in our past history." (White, *Life Sketches*, p. 196)

You see, when God gave our church its theology, he also gave us a practical organizational structure.

Doctrine and Theology: What's the Difference?

JOHN MCLARTY

In seminary, church ministries professor Don Jacobson called me a maverick. Ivan Blazen remarked about my independence when I wrote my final exam in his class. After writing several pages exegeting a passage in Romans, I then wrote something like, "The above is the 'right' answer. But I don't believe it. My understanding is as follows." Then I argued again for a position Blazen had vigorously opposed in class. Other students reported to me that one day when I was absent, history professor Mervyn Maxwell announced to the class that I'd never get a job as an Adventist pastor. And since then colleagues and employers have confirmed these early diagnoses, using phrases like "off the wall," "marching to a different drummer," "different."

So why am I glad to be a denominational Seventh-day Adventist? One reason is my understanding of the relationship between theology and doctrine. More on that in a moment, but first several vignettes:

I got a phone call the other day from a theologian famous for his cogent defenses of the prerogatives and authority of the Adventist system. I've argued with him long and hard, but this time I listened. He was deeply troubled. His latest research was leading him to believe that the Bible does not teach the traditional Adventist (and evangelical) understanding of the second coming. What to do?

John McLarty is the editor of *Adventist Today*.

On another occasion I visited with a pastor in the Southwest. As a result of years of study, he was convinced life on earth was at least 600 million years old and that evolution was the process God used to create all life forms.

People who worked with H. M. S. Richards, Sr. tell of asking him about various challenges to historic Adventist beliefs. Not infrequently, instead of giving them the silver bullet which would kill the question, he would reply he was aware of the difficulty and didn't have a tidy answer; he just lived with the question.

I had a church member who was involved with the Shepherd's Rod movement. On the basis of statements by Ellen White, they believed that Victor Houteff was her prophetic successor.

Recently, a denominational official declared to the Adventist Media Center staff that if we were serious about getting ready for Jesus to come we'd need to get the victory over eating milk and eggs.

In 1989, I met a friend, Richard Ruhling, M.D., outside the New Jersey campmeeting. He was distributing literature which proved beyond any question that Jesus was going to return before the end of 1994.

Graham Maxwell, on page two of *Servants or Friends*, writes that there is one verse which is "a key to understanding the rest of Scripture and God's plan to restore peace in his universe. It is this offer of friendship recorded in John 15:15. . . . Friendship is the whole purpose and meaning of atonement."

What's the purpose of this list of "Adventist ideas"? To illustrate the huge range of thought within Adventism. There are some who would like the church to return to a supposed golden era when Adventism was a monolithic, coherent way of reading the Bible and understanding the world. To achieve this kind of uniformity we'd have to get rid of many, if not most, of our scholars (professional and amateur). The reality is that if any two people spend enough time studying any complex subject, they will come to at least slightly divergent conclusions. And what subject is more complex than God and human interaction with him?

In the late 1800s there was intense disagreement over the process of salvation and the deity of Christ.

And there was no golden era. James White strongly disagreed with Uriah Smith over prophetic interpretation. He suppressed his views so the fledgling denomination would not have to invest energy in deliberating competing viewpoints. In the late 1800s there was intense disagreement over the process of salvation and the deity of Christ.

Thinking, studying people simply can't be confined in a small box. Thus it has always been. So what is the value of the denomination and its doctrinal statements? Simply this: it gives us a center from which to deviate. A center through which we can reconnect with one another in spite of our diversity. The church needs a formal core of doctrine that defines normative Adventism. Twenty-seven statements may be too many, but there must be

more than "I believe in the Bible" or "I believe in Jesus."

Jaroslav Pelikan, in his five-volume *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, distinguishes between theology, which is the thought of individuals, and doctrine, the thought of the church. The two always live in tension. Doctrine usually is the reaction of the church to theology. That is, an individual articulates new ideas and the church reacts. Doctrine is always conservative. It expresses what the church has already come to believe. At minimum, doctrine must be supported by a majority of those present and voting, whether we're talking about the Council of Nicea in 325 or the General Conference at Utrecht, '95.

Theology, on the other hand, because it is the work of individuals, is inescapably idiosyncratic. It describes one person's understanding of God. Sure, theology is done in dialogue with other theologians, doctrine, culture, etc. But still the finished product expresses the mind and heart of one person. Doctrine expresses the mind and heart of a community.

So how do we connect theology and doctrine? What should be the relationship between the church and theologians?

On one hand, theologians must acknowledge that the validity and the value of doctrine does not depend on the personal convictions of theologians. Doctrine is the heritage of their community; it is not the fruit of their personal quest. By their very nature, theologians are driven to proclaim their conclusions. But their conclusions are not doctrine. Their conclusions may lead to the formation or reshaping of doctrine, but when this happens it is no longer the theologian's work; it becomes the work of the community.

On the other hand, the church must acknowledge that the more detailed its doctrinal statement, the less it can require theologians to affirm they are personally persuaded on every point. Administrators who insist both on a highly specific statement of doctrine AND the personal commitment of theologians to every point in the statement are defining a very small church, one that will be too small for many of our children.

The SDA denomination provides an ideological, social, spiritual, and yes, even institutional center from which creative thinkers can and will diverge. It provides a nexus, a connective center, through which all the mavericks, eccentrics, fanatics and dissidents can connect with each other, with their parents, children and siblings and high school and college classmates.

If we are going to have theologians, that is people (amateurs or professionals) who devote their lives to the exploration of words about God, we must expect a diversity of viewpoints. It is a denial of the creativity which is part of the image of God to insist that all theologians agree with each other or with every point of a detailed doctrinal statement.

It is a denial of the creativity which is part of the image of God to insist that all theologians agree...

At the same time, if we are going to have a community (and this is indispensable for wholesome spiritual life), we must insist that not all the ruminations of theologians deserve the label "doctrine." In fact, the community must be free to explicitly label some theology as "maverick," "eccentric," "aberrant."

Theology divides us because no two theologians agree on everything. Doctrine can unite us, even when we are arguing with it. The doctrinal core which the denomination transmits from one generation to the next forms the seedbed from which the infinite variety of our thoughts emerge. It provides the common ground for arguments among us, the common bond that keeps us from degenerating into a loose aggregation of clever, lonely individuals.

There is a delicious sense of adventure in roaming beyond the confines of doctrine. One's own discoveries are so much more exciting than hand-me-downs. If we silence our theologians, the church will lose the sparkle and vitality that interests our children in spiritual matters.

On the other hand, doctrine is an essential part of the glue that holds together the institutions in which most of us acquire the skills needed to engage in the adventure of theology. Neutralize the glue and the institutions fall apart. And if the institutions disappear, the church will lose a major part of the connectivity between generations. If we discard our doctrine, the church will lack the structure our children will need when it comes their turn to pass on the faith to their children.

Luther remarked that both popes and councils contradicted themselves and each other. He should have added theologians to the list. If "the church in session" is infallible, then we must all return to Rome, historically the mother church of Protestantism. And if theologians have the last word, then what do we say about the brilliant German theologians who advocated Nazism? What do we say about the amateur theologians Koresh and Jones? Somehow, the right way must hold church and theologians together.

There is a delicious sense of adventure in roaming beyond the confines of doctrine.

Church history tells us that the interaction between the church with its established doctrine and theologians with their personal visions of God and truth cannot be reduced to a simple formula. Neither is always right; neither is always trustworthy. But neither is superfluous. A living, effective church needs both theology and doctrine. The relationship between the two will always be in flux. If we try to simplify things by suppressing either we'll diminish our ability to do our God-given work.

Oregon Pastor Resigns

CONTINUED FROM BACK

come perilously close to blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Traditional Adventist teaching clearly states the Sabbath is the seal of God. James White said, 'The Holy Spirit is the sealer, and the Sabbath is the seal.' Ellen White also states in the book *The Great Controversy* that the Sabbath is the seal. Some of our theologians disagree with this statement and have tried to explain that what Ellen and James really meant was that the Sabbath was the sign of the seal, not the actual seal.

"Both positions are unbiblical and I believe offensive to God. First of all, if the Word of God teaches that the Holy Spirit is the seal of God—and I believe it does—then the third person of the Godhead is the rightful owner of that chair. If we have placed the Sabbath—something that God created—in God's chair, then we have taken something created and placed it in the seat of Deity....

"Whenever we place something God created in the position He claims as His position, we've declared war on God's right to be God! Our God is a Jealous God! I truly believe that Adventism is in serious danger of blaspheming the Holy Spirit with its traditional teaching regarding the seal of God. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is a dangerous place to be! I believe the Sabbath is significant, but the way the church has taught it is wrong, and we need to repent of it."

Furthermore, Galeotti says, he believes that the church has misinterpreted the idea of "the shaking." It is not, he says, about people being shaken out of the Adventist church.

"Hebrews teaches that whatever can be shaken will be, but if we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, we won't be shaken. The things of earth will be shaken out of us, and the things of the kingdom left in. God will shake our world to get rid of worldly things distracting us. The farther we are from God, the more violent the shaking will seem. The closer we are to him, the more it will seem like the Father is rocking us in his arms. The shaking is founded in love."

Galeotti further believes that the Adventist definition of the remnant is arrogant. "Adventism's traditional position regarding the remnant is spiritually arrogant and highly cultic. When you boil it all down, the bottom line is that Seventh-day Adventists believe they have the remnant message for the last days. They're calling all other Christians to 'leave Babylon and join us, God's true church.' In its traditional belief on the remnant, they've positioned themselves as the Noah's ark of the end times. I know that many Adventist theologians don't believe this, yet it remains part of Adventist heritage. Unfortunately many Adventists still hold to this position. I believe Scripture reveals this teaching is sin against the rest of the Body of Christ. It isn't biblical. We can say we're the remnant, but we can't say for sure that we're saved," he observes. "The remnant will never call themselves 'remnant.' God gives that name from his vantage point. We sin against the body of Christ by claiming to be the remnant."

"We sin against the body of Christ by claiming to be the remnant."

The Tuesday after Galeotti's pivotal sermon, the Oregon Conference administration called him in for a meeting, and on February 11 he met with the personnel committee. In his official conference statement Livesay says, "Participants in both meetings found Mike to be open and informative as he discussed his feelings and convictions. His transparency was very helpful in facilitating clarification of his theological understanding and his future intentions."

"When the meetings were over," Mike says, "some of the committee members had tears in their eyes. Several of them are men of integrity, and they're only trying to protect what they love. I said to one who talked to me, 'I know your heart is of God. I want you to sleep at night without guilt.' "

Livesay went on to say, "Mike requested that the personnel committee tell him whether they felt the umbrella of Adventism was big enough to include him and his views. After careful exploration and discussion, the committee concluded that Mike has moved outside the Seventh-day Adventist doctrinal umbrella. On receiving this information, Mike tendered his resignation the next day."

Livesay acknowledges that the conference's differences with Galeotti were mostly theological. "Although the 'Sabbath Seal' was an issue, the personnel committee was more concerned about several additional doctrinal issues, about his language and actions that appeared to lead toward a separation from the Seventh-day Adventist church, and about the Pentecostal-style directions the New Life Celebration church had taken," Livesay states. "We definitely support celebration worship services, but we are uncomfortable with the style New LIfe had adopted."

Mike says that the issues of the Sabbath as Seal, of remnant theology, and of the role of the Holy Spirit "represent the reason the Adventist umbrella isn't considered big enough by conference officials for my theological position. I love these men...I respect them for their convictions, and I believe they are sincere. I also believe they are wrong! I am in agreement with the Oregon Conference leaders that Adventism as they define it is too small an umbrella for my theology."

On Sabbath, February 14, the New Life Celebration church reorganized with about 70 people making a commitment to stay with NLCC. They now worship under the direction of interim pastor Eldon Walter, with approximately 100-150 in attendance.

Galeotti and over 100 of his parishioners now meet every Sabbath as an independent congregation. They are currently applying for nonprofit corporation status.

"One of the committee members asked me what would happen if I'd repent down the road and realize I'd taken people with me," Galeotti says. "I replied that I don't believe I've sinned in my beliefs; you don't have to be an Adventist to be saved. The Holy Spirit has shown me that it's not enough to transition to a new way of thinking without acknowledging our past error. We must repent.

"Just go into the Word," he declares. "Let the Word speak to you."

"...And Send One Up For Me, Too"

CRAIG K. ANDERSON

It was a Sabbath like any other, I suppose. I was invited by someone I did not know to their home for "the meal after church." There I was, sitting around a table with total strangers. We had introduced ourselves at church, but I knew everyone had forgotten everybody else's name by the time we sat to eat.

Someone suggested we go around the table and introduce ourselves again. I thought this was a good idea. I quickly stated my name and nodded to the person on my left as a way of passing on the introduction routine. I jumped in my chair when the person on my right gave their name and looked to their right to continue the process around the table.

By the time the introductions got back around to me again, someone suggested we get started with the meal and give thanks to God for the food and the fellowship. Everyone darted glances at everyone else at the table. Everyone wondered who was going to ask for the blessing. Clearing, my throat, I stated I would lead the prayer.

They all bowed their heads, and just as I started to thank the Lord for the bounty of the table and the hospitality of our unknown host, the telephone rang. I stopped without a word, and everyone's head came up. The person nearest the phone answered it and said it was for me. For me? No one knew I was here. Who could be asking for me?

I picked up the receiver and heard the voice on the other end say they were the one who had done the inviting. With a quick explanation, they told me they would be late getting there to sit with us. They asked that I take charge of the meal until they arrived.

"Well, OK," I mumbled; "please hurry, would you? I don't know how long I can hold out."

They assured me they would hurry and told me it was all right; everything would work out properly. I hung up the phone and went back to the table where everyone was waiting. Sitting, I informed them of the conversation and asked if someone could offer the blessing; the food was getting cold. A very thin young man next to me raised his hand and said he would. We all bowed our heads again, and I closed my eyes tightly and offered up a quick and silent prayer that this meal would pass quickly. I kept my eyes closed and listened for the prayer.

I didn't hear it. My eyes were still closed, and I knew I was praying silently yet still more loudly for myself than the person who was really praying aloud for us all. I prayed. I listened. I did not hear a sound.

"They are all praying silently," I thought. "I'll just keep my eyes closed for just a little while longer."

There I was, sitting with my eyes sealed, my hands clasped in front of me in prayerful attitude, just as my mother taught me. My head was bowed very low by this time. This was a very long prayer. Then I heard a noise. It was a faraway noise, like squirrels or chipmunks. A chattering sound.

I opened one eye and slowly peeked up to look at the person next to me.

They were eating! These squirrels had forks in their hands.

I opened both eyes and brought my head up. Everyone was eating. I had not heard the prayer, and I must have been praying for a long time.

By now my face was bright red, and I tried not to look at the others around the table. Someone asked if I wanted to try the potatoes. I had to look them in the face.

As the meal progressed, persons started to tell about themselves. Very quickly the truth became apparent to me—and to everyone else—no one at the table knew the person sitting next to them. We were all strangers invited to share a Sabbath meal with a host who was not present. As suddenly as I realized that fact, I started to ask around the table if anyone knew whose house this was and who had invited them. As we went around the table, no one knew who owned the house. No one had ever been there before; no one remembered who had invited them. Everyone had been asked at church, and when they said they could attend, they were given a map showing how to get there.

> "...Anyone who can pray as long as you did before you ate must have a special communication linkage with God."

As we finished our meal, someone suggested we pray again, not only to thank our unseen host, but for a safe journey from this place. Everyone asked that I pray.

Blushing again, I bowed my head and thanked God for the food and all the persons who had made it possible. When I finished I asked someone why they picked me to give the closing prayer. They said, "You seemed like the most prayerful person in the group. Anyone who can pray as long as you did before you ate must have a special communication linkage with God."

As I walked away from the house with a full stomach and a full heart, I realized I didn't really have anything "special" going with God—just an open line.

I never found out whose house it was, and I never found out who our host was on the other end of the phone.

But I can guess.

Craig Kenneth Anderson, Ph.D., is an educator, author and sometimes sports car racer. His degrees are from Western Oregon University and Colorado State University. Dr. Anderson has published two books, writes a monthly column for three magazines and is chair of Buena Vista Adventist School Board, Auburn, Washington.

Oregon Pastor Resigns

COLLEEN MOORE TINKER

On February 12, 1998, Mike Galeotti, senior pastor of the New Life Celebration church in Milwaukie, Oregon, resigned. Most of the approximately 150-member congregation has elected to follow Mike to his new Sabbath-observing but not Seventh-day Adventist church.

The New Life Celebration church peaked several years ago under the direction of Dave Snyder, then the senior pastor. It was one of the earliest Adventist "celebration churches," and shortly after its formation, about 1,200 people attended on most Sabbaths. Because of internal problems, however, the Oregon Conference eventually offered to relieve Dave of his pastorate and gave him the opportunity to attend the seminary at Andrews University. Snyder refused, choosing instead to resign.

Mike Galeotti succeeded Snyder as senior pastor of New Life. When he arrived five years ago, the weekly attendance had dropped to about 300, but after his arrival it grew to between 450 and 500. His presence did not stop the internal difficulties, though. According to Don Livesay, vice-president for administration in the Oregon Conference, there were "power plays" between Galeotti and prominent members in the congregation. These members, Livesay acknowledged, were the same people who had implemented Snyder's leaving.

Mike Galeotti brought an untraditional background to his pastorate. He had grown up a Catholic and had become a career Marine. He rose rapidly through the ranks and faced a secure future. His last station was Camp Pendleton where, in addition to working for a general, he was a rifle and pistol instructor.

"When I finally started to look for God," Mike admits, "he really shook up my world."

Through his girlfriend (now his wife) he learned about Adventism and attended some evangelistic meetings. When he became convinced that many of his Catholic beliefs were in error, he entered a spiritual crisis that left him forever changed. Ultimately, Mike knew he had to embrace truth. He left behind the beliefs of his childhood as well as the Marines, and in 1983 he became an Adventist.

"I used to be a Wiemar kid," Mike smiles. "I even made my own 'butter'." He worked for a time at the Colton Seventh-day Adventist Church in Southeastern California where was a discipleship training leader. Then he went to New York, where he pastored several churches, and from there he moved to Milwaukie and the New Life Celebration church.

When he got to Oregon, he raised conference eyebrows by wearing a wedding ring and by ordaining women elders who wore earrings.

"I truly believe that Adventism is in serious danger of blaspheming the Holy Spirit with its traditional teaching regarding the seal of God."

"When I began work in Oregon, I began to pray regarding integrity issues. I was becoming increasingly frustrated with the iron claws of control exercised by denominational leaders."

About a year ago the Oregon Conference became seriously concerned about what Don Livesay called a "Pentecostal-style" of worship the congregation seemed to be adopting. "We heard that people in the congregation were experiencing holy laughter, being slain in the spirit, and speaking in tongues. We also had reports that the members had an increasing desire for such manifestations."

Furthermore, Livesay says, people were leaving the church. Many were uncomfortable with the charismatic emphasis they felt there. Eventually weekly attendance averaged about 200-250 people. Rumors also suggested that New Life had become a Toronto Blessing church. (Toronto Blessing is a charismatic church that began as part of the Vineyard movement but eventually was divorced from Vineyard and has become independent.)

Both Galeotti and his associate Angelo Nannachio are open about the emphasis they have placed on the work of the Holy Spirit. But they are quick to point out that they have played a cautionary rather than a promoting role regarding many charismatic manifestations.

"Mike always says that our role is to be open to what the Holy Spirit prompts us to do. We are not to actively seek certain manifestations; we are simply to be open to God," Nannachio says. "We have never had anyone experience holy laughter in our church, and I have heard that a few people have experienced speaking in tongues. No one has ever been disruptive, and we do not urge people to chase manifestations."

The reports of charismatic activity, however, only made it more explosive when Mike preached what Livesay termed a "confrontational" sermon about the Holy Spirit, the Sabbath, and the seal of God.

"The biggest issue was his rhetoric," Livesay reports. "He used phrases such as, 'The teaching that the Sabbath is the seal of God is a lie from which the church must repent.' "

No one on the conference personnel committee, according to Livesay, agreed with Galeotti. "We believe the Sabbath is an incredibly important part of our life with God and of end-time events," Livesay says. "But we don't worship the Sabbath; we worship God."

Galeotti says, "By calling the Sabbath God's seal instead of acknowledging that the Holy Spirit is God's seal, we have

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