

NEWS

ANALYSIS

OPINION

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what is  
yours saying?

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## New Tools for Altruists

John McLarty

The most widely known Adventists in Memphis when I was growing up were a couple of physicians. They never advertised for staff. When they had a vacancy they simply reviewed their waiting list of people wanting to work in their office. They paid better than anyone else. They offered better benefits. I assumed that was normal Adventist business practice.

Then I went to college in an Adventist town. I quickly learned that the non-Adventist community saw us as sharp and grasping. You did business with Adventists at your own risk. I heard similar reports in several other communities with significant Adventist populations. Adventists might practice good medicine, but you wouldn't want to do business with them. That was twenty-five years ago. Maybe it's different now.

But I continue to hear stories about the ruthless Adventist pursuit of a bargain. For us, business is simply the process of getting what I want. My need or desire is the only significant concern. Those other people out there, the people we're doing business with, are like a natural resource, and we're in the process of resource extraction. We are miners or loggers. And often we operate with pre-environmental ruthlessness.

The problem is not business. In reality, at this point in history, the world's need for skillful, ethical businesspeople is arguably greater than the need for medical professionals.

When I traveled in India or Honduras, when I used to walk the streets of Harlem or drive by the Hispanic strawberry pickers just down the hill from the palaces of Thousand Oaks, California, I would lie awake at night and listen to a mocking voice in my head: If you really want to help these people, you'd quit wasting your time with this preaching and writing and do something useful like start a business.

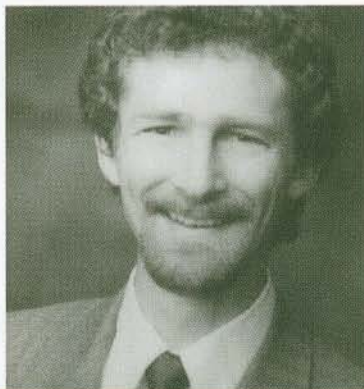
In the sober light of morning, I face the fact that I can't balance my own checkbook and that organizing a Pathfinder backpacking trip exceeds my administrative ability (my role on such ventures approximates that of a human mule). But I can't escape what my eyes have seen and

what development specialists have documented: Making a significant improvement in the quality of life for most of the world's downtrodden can only be done through economic change, the kinds of change more commonly associated with MBAs than MDs or MDivs.

In the past ten years I've gotten acquainted with a number of Loma Linda Medical School graduates from classes in the thirties and forties. I have been struck by the percentage of these physicians who have engaged in heroic, sacrificial service, people like Dr. and Mrs. Lewis in South Central L.A., the Drs. Youngberg in Honduras, Dr. and Mrs. Gardner in New York City. And even among those who settled comfortably in White America, an impressive percentage of these physicians have created large reputations for their altruistic spirit.

What if Adventists were known as the people in business who could balance profit and environmental and social imperatives?

I wonder what would happen if Adventist business schools could develop a similar culture of altruism. What if, both in the U.S. and abroad, Adventist businesses had waiting lists for every position because their employees received the best pay/benefits package and it was common knowledge that the management were people of absolute integrity? What if Adventists were known as the people in business who could balance profit and environmental and social imperatives? What if Adventist profits were the natural outgrowth of superior products, service and management? What if Adventists in business saw dollars and spreadsheets, Human Resources and the legal department, marketing and Accounts Receivable as tools of altruism? Would it change the world? Would it change us? ■



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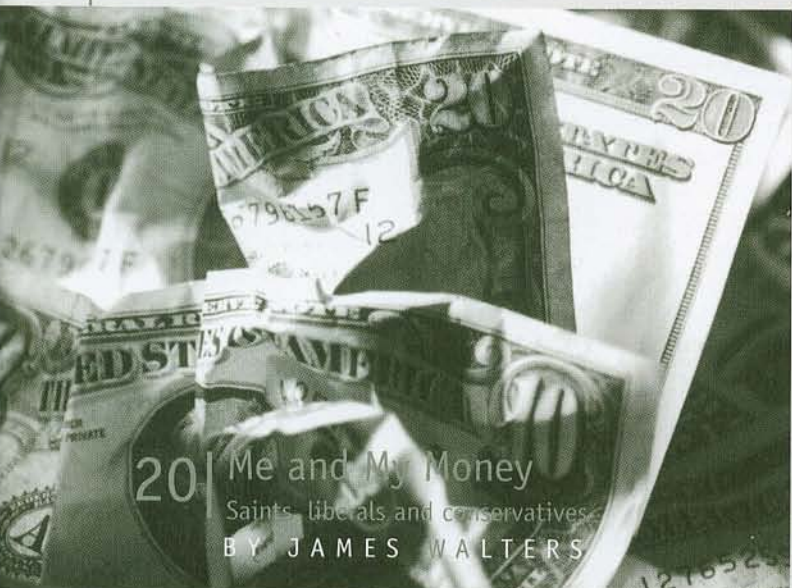
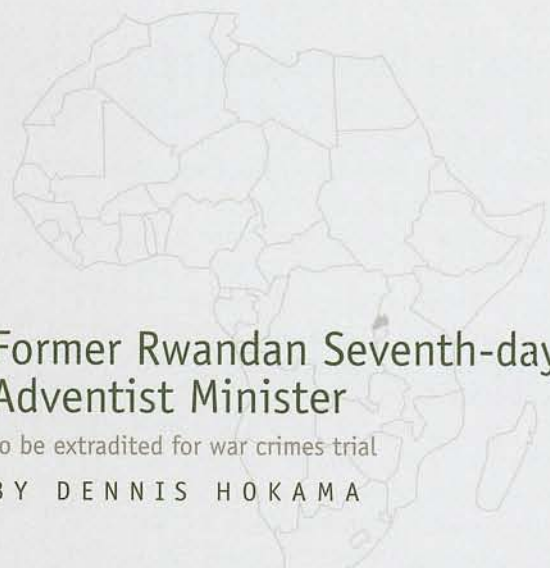
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## Bible on Homosexuality

The article "The Bible on Homosexuality" by Jim Miller (AT, July/August 1999) is particularly disturbing. For one who claims to be a Bible scholar he certainly went out of his way to avoid the Bible texts that deal with the subject.... I sympathize with Brother Miller because his situation is not a happy one, but it doesn't help to "fog" the truth.

Is homosexual behavior a sin? The Bible is very clear on the subject. Leviticus 18:22 states: "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination." (New RSV.) Leviticus 20:13 continues: "If a man lies with a man as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them." (New RSV). In the New Testament we find: "Do not be deceived; neither prostitutes nor idolaters nor adulterers nor homosexuals.... nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor robbers shall inherit the Kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). And in 1 Timothy 1:9, 10 we read:

"Knowing this, that the law is not for the just, but the lawless and uncontrollable, the irreverent and sinful, the irreligious and vile, those who kill their parents, murderers, prostitutes, homosexual,.... kidnapers, liars, perjurers and whatever is different from sound teaching..." I doubt that you can find language more precise than that.

It is difficult to imagine anything clearer than the foregoing or Paul's diatribe in Romans 1:24-32. Let's face it. No one is going to be helped by ignoring the unambiguous import of these texts or by pretending they don't exist or don't mean what they say....

I am neither a "gay basher" nor a "homophobe." I neither hate nor fear homosexuals. I have had friends and colleagues who are homosexual and have loved them as much as any others. However, sex and love have no relationship with each other. I have loved many men in my life, including my son, and have had no sexual desire

for any of them. I have been sexually aroused by many women whom I did not love or even know. If love was a prerequisite for sex, the "world's oldest profession" would never have gotten off the ground.

No true Christian will taunt, insult, assault or otherwise cause pain, either physical or emotional, to any person, whether he or she is homosexual or not. A homosexual is as much entitled to Christian love as is anyone else. But that Christian love demands that the truth be told, clearly and lovingly. And the truth is that homosexual behavior is a sin. The Christian church has taught for nearly two millennia that all sexual activity outside of marriage is sin....

I understand that many (but not all) male homosexuals are so because they were born that way. They are not sexually attracted to women but are to men. There is no point in asking them to marry because such a relationship would be unbearable to the husband and unfair to the wife. Those who are "bisexual" could possibly establish a healthy sexual relationship with a woman and therefore marry and have a legitimate outlet for their sexual urges. To those for whom marriage is not an option the church has always taught that celibacy is the only alternative. However, they need not spend the rest of their lives fighting overwhelming waves of sexual passion. The Bible has a solution for it and I offer it in all seriousness. "For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven. Let the one able to accept this accept it." (Matthew 19:22). It is a simple bit of surgery and can be done quickly by any surgeon, probably as an outpatient. Once all the testosterone is flushed out of the system there will be no more sexual desires. I speak of this from experience. Three years ago, in preparation for treatment for prostate cancer, I was chemically castrated for three months to shrink my prostate

gland. It was an interesting experience. I soon lost all desire for sex! Not only that but I didn't care! I still loved my wife, I still enjoyed hugging her and kissing her, but I had no desire to have sex with her or anyone else. In fact, I felt a sense of relief! My urologist had told me this would happen but I didn't believe it until I experienced it. For those who wish to be released from this bondage Jesus has the solution.

Rodney H. Mill | Deltona, Florida

## The How of Creation

The September/October issue of AT focusing on "Creation—how?" was a bombshell to me. Let me share my sense of bewilderment and surprise....

It all sounds plausible as you have presented it—in isolation from other Christian considerations. But as a Christian, what am I to do about the following concerns?

1) If I believe there was an Exodus experience for the Israelites from Egypt, and if I believe the story of Sinai about God speaking the Ten Commandments and writing them on tablets of stone, I don't know how to understand His declarations therein that "in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth..." What am I missing in the story? Or must I accept that God did not tell the truth about that? Jesus affirmed the story of the Ten Commandments. If it was a misleading myth, why do you think he did not clarify that for us? The writer of Hebrews also believed in the "one week" creation scenario with its Sabbath implications—Heb. 4:4-9. Was he also misled?

2) Jesus claimed to be the "I Am" of the Old Testament—John 8:58. And Paul said Jesus was the Rock that accompanied the Israelites through the wilderness—1 Cor. 10:4. John said that Jesus was the Creator—John 1:1-14. If Jesus was/is God and was there when it happened, and if He said that "At the beginning the Creator made them male and female..." quoting at length from Genesis, (naming Moses as the

author), validating his belief in the creation story as it is in Genesis, then I must ask, Are these texts a misrepresentation of Christ, or did he misrepresent the truth?

3) Paul witnessed the evolutionist's viewpoint as we read in Romans 1:18-31 where he discusses the consequences of ignoring the knowledge of God as Creator, as the one who "made" the creatures. He further referenced the idea of a fiat creation, when he said in Romans 4:17 that we are working with a "God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were." ...

You see, it is not just a matter of my coming to accept the idea that Genesis is "theology," not history. I might find some justification for that viewpoint. But all through the scriptures I run into these other problems. I have to consider almost all the Bible writers as doubtful authorities. If they were ignorant on the subject of how creation happened, they might also be ignorant on any other subject too! Or, if they were dishonest, then we have an even greater problem!

But the really troubling thing is that I have to believe that Jesus himself was either ignorant or dishonest. So I am finding it very difficult to accept the notion AT advocates-- that buying into this "scientific/scholarly" viewpoint need not disturb my "faith experience." If I come to doubt the witness of Jesus, I have a real crisis of my faith.

A couple of additional concerns:

1) Why did AT not print a single word from the only man on the panel supporting the historical view of the Bible story? (According to your story of the make-up of the panel.)

2) Why did AT seem to think that if the GRI people did not want to show up, that there were no other capable souls in the world, in or out of the SDA community who would not want to speak for the other side of the question? Or is it really true that you did not want the other side to be ably represented? Your print report, being entirely one sided, would surely support that suspicion!

3) Is there an obvious pretense on AT's part that current scientific books like *Darwin's Black Box* by Dr. Michael Behe do not exist? One of the AT articles recommends we read Dawkins's *Blind Watchmaker*, but doesn't cite a

You see, it is not just a matter of my coming to accept the idea that Genesis is "theology," not history. I might find some justification for that viewpoint. But all through the scriptures I run into these other problems. I have to consider almost all the Bible writers as doubtful authorities.

single title of a book on the other side. Nothing of the works of Dr. Francis Schaeffer, or other hard-hitting defenses of the Bible story. (Some authors were mentioned, but none of their books. Do they really represent the other side of the issue?) Why did AT have such a total eclipse of the other viewpoints? What are we to conclude by that obvious bias?

I have been a subscriber to AT from the start, and I have read the letters of those who accuse you of trying to destroy the church, the SDA message. I do not think that, but I have become convinced that your agenda is to change SDAs into a "scholarly" church that isn't sure of anything -- something like a "Seventh-day Methodists" might be. That would make us respectable in the scholarly world, which is seemingly what matters most. (Even the Sabbath part of that imaginary church would be more of a "cultural" thing than a moral absolute.)

My own bias is clear, of course. So obviously, your direction saddens me profoundly. I will continue my subscription—because I want to track where this is all leading. But as I indicated, I think that when we throw out the creation story, our faith in all the rest of the Bible is so compromised that we will be in deep trouble as a church.

Elden Walter | Junction City, Oregon

**Editor's note:** We appreciate the fervor of Elden Walter. It is an important subject. The speakers whose papers were included were all believers like Walter in the inspiration of the Bible and in the creatorship of God.

They did not display doubt in the story of the Exodus, nor did they explore the implications of what the New Testament writers said. Sponsors of the seminar did their best to get speakers who were informed and would represent "both sides" of the issue, but not all were willing to speak, or to have their remarks printed. The articles represent condensed summaries of the speeches, prepared chiefly by the speakers. AT has no "agenda" to change the church; it rather seeks to let readers see what dedicated Adventists and other Christians think in the light of modern scholarship and literary and historical resources.

## Timeless Adventism

Thank you for "Timeless Adventism" and "Undated Adventism" (November-December, 1999). The points emphasized were a significant contrast to what we as Adventists are most accustomed to hearing on this subject. We are very familiar with emphasis on the "when" of the event. Some phrases that especially caught my attention were the following:

"...You can live in breathless expectancy for only so long. Sooner or later you have to get on with life."

"I cannot invest my heart in another round of frenzied expectation. Adventist history is too much with me."

"And they were all wrong." (A reference to the some of the "second ad-

vent" dates that have been put forth over the years: 1843, 1844, 1847, 1851, 1964, 1994, and 1996).

"I am unconvinced." (In response to recent "turn of the millennium" speculations about the timing of the second advent).

"How do you move from breathless expectancy to patient service? How do you change a church culture from one predicated on certainty that time... is almost over to a culture that embraces suffering, service and evangelism as the normal life of the church?" (Questions well worth our consideration).

I'm hopeful that as we move into the future we will also move toward an outlook (such as you describe) that is more candid about the fact that we don't know the "time." We might do a better job of balancing the possibility of a "not-so-soon" coming along with the possibility of a "soon" coming. It just might be good for our credibility, too.

**Robert W. Visser | Beltsville, Maryland**

### Millennial Madness

Your articles on "Prophecy" (AT November/December '99) with differing viewpoints were most interesting. Is anyone surprised by date settings, visions, messages from God, etc. when these things were the foundation of our early church? The Lord did not come in 1843, 1844, or 1851 and I am amazed that people are so locked in to an outdated end-time scenario. Does the rapidly growing influence of Islam or the growth of the technological and destructive power of China have no place in our thinking? Maybe it's time for more true Bible study and not just a constant rehearsal of what we were taught years ago.

Perhaps we need a broader outlook. Not just the world against us (SDA's) but the world against Christians. Christians are now the only group that's legal or permissible to attack without public and institutional outrage. The real enemy is being ignored while we fight among ourselves. Just what Satan

wants. Let's get on with bringing people to Christ and forget our paranoia about being the victim of the wrong enemy.

**Elly Fitzsimmons | Rogue River, Oregon**

### Shady Grove Problems

This letter is a response to the article entitled "Turmoil in Shady Grove," which was published in the January-February issue of *Adventist Today*. We commend *Adventist Today* for addressing this important church issue and providing the chairman of the board of Shady Grove Hospital the opportunity to refute the *Washington Post* article... "Shady Grove Gave Out Big Raises." This raises a number of unanswered questions. Kenneth B. DeStafano, Adventist HealthCare's (AHC) general counsel, said, "The board made a reasonable business decision that retirement plans for a number of the executives... were not adequately funded in comparison to what they would have otherwise received" in a nonreligious organization. "The decision was made to do a catch-up, if you will." To what board is Mr. DeStafano referring? Who are the members of this board? At least two Shady Grove Hospital board members claim that they were unaware of the executive compensation and the reported lump-sum severance payouts. Wisbey subsequently referred to an "independent committee of the board of directors" that determined executive salaries. Who are the members of this committee? Were the actions of this committee approved by the "board of directors"?

When these executives were initially hired, what Internal Revenue Service (IRS) approved retirement plan was included in their employment contract? What was the annual retirement contribution as a percent of their base salary? No ordinary employer could afford to make huge lump-sum contributions to retirement programs at the time of termination. Further, it is difficult to understand how the IRS would approve a retirement plan that was funded in this fashion or that would exclude all other

employees. In a subsequent *Washington Post* article dated January 7, 2000 entitled, "Chief Financial Officer Quits Adventist Hospital Company," Harry Weis resigned after "less than two years" of employment. His base pay was \$200,000 per year and at the time of termination an additional \$131,000 went to company retirement contributions. That calculates to an astonishing figure of 32 percent of his base pay for two years of employment! Is this retirement percentage the same for the other hospital executives and the 5700 employees? If not, why not?

*Adventist Today* reported AHC officials as saying "half of Wisbey's compensation was reimbursed by two other Adventist hospitals in Ohio that also employ Wisbey as board chairman." The implication is that only half of the reported figure for Wisbey was actually paid by AHC. These *Washington Post* figures came from federal tax returns of Adventist HealthCare Inc., the regional nonprofit company that owns Shady Grove Hospital, Washington Adventist Hospital, seven

The problem, of course, is how to fund such wage scales. It must be understood that the healthcare system would not be allowed to subsidize higher wages in other parts of the denomination.

nursing homes in Maryland, and Hackettstown Community Hospital in New Jersey. Would Wisbey's compensation from Ohio appear on these particular federal tax returns? Did Ohio reimburse AHC for Wisbey's employment in Ohio, or did Wisbey actually receive additional compensation from Ohio?

Wisbey decried the *Washington Post*'s reporting of his compensation for 1997, 1998, and 1999, claiming that Goldstein "treated the dollar figures on form 990 as if it were a W-2 form." On the contrary, Goldstein referred to the figures as compensation and then defined compensation as "salary, benefits, deferred salary

and expense accounts." Wisbey included "cashed out, unused sick and other leave accrued over many years" in his compensation. Do all 5700 employees of AHC cash out unused sick and other leave accrued over many years? Since there is a great discrepancy between actual salary and total compensation, an itemization of Wisbey's benefit package and expense account for this nonprofit organization would clarify this issue.

**Stewart W. Shankel, M.D.**  
**George M. Grames, M.D.**  
**Richard Sheldon, M.D.**  
Redlands, California

## Compensation at Shady Grove

Your report on the troubles at Shady Grove Adventist Hospital (AT Jan/Feb 2000) made painful reading. Each such incident in our healthcare system takes an enormous toll on our members' faith in the leadership....

You can not determine whether the executives' compensation was excessive based on the published information. Perhaps the payments included "catch-up" contributions to an underfunded pension plan that should not be considered severance pay or current year compensation. Journalists often publish sensational claims about executive compensation in various businesses.

I agree with James Walters' point that compensation actions by the hospital boards ought to be able to stand a publicity test. However, a few minutes of time on 3ABN would not be sufficient to educate the church to all the complex issues.

I was a layperson member of the Adventist Health System-U.S. in 1989 when the executives in the healthcare system were placed under the new wage scale. I agree with Neal Wilson's recollection that the intent was to place our executives at the lower end of a competitive wage scale. Not many people seem to understand that we were trying to solve a problem that had developed since the church decided in 1972 (I think that was the year) that it needed to pay community (or competitive) wages to our healthcare workers, except the se-

nior executives. This led to a situation where middle managers in our institutions refused promotions to senior executive positions because they would have to take a pay cut; and it was almost impossible to recruit qualified Adventist executives who were working at non-Adventist hospitals.

The fact is that the majority of our healthcare employees are not Adventists and can not be expected to work at "sacrificial wages." With regard to our executives, we should be much more concerned about whether they are managing well than about the size of their paychecks. I am not at all sure that we have enough qualified board members to provide the needed oversight. Many church administrators lack the background to spot developing problems before they get out of hand. I would like to see greater use of "pay for performance" where executives are paid incentives for meeting certain goals and have a portion of their compensation at risk if they fail to meet those goals.

It is obvious that there is a great deal of unhappiness among ministers and educators over the disparity between the healthcare wages and denominational wages. I don't believe they will ever be equal, nor should they necessarily be equal. Our educators should ideally be paid wages comparable to educators in private, religious universities and boarding schools. Ministers should be paid wages comparable to ministers in other denominations. The problem, of course, is how to fund such wage scales. It must be understood that the healthcare system would not be allowed to subsidize higher wages in other parts of the denomination. There are too many restraints, by government entities and reimbursing insurers, to permit such transfers of funds.

We ought to be concerned about the ability of the healthcare system to offer jobs, at greatly increased salaries, to the very church administrators who sit on their boards. There ought, also, to be policies regulating the acceptance of perks such as vacation trips, golf outings, and so on, (paid by the healthcare institutions) by church administrators who are overseeing the healthcare system. Board members ought to be free of all

such conflicts of interest. Perhaps the church should adopt the government model, i.e. government regulators are not allowed to accept positions with businesses or institutions they were regulating for at least two years after they leave government service.

When I was on the board of AHS-US, church officers up to and including the General Conference were very concerned about the potential for a lawsuit against any of our institutions impacting the whole denomination under the concept of "ascending liabilities." We restructured AHS-US to minimize this risk but could not eliminate it entirely as long as union and conference officials serve in the dual roles.

We ought to be concerned about the "ascending disrespect" that occurs every time there is a major problem in the healthcare system. Church administrators can only lead when they enjoy a reasonable amount of respect.

**Joseph H Rasmussen | Marble,**  
**North Carolina**

## Prophetic Task of the Church

I would like to comment ... on Larry Christoffel's "The Prophetic Task of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Next Millennium." (AT Jan/Feb '00). He states that the SDA view of "the testimony of Jesus" is Ellen White. I would like to use a more biblical interpretation. In the Old Testament, the "Testimony" of Jesus has always been the Ten Commandments. In the Old Testament it is called "The Ark of the Testimony." That would make a lot more sense and agree with the first part of Revelation, "Those who obey God's commandments and hold to the Testimony of Jesus. In essence, it is just saying the same thing. It is doubly important: Keep the Ten Commandments. That is all.

**Ronald John | Via the Internet**

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# Columbia Union College

Diana Fisher president resigns

On January 12, 2000, at Columbia Union College's Executive Board of Trustees meeting, Dr. Charles Scriven, president, turned in his formal resignation. According to a press release from CUC's office of public relations, the Board accepted his resignation, and Scriven will hold his position as president of the college until May 15, 2000.

Elder Harold Lee, chairman of the Board of Trustees and president of the Columbia

Union Conference, was quoted as saying, "Dr. Scriven has given seven and one-half years of strong service to Columbia Union College, and in today's educational environment that's quite an

achievement. We're delighted that he is staying with us for awhile yet to assist us in finding a replacement. He brought a level of academic excellence to the CUC presidency that will be difficult to equal."

Scriven's resignation has come under some question as to its relation to the recent receipt of state funds. The following interview (via e-mail) with Dr. Scriven reveals his perspective on the recent change in the CUC administration. Columbia Union Conference personnel did not confirm or deny Scriven's first three statements.

**AT:** Was your resignation forced? What were the conditions under which it happened?

**CS:** The resignation was a matter of discussion between the chair and me for about a year. I had overseen forward movement in college finance and had helped with changes that were engendering new institutional energy and self-esteem. But to improve upon the pace of change, it seemed clear that a new leader, with a fresh supply of political capital, would make sense. I agreed dur-

ing our conversations, and I agree now.

**AT:** What's next?

**CS:** What I will do next is unclear. The chair hopes that I can maintain my connection with the college.

**AT:** Was the stance you took on the receipt of state funds for CUC a consideration?

**CS:** To my knowledge, no. The lawsuit did thrust me, however, into a controversy outside the confines of our board. It was driven by old-school church-and-state types who don't understand the downside of secular liberalism.

**AT:** What do you see as the biggest challenges facing CUC and Adventist higher education in general?

**CS:** The biggest challenge concerns imagination and will—on campus and, even more importantly, off campus. Other challenges, including the financial challenge, pale in comparison with this one. As for higher education and the wider church, the election of Dr. Jan Paulsen as General Conference president augurs well: he comes across as a friend. But he inherits an environment of suspicion and insecurity with respect to trained intelligence, and this inheritance continues to be a hazard, not just to higher education,

thought without prayer.

Two related factors loom forbiddingly over the church's future and touch on prospects for higher education. One is flat or declining enthusiasm and loyalty among second- and third-generation Adventists. These members yearn for deeper relevance, or deeper understanding, or both; too often a fearful leadership denies them both, with consequent losses in not only trained intelligence but also financial commitment. The other factor is administrative preoccupation with retrenchment and downsizing at just the moment when new vision, new engagement of Scripture, new strategy and risk-taking are the crying needs. This carries with it the potential consequence that aspiration itself will be downsized, and the certain consequence that the church's actual impact, and in time its active membership, will decline. World-changing churches must grow in both new and seasoned membership; what is even more important, they must grow in understanding and in the capacity to make a difference.

**AT:** Do you think CUC can turn its urban geography into a significant selling point for a college, given Adventism's historic antipathy to cities?

**CS:** This is already happening. It is the school's future. To the degree that the wider church is alert, it will recognize and celebrate this fact. Adventist mission must increasingly be a mission to the great cities.

**AT:** There have been calls in Adventism to reduce the number of SDA colleges in North America. Why should CUC not be closed or merged with another SDA school?

**CS:** The great temptation in North American Adventism is to give up. There is no evidence, to my knowledge, that fewer colleges would enhance enrollments, or even produce financial efficiencies. The dreamed-of efficiencies all assume, after all, higher enrollments at the remaining institutions. Still, this

"The resignation was a matter of discussion between the chair and me for about a year. I had overseen forward movement in college finance and had helped with changes that were engendering new institutional energy and self-esteem."

but to the very mission of the church. History is ruthless, after all, in its judgment upon peoples who lack imagination and fail to reinvent themselves in response to changing circumstances. The Great Commandment says that those who turn against the mind turn against God. They also, in fact, turn against themselves: prayer without thought is as reckless as

[Continued on page 22]



# Former Rwandan Seventh-day Adventist Minister

## to be extradited for war crimes trial

Dennis Hokama

**t**he U.S. Supreme Court rejected without any comment or dissent an appeal by Elizaphan Ntakirutimana, former Seventh-day Adventist minister and president of the Rwandan SDA church, to prevent the U.S. government from surrendering him to the U.N.'s International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. The stories were filed by Laurie Asseo of the Associated Press, and by James Vicini of Reuters on Monday, January 24.

Reuters reported that Ntakirutimana was "a former president of the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Rwanda" in 1994 when more than 500,000 people, mostly minority Tutsis, were killed by Hutu troops, mobs and militiamen during three months of slaughter.

There is some disagreement as to precisely the church entity over which

Ntakirutimana was President. Carl Wilkins, identifying himself as a former missionary to Rwanda as the director of ADRA at the time of the massacres and an acquaintance of

Ntakirutimana, wrote in to AT via e-mail to say, "Rwanda was divided into five fields (they didn't have conference status) and Pastor Ntakirutimana was Field President of the West Rwanda Association." However, an October 1, 1996 news release apparently authorized by the General Conference, states "Ntakirutimana was President of the South Rwanda Field during the killings."

According to U.N. prosecutors, Ntakirutimana encouraged a large group

of Tutsi men, women and children to take refuge in a church and hospital compound in 1994. Then he joined convoys of armed soldiers and civilians in massacring them. The indictment alleges that Ntakirutimana committed genocide in his repeated and persistent participation in attacks on Tutsis.

It is a charge that Ntakirutimana has repeatedly denied vigorously. His son John has told reporters that "the charges have arisen because people were jealous of his father's ability to maintain good relations with both Tutsis and the Hutus in Rwanda." (G.C. release, Oct. 1, 1996.) His attorney Ramsey Clark has said, "He's a man that in all his life has never had any charge of violence against him, but because he's a Hutu and in a position of power, the Tutsis are saying he's guilty of genocide." (quoted by ANN Bulletin, January 6, 1998).

On the other hand, Philip Gourevitch, a staff reporter for *The New Yorker*, who spent nine months in Rwanda between 1995-1998, published a book in September of 1998 titled, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories of Rwanda*. The title of the book comes from a letter by a Tutsi pastor to his church president (Ntakirutimana). Gourevitch quotes the words of a Tutsi survivor in the mission compound named Manase Bimenyiman. He quotes Ntakirutimana as saying in response to their pleas, "You must be eliminated. God no longer wants you."

The U.N. tribunal charged

Ntakirutimana with genocide in June 1996, and he was arrested three months later near Laredo, Texas, where he had been living with one of his sons. A federal judge in Texas ruled in 1998 that there was sufficient evidence that

The indictment alleges that Ntakirutimana committed genocide in his repeated and persistent participation in attacks on Tutsis. It is a charge that Ntakirutimana has repeatedly denied vigorously.

Ntakirutimana committed genocide and crimes against humanity. A U.S. appeals court upheld the decision last year. Ntakirutimana's lawyer, former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, then appealed to the Supreme Court.

Clark has been fighting extradition on the basis that it would be unconstitutional because the United States had not signed and ratified a treaty providing for the extradition of suspects to a U.N. tribunal. He claimed the United Nations lacked the authority to create the tribunal.

He also questioned whether the tribunal was capable of protecting fundamental rights of the accused, which are guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and by international law. But U.S. Justice Department lawyers replied that there was nothing to suggest the tribunal would be unable or unwilling to afford Ntakirutimana a fair trial.

They said the United States entered into an executive agreement with the international tribunal, and that the U.S. Congress adopted legislation to implement the agreement. If convicted by the U.N. tribunal, Ntakirutimana could face a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. ■



# The Journal of Ellen G. White Studies

Dennis Hokama

## An interview with Graeme Sharrock

**a**dventist Today caught up with Graeme Sharrock, whose first issue of the *Journal of Ellen G. White Studies* is scheduled to come off the press this April.

**AT:** Tell us a little about yourself and why you want to undertake something as ambitious as starting a new journal about Ellen White.

I teach Academic Writing and lecture in the undergraduate humanities program at the University of Chicago. In addition, I am a practicing therapist and direct a busy counseling center for artists and performers in downtown Chicago. I've made presentations in both these areas at professional meetings.

In the mid-90's, I began to think about how I could make a contribution to the church and to academia. Over the years, starting in graduate school, I had been keeping notes on my new understandings of the Adventist faith that emerged in my thoughts. After a long absence, I read Ellen White again and discovered I had a new appreciation for her, a way of reading that was neither naive nor hypercritical. I then reviewed some of the research which had been done on her over the last 30 years and discussed it with some colleagues here at Chicago. I soon discovered that I was in the unique position of bridging two worlds—that of Ellen White and that of the modern study of religion. Although I did not write a dissertation on her, I had knowledge and tools that could help shape a new academic field of study.

I contacted a number of scholars whom I respected, such as Ron Numbers, Herold Weiss and Ron Lawson, and suggested we create an e-mail list and a journal. It's been onward and upward from there.

**AT:** What is your own personal attitude toward Ellen White?

If you call it anything, it would be "critical appreciation." I am neither an apologist for, nor a critic of, Ellen White. I have no axe to grind and feel no need to defend her. However, as a remarkable woman, a prolific writer, and the source of a thriving international religious movement, she is a figure worthy of attention

from scholars in the same way that Emerson or Mary Baker Eddy are. I hope that the current generation of educated Adventists can get over whatever daunted idealism and discouragement they suffer from and see her as a gifted woman and accord her legitimate status, along with other important religious founders.

**AT:** What do you expect to accomplish with this journal that hasn't yet been done with Ellen White?

Our larger goal is to become the publishing venue of choice for Ellen White studies, where scholars, both in and outside the Adventist church, can write up their research, conduct conferences and engage in informed dialogue regarding Mrs. White's life, her writings and her ongoing influence.

I hope this journal will provide a nexus between what has been happening within Adventist circles and the wider world of religious studies. We'll bring together academics from many different fields—religious and women's studies, social sciences and history, theology and literature—both Adventists and those interested in Mrs. White but not affiliated with the SDA church. Our web site will also be a clearinghouse for researchers to post summaries of their projects. Although thousands of things continue to be written and taught about Ellen White, Ellen G. White studies as a field is a long way from mature. We will start by publishing the journal this year, and for 2001 we plan a nationwide conference focusing on Ellen White. If we succeed, it will be the first time that Adventist and non-Adventist scholars have come together to study her influence as a spiritual woman and visionary leader.

**AT:** Tell us what you have in your first issue.

We will have a couple of introductory articles, then some examples of recent research. Arthur Patrick, who has taught Ellen White's writings for over a quarter century, gives an overview. Ann Taves, a Methodist and professor at Claremont, writes on the "Shouting tradition,"

comparing Ellen White and her contemporaries in Portland, Maine in the 1840's. Gil Valentine's paper on the controversial Camden vision (1851) explains why that vision was rejected by Adventist apologists, and instead urges its inclusion in the canon of official visions. My own paper discusses how the 19th-century popular art of the panorama shows up in Ellen White's writings. We will also have a couple of reviews of recent books.

**AT:** What are your general plans for future issues?

The journal will come in two issues per year, with each essay reviewed by competent scholars before it is published. Some of the articles will be available on the web site. Our second issue,

I hope this journal will provide a nexus between what has been happening within Adventist circles and the wider world of religious studies.

"Cross-Cultural Perspectives," will present Latino, African-American, European and Pacific viewpoints, including an examination of recent assertions regarding White's blood ancestry.

In upcoming issues, we hope to examine gender issues in White's writings, her legacy via Adventism's enormous impact on third-world countries, and the charismatic roots of early Adventism.

**AT:** Can you give us specific examples of other subjects that you would like to see tackled in the future?

Serious scholarship from any discipline is welcome. We want to hear from the many researchers who spend hours in Ellen G. White Research Centers around the world. We want to hear from graduate students and professors in seminaries and colleges. What are they writing about? Do they want others to know what they are finding? If so, then our journal is the place for them.

As for topics, I can think of a few: I think Ellen White's relationship to mainstream Christianity needs attention. For

example, several authors have boldly stated in the last few years that her concept of the "great controversy" is her unique and valuable contribution to Christian thought. Yet is this so? No one has yet provided the argumentation and evidence. I suspect that when all hands have folded, the answer will be "Yes" and "No."

Thanks to the women's movement, probably the single most important new influence in religious studies, Ellen White can now be seen as an important and successful female religious leader. Yet, little analysis of her thought and career from feminist perspectives has been done. For example, some of the early opposition to her visions seems to me to be clearly due to the antifeminist attitudes of her male contemporaries.

Ellen White's visions need to be explored in much more depth. There are so many historical and explanatory tools available now to religion specialists, including anthropological and psychological perspectives very favorable toward religious experience. While her limitations need to be honestly acknowledged, many riches in her writings remain to be mined.

**AT:** What kind of general response have you been getting from scholars you have contacted so far?

Well, a few have been skeptical and concerned about what we're up to. But most have listened patiently and offered encouragement. When they hear that the essays should be aimed at an informed non-Adventist readership, they've been delighted. I have lots of e-mails saying, "It's about time!" We have papers or book reviews in production from Lourdes Morales-Gudmundsson, Bernadine Irwin, Gary Land and Ron Lawson, as well as several graduate students. Colleges from Germany to Korea to South Africa have already ordered the journal for their libraries. If teachers and students in these places read it, they'll also send manuscripts; but it'll take a while.

**AT:** What are you doing to advertise the journal?

We have already published a Call for Papers in *Religious Studies News* and *Spectrum* and other academic and religious journals. For now, our primary marketing avenue will be our web site, [www.ellengwhitestudies.com](http://www.ellengwhitestudies.com). As we have funds, we will solicit schools, seminaries, libraries and organizations for subscriptions. ■

# Adventist Today readers

Diana Fisher respond to survey

Over one-fourth of all subscribers to *Adventist Today* responded to a recent survey sent by the staff. Of those surveyed 85 percent said their expectations of the magazine are usually met. The highest ranking of sections read were the top news story and the letters to the editor.

A surprising 65 percent have not visited the web site, whereas among those that have, 40 percent visit at least once

every three months.

The largest group of those surveyed said they would consider themselves "middle of the road" (56 percent) and 36 percent said they are most comfortable in the "liberal" group.

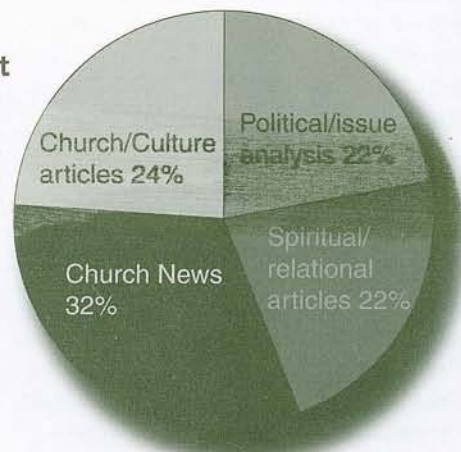
Thank you, readers, for your helpful comments and concerns. We appreciate the feedback. If you would like to contact us directly, please send e-mail to: [editor@atoday.com](mailto:editor@atoday.com).

## Does Adventist Today meet your expectations?

A. Usually 85% B. Sometimes 14.9% C. Never .01%

## Which page(s) do you usually read first when you get a new issue of AT?

Editorials 20%  
Features 19%  
Letters 30%  
Soundings 3%  
Top News Story 33%



## Do you visit [www.atoday.com](http://www.atoday.com)?

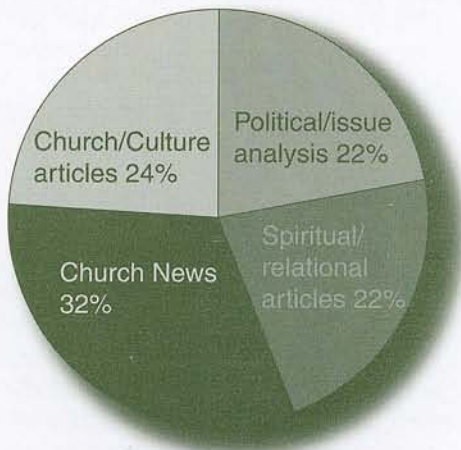
Yes 35% No 65%

## If yes, how often do you visit our web site?

Once every three months 40%  
Once a month 24%  
Twice a month 17%  
Every week 16%  
Every day 3%

## Which group of Adventists do you feel you most relate to?

A. Conservative 8% B. Middle of the Road 56% C. Liberal 36%



## Which of the following would you like to see more of in AT? (Circle more than one if you wish)

Church News 32%  
Political/Issue Analysis 22%  
Spiritual/Relational Articles 22%  
Church and Culture 24%

# Out of Africa

Dennis Hokama *1888 Re-examined Turns 50*

**O**n February 8, 2000, the Primacy of the Gospel Committee conducted its tenth and last scheduled meeting in the Drayson Center at Loma Linda University. This committee is an outgrowth of a private meeting between former General Conference president Robert Folkenberg and Robert Wieland. What follows is a brief history and analysis of another chapter in the great "1888 Righteousness by Faith Debate" that has rocked the Adventist church ever since Robert J. Wieland and Donald K. Short burst upon the Adventist theological scene unexpectedly at the General Conference session in San Francisco fifty years ago.

## History and Background

On July 11, 1950 two missionaries still in their early thirties on furlough from Africa sent a letter with a shocking thesis to the General Conference Committee assembled for the General Conference session in San Francisco. That four-page letter and its aftermath have transformed the Adventist theological landscape in the following half century, even while its central thesis was being repeatedly rejected by the church.

Citing the President's address the night before, calling for them to guard "the faith once delivered to the saints, and to speak forthrightly in defense of it," the two men proceeded to denounce the "Christ-centered preaching" currently being urged upon them by the Ministerial Association meetings for the past four days as "merely anti-Christ centered ... Baal Worship" which contradicted the 1888 message, robbed Adventists of their distinctive message, and constituted a return to Egypt (*Faith on Trial*, p. 39-43).

The first consequence of that initial rejection was the hasty writing of the 204-page manuscript that became *1888 Re-examined*. Although it saved their credentials and secured their return to Africa as missionaries, the document was banned and their names were put under a cloud until this day. The church's attempt to ban it did not prevent it from getting into the hands of the Adventist underground, and firebrands like the Brinsmeads and A.L. Hudson, who used it with great effect to trouble Israel. By the

time Wieland and Short finally felt ethically free to publish it in 1987, righteousness by faith (RBF) and 1888 had become the most controversial subject and year in Adventism since 1844 and the "shut door."

## The Road to the 1950 General Conference

What circumstances provoked these two young missionaries from Africa attending their first General Conference session to write such an audacious letter, and what enabled them back it up with a two-hundred-page manuscript less than two months later?

When Wieland entered Columbia Union College he was a fellow student with Short, but they were only casual acquaintances. It was during Wieland's junior year that he first encountered E.J. Waggoner's *Glad Tidings*, a book whose teachings would change his life. In a theology class, Elder Lindsay Semmens made the claim that Desmond Ford, an Australian professor, did not understand the two covenants. Wieland asked, "Well then, who

"The fifty years of rejection does not seem to have embittered them toward the church, and they remain loyal to, and respectful of, the organization, some might say to a fault."

does?" The professor referred him to *Glad Tidings*. Wieland read it and was impressed. He took his typewriter into the library and copied key chapters. He carried those typewritten pages around with him after that.

Wieland graduated from CUC in 1939 and entered the ministry in the Florida Conference in 1940. In 1945, he went to the Kakoro Mission in East Africa. He was to spend a total of 24 years in Africa, though not consecutively. He returned from Africa for the last time in 1984.

While at CUC, Short supported himself by operating a private printing business and involved himself in evangelistic efforts. Upon graduating in 1940, he was appointed as a missionary to Africa and

sailed to Mbeya, Tanganyika. He remained in East Africa until 1960, serving in various capacities, including mission director and publishing house manager. Then he was transferred to South Africa, where he served until he retired in 1978 after 37 years in Africa.

Wieland was disillusioned when he got to Africa, because of rampant sexual promiscuity by native workers and the constant lying that took place to conceal it. He found a solution in the chapters of *Glad Tidings* that he had brought with him. That 1888 Righteousness by Faith (RBF) included an understanding of the nature of Christ, which was completely human, including sexuality. Since Christ was empowered to conquer sexual desire, and was our Savior, it implied that the Holy Spirit would also empower believers to control sexual passions.

This was a shocking idea to the natives, but it also made Christ someone they could now identify with. Wieland concluded that the 1888 theological package contained in *Glad Tidings* was the key to the Adventist message, and he built his ministry around it. This included a non dispensational unified understanding of the covenants, the complete humanness of Christ, which made him our example in every way, and the unconditional gift of salvation to every human at

the cross, regardless of works.

In 1949, Wieland returned on furlough by ship with Short, who had been in Africa since 1940. The plan was to study at the seminary during the winter and spring of 49-50 and attend the General Conference as delegates from Africa just prior to returning to their respective mission posts in Africa. During the three weeks they sailed together, they discovered that they shared similar views on most things and forged a close friendship.

## Sudden Expulsion from the Seminary

Wieland took a class on RBF from George Vandeman. He soon realized that Vandeman was teaching a RBF that also

required works, which was different from the 1888 version that he had learned from Waggoner. After discussing the matter with Vandeman and getting no satisfactory answers, he went right to the President, D.E. Rebok, without talking to anyone else. When he had finished telling Rebok his concerns, Wieland was shocked to have Rebok tell him that he must leave the seminary immediately.

### The Quest Begins

Before leaving town, Wieland drove to the White Estate and began researching what Ellen White had said concerning 1888 and E.J. Waggoner. When Wieland discovered Ellen White's statements about 1888 and her endorsements of Waggoner, he knew he had discovered something to explain his experience.

He spent that winter in Florida researching the 1888 history and message. He was denied access to the White Estate, so he began to call and write to retired ministers who had known Ellen White personally to ask about their correspondence with her. The letters he was given, he said, became the basis for what would become *1888 Re-examined*. Although Short was no longer at the Seminary, he began helping Wieland by checking out materials from the White Estate and the seminary as they were needed.

Despite Wieland's unexpected detour, both men arrived in San Francisco on July 6 to attend the General Conference session as delegates from Africa. Elder L.K. Dickson declared in the Sabbath worship service preceding the session that "we must make a right turn at this session where we took a wrong turn in 1888." There was also a public announcement that if any delegate had a burden on his heart, they should express it. The convergence of these two proclamations in conjunction with Wieland's recent experience seemed a providential sign compelling them to write a letter to the General Conference Committee. The rest, as they say, is history.

### Robert J. Wieland and Donald K. Short Today

Wieland is now 83. His partner, Short, just turned 85 on January 2. Between them, they have logged 61 years as missionaries in Africa. They have now had theological dialogue with seven G.C. Presidents, from Spicer (who by 1950 was retired) to Folkenberg. The fifty years of rejection does not seem to have embittered them toward the church, and they remain loyal to, and respectful of, the organization, some might say to a fault. To

this day, neither they nor the 1888 Message Study Committee (MSC), which formed around their ministry in 1985, will accept any tithe money, on the principle that they cannot ethically compete with God's church. Nobody reading through their correspondence with the church and its designated scholars over the last 50 years can fail to marvel at how they have managed to balance their uncompromising logic with charity and humility in receiving counsel that at times was brutal and derogatory.

The February 8, 2000 meeting was the fifth hearing Wieland and Short have had with the General Conference or its authorized designees. The first four were in 1950, 1958, 1964-72, 1973-75. Each of the first four hearings resulted in ultimate rejection, although the last time around Elder Pierson was very sympathetic, Wieland says, until Desmond Ford changed his mind as a result of the Palmdale conference in 1976.

When asked what he hopes will come out of this series of meetings, Wieland admits that after fifty years, he is still optimistic enough to hope for acceptance and corporate repentance, but at this point will gladly settle for a cessation of hostilities so they can preach without interference.

Although the meeting on February 8, 2000 had little fanfare and no publicity, it marks the completion of yet another significant chapter of this debate. The unannounced surprise substitution of Robert Kloosterhuis for Calvin Rock as chairman for this final meeting was a source of keen disappointment and concern for the 1888 Message Study Committee. This was not only because of the fairness Rock had demonstrated throughout the committee, hearings but also because Kloosterhuis as Division President in Africa had fired Wieland under controversial circumstances, and he was not perceived by the 1888 group to be an impartial participant.

The findings of this committee will not be known officially for a few months, since all participants have agreed not to publish or speak for the record concerning the discussions until after the committee delivers its report to the General Conference.

### In Conclusion, an Analysis:

Wieland and Short may or may not know anything about 1888, or about Righteousness by Faith. As they once confessed to Leroy Froom, "We profess to know nothing more on the matter than has been recorded in the writings of Ellen G. White." Their lifetime has been spent studying, not 1888 and righteousness by faith per se, but 1888 and righteousness by faith as refracted through the pen of Ellen White and the two messengers (A.T. Jones and E.J. Waggoner) she endorsed.

Whether or not this is a sound way to discover the truth about 1888 and the reason for the long delay of the second coming of Christ is not the subject of this

"What circumstances provoked these two young missionaries from Africa attending their first General Conference session to write such an audacious letter, and what enabled them back it up with a two-hundred-page manuscript less than two months later?"

piece. But history shows that once granted their premises, they have proved themselves formidable defenders of their thesis against all opposition for over half a century. Those who have taken issue with their conclusions over the last half century without first repudiating their logic, such as Leroy Froom and George Knight, have repeatedly shattered their evidentiary lances against the granite of that logic. On the other hand, those scholars who openly repudiated their logic by challenging the historical integrity of Ellen G. White, such as Desmond Ford, and eventually Robert Brinsmead, soon found themselves in even more theological hot water with the Brethren than Wieland and Short were. But whether they are right about Ellen White, 1888, Righteousness by Faith, or the reason for the Great Delay, who can argue against the conclusion that in the process of fighting the good fight, Wieland and Short have discovered the fountain of youth? ■

*For an in-depth and complete account version of this story, see the Adventist Today website at: [www.atoday.com](http://www.atoday.com)*

# thank you for the good for the gentiles

James Coffin

## Where should we draw the line concerning what's "essential" service?

Recently I was preparing a sermon on the story of Jonah when it suddenly struck me just how astoundingly successful he was as an evangelist—everyone in the entire city of Nineveh turned to God. A 100 percent conversion rate in a major population center is so incredible that, were it not recorded in the Bible, I would find it hard to believe.

On the very day I was contemplating Jonah's amazing success, I received details of a major evangelistic series to be run in New York City the latter part of 1999. The thought leaped to mind: What if our Adventist preacher were as successful as Jonah? What would be the implications if everyone in New York City became a Seventh-day Adventist? But before I try to answer those questions, let me do a little random reminiscing.



Nearly ten years ago I was a delegate to the General Conference Session in Indianapolis. So that Adventists wouldn't have to buy food on Sabbath, session organizers had arranged with various eating establishments

for us to prepay for our meals. Those prepaying received a receipt that would entitle them to a meal on Sabbath.

Although we prepaid to avoid having to buy on Sabbath, we didn't seek any guarantee that our food would be prepared initially on Friday, then merely reheated and served when we handed in our receipt on Sabbath. It seems we were more concerned about our having to buy than about their having to work.

About twenty-five years ago I was holding forth before a group of students about the virtues of country living. It was my second year in ministry, and I was serving as chaplain for an Adventist students' association at a state university.

Having outlined in considerable detail the virtues of country of living and the specifics of how it was possible for anyone adequately motivated, I was taken aback when an Adventist professor from the university gently informed me that my thinking was flawed. "You've forgotten the law of composition," he said.

"If you're at a football game and can't see because

heads are in your way, it will help if you stand up. But it will help only as long as few people do it. If everyone stands, you lose the advantage. In the same way, your ideas of country living are predicated on the assumption that most people won't do it. If everyone did, we couldn't support the technological infrastructure that makes country living, as you've outlined it, viable."

So, what are the implications of the entire population joining the Adventist church? Do Adventists unwittingly ignore the law of composition? Would it be possible to satisfy Adventism's traditional expectations in an environment that's 100 percent Adventist and still have a technologically advanced society? Let's note but a few of the many complexities.

For starters, there's the police force. If New York City becomes 100 percent Adventist, there are basically two options for protecting its totally Adventist citizenry against unsavory types from elsewhere: leave all personal and property protection to God, or maintain a police force. If the latter option is chosen, police protection is needed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, which creates a Sabbath-work dilemma.

Of course, as the police seek to protect lives and property, they face another dilemma: do they expect God to protect them from harm, or carry deadly weapons? If the entire nation is Adventist but surrounding nations aren't, we have an even greater problem of protection from aggressors. The national police force is called the "military."

If it isn't realistic to expect God to consistently protect his people, then we would be forced to play roles that we were able to avoid when there were plenty of non-SDAs ("Gentiles") willing to do them.

The church life and personal life of NYC Adventists presuppose the availability of electricity on Sabbath. Church sanctuaries are so large that a speaker would never be heard were there no sound system. Lighting, air conditioning and heating are taken for granted. Food has to be kept cool. Even on Sabbath, Adventists depend on subways, traffic signals, elevators, and life-support apparatus at hospitals.

All of this is made possible by electricity. And this electricity comes from a power plant somewhere, which is operated by human beings. There would be similar concerns with water supply, sewage disposal, fire protection, and snow removal.

If the entire population of New York City were

Seventh-day Adventist, church members would have to run the hospitality industry, if it continued to exist. Would no hotel patrons be allowed to check in or out on Sabbath?

Would there be no room service on Sabbath or customer-service representatives? Would hotel patrons have to buy food on Friday, to be eaten in their rooms on Sabbath? Would they be served meals in the hotel restaurant only if they had paid in advance?

Today's high-tech society doesn't allow everything to grind to a halt once every seven days. Nor, for that matter, did a bygone, more low-tech society. For example, the sailing vessel taking Ellen White to Australia in the late 1800s always required at least some oversight on Sabbath. Students in Adventist boarding schools have always required meal service on Sabbaths. Child care has always been a 24/7 task.

The examples I've provided don't scratch the surface of the complexity of our modern society. But these few cases are sufficient to show the incompatibility of many traditional Adventist structures with a hypothetical 100 percent Adventist population of a city or a nation.

If everyone in NYC became an Adventist we would have to adjust our concept of what's acceptable for Adventists to do, or we would have to import non-Adventists to do Sabbath work. And this dilemma cannot be solved by moving out of NYC. In Missoula, Montana we still need oil and gas from refineries to run our chain saws and Honda generators. And those refineries must run continuously. Even in small towns and in the country, we still rely on police and fire protection and probably think that the availability of electricity and telephone service on Sabbath is a good idea. The only reason we've been able to retain both our belief system and our technologically sophisticated lifestyle is that there are a huge number of non-SDAs who can do for us what we find unacceptable to do for ourselves.

Some find no incongruity, no dilemma, no cause for consternation in this fact. I'm not one of them. If I can't have my cake and eat it too in a society where everyone is Seventh-day Adventist, then I wonder if I should have qualms about doing so where few are Adventists.

If my religious practice is rendered nonviable when Gentiles are removed from the equation, then my religious practices need to be seriously reevaluated. At the very least, I need to understand the inherent incongruities and the magnitude of what I'm dealing with. Do the Gentiles provide Adventists with a lifestyle that would otherwise be out of reach?

I'm not trying to do away with the Sabbath or any other Adventist belief; I'm not trying to make them of no consequence. In fact, I think the Sabbath, when seen in nonlegalistic

terms, is one of the most beautiful doctrines espoused by the Adventist church. But I believe we need to either deny ourselves the benefits we derive from Sabbath breaking by Gentiles on our behalf or change our concept of Sabbath keeping.

In the agrarian society of the Old Testament the Hebrews recognized that certain jobs still had to be done. They still fed and milked their cows and goats, even though the commandment said they were to do no work. And in the New Testament Jesus endorsed the concept of helping the ox out of the ditch on Sabbath. He made it clear that it was lawful to do good.

But just how far does the concept of doing good go? And in a complex society, what constitutes an ox in the ditch? Where should we draw the line concerning what's "essential" service?

The only reason we've been able to retain both our belief system and our technologically sophisticated lifestyle is the presence of a huge number of non-SDAs who can do for us what we find unacceptable to do for ourselves.

My purpose isn't to imply that the traditional prohibitions we've practiced should be ignored, but to call for rigorous, thoughtful reexamination of how Sabbath-keeping principles apply in modern society. We need to ask ourselves why we've drawn the lines where we have. Can we justify them objectively?

I'm not suggesting that there should be no standards and that all Adventists should just do as they please. But we need to rethink how and where we've drawn many of our lines of demarcation. And I think we must recognize the need for great individual latitude in determining just how to relate to such complex issues.

Until we've acknowledged the existence of this quagmire of complexity and wrestled with its implications, the least we can do is to thank God every day for the Gentiles—because, without them, life would be pretty grim. ■

*James Coffin is senior pastor of the Markham Woods Church in Longwood, Florida.*

Do the **Gentiles** provide Adventists with a **lifestyle** that would **otherwise** be out of reach?

# this world is not my home

Robert Gardner  
and John Sickler

## individualism and the ethics of citizenship

**a** friend of ours tells a story of walking down the street with a fellow seminary student who had an almost empty paper cup in his hand, left over from a fast food break. Seeing two trash bins beside the street, one regular and one for recycling, he paused. Clearly, he understood the choice before him. With calculated certainty he tossed the cup into the regular trash and walked on, pontificating on the subtleties of one Greek verb or another. Our friend noticed this decision and asked, "Why did you choose to throw your empty cup into the regular trash can when you could have recycled it with no extra effort?" The young man responded, "Ahh, who cares, it's all going to burn!"

The seminary student in question was devout, if not evangelistic, in his opinion. Here was a man whose individual salvation contradicted basic social responsibility; it was as if recycling, in his mind, indicated a lack of faith. Perhaps his religious hedonism sounds extreme; indeed, we hope it does, but his individualistic brand of ethic is alive and well in American Protestantism in general and, more specifically, in American Seventh-day Adventism.

Unfortunately, there are those within the church who look at societal misfortune as merely a sign of the times.

Why worry about the environment or get involved in politics when prophecy tells us it will only get worse? We would ask: Are Christians

called to be active citizens, or are civic matters just distractions interfering with personal salvation?

To determine their own answers to this issue, readers might want to think through the following questions:

If you were an Adventist and a young adult during the 1960s, did you actively engage in any of the social equality movements?

If you are a vegetarian, is it because that is a way to more efficiently use the world's resources, and

help reduce poverty, or "for health reasons?"

Do you abhor social sins like the hoarding of wealth with the same vehemence you have toward individual sins like adultery?

Let us pretend there was international revival across Christendom regarding the seventh-day Sabbath and that it led to talk of a universal Saturday worship law. If the church responded with apathetic confusion, would you join a public movement against such a law anyway? What if most of those leading the movement were secular atheists?

Do you vote?

Seventh-day Adventists are a highly individualistic lot, and their independent culture and character are clearly evident. Remarkably strong and self-reliant, early Adventists separated themselves from their relatives and churches of origin to create new communities with separate institutions. In just a few years, Adventists established distinctive schools, sanitariums, food factories, publishing houses, and other industries that provided for member needs in a world of their own. In reality, this "spirit of Adventism" which identified the character of Battle Creek, Takoma Park, and Loma Linda was common to 19th century America. It was a spirit of individualism with strong values of freedom, independence, self-reliance and self-sufficiency.

Today it is not uncommon for the same person to be born in an Adventist hospital, taught in Adventist schools, baptized in an Adventist church, fed by Adventist-owned food companies, entertained by Adventist television, employed by one of many Adventist institutions and cared for in an Adventist retirement home. That person might, then, donate his or her money to Adventist causes and die in the same or a different Adventist hospital, only to be buried in an Adventist cemetery. In fact, more than one of our communities can provide every one of these institutions without exception. It is not without irony that the population figure on the Loma Linda city limits sign was changed by some observant prankster to read "144,000."

Adventism, like other denominations, tends to "separate its members off from attachment to the wider society. Morality becomes personal, not social, private, not public" as described by a team of sociologists in *Habits of*



Gardner



Sickler



*the Heart.* A tension arises, however, within our church between "withdrawal into purely private spirituality and the biblical impetus to see religion as involved with the whole of life." On the level of the individual, one cannot be a citizen of "a heavenly kingdom" without also being a citizen of numerous earthly governments. Each person plays out many different roles, which affect not only his or her own well-being, but that of others as well.

Even our institutions are interdependent within the wider society. One has only to look at the budget of any Adventist hospital to see that its survival depends more on Medicare than on tithes and offerings.

The Adventist ethic of citizenship is shaped by several historical as well as theological influences. Perhaps the hardest influence to admit is that of classical Greek thought. In the *Republic*, Plato sketched the first theory of citizenship, a theory that formed the basis for subsequent practice in western societies and organizations. The moral character of people, he wrote, determines the nature of the community and the way it is organized and governed. Since nature has determined some people to be of higher moral character than others, society is benefited if the "aristocracy," or better class of people, govern for the good of all the people.

This theory of exclusive citizenship characterized human beings as unequal, and thus, it justified slavery. Plato's well-known pupil Aristotle wrote in *Politics*, Book I, "The lower sort are by nature slaves, and it is better for them as for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of a master ... Indeed, the use made of slaves and of tame animals is not very different. Again, the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind."

The same theory of exclusive citizenship was adapted to the theology of the Roman Christian church under the rubric of "natural law." Roughly translated, it held that God in his infinite wisdom had determined some, like women and people without white skin, were inferior; neither were seen as capable of the responsibilities of citizenship or the priesthood. It is ironic that although today we criticize the way society in general treats minority groups, we maintain some of the same prejudices in our church structure.

Scripture has also helped form our ethic of citizenship; however, our fulfillment of these directives has often been selective. Perhaps two biblical passages have been the ones most partially applied. First is Jesus' statement in John 17:16, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Then, in verse 18, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." Why is it that most readers see only the first passage and not the second? How often do we hear a sermon entitled, "You are to be in the world"? It is as if we have taken this passage to mean we are to do nothing more for society than pay taxes. To volunteer for our local school district or write our state senator is to somehow waste our God-given talents on something "secular," or worse, to place our soul in danger.

Many people have a mistaken notion of the term "salvation." It has also been taken out of scriptural context and been "baptized" with our gospel of individualism. The term is used in the Bible far more often to speak of a community

than of an individual. Today people regard "salvation" almost exclusively as referring to a heavenly reward, but in scripture it is rarely connected with heaven at all. Liberation theologians are right when they claim salvation is meant for this world as much as the world hereafter and is as much political as doctrinal.

A third stream of influence upon the Adventist ethic of citizenship is that which was expressed in our nation's Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are...liberty..." In truth, only four percent of American citizens were eligible to vote in America's first election, since the remaining 96 percent were women, slaves, or Native Americans, but this phrase planted the seeds of salvation to be more fully cultivated during the women's suffrage and

If you were  
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There is no way to know how many generations to come will need our environment or whether God would have us vote Democratic, Republican or Green in an upcoming election. We do know, however, that salt does no good in a saltshaker, and fertilizer stinks if it isn't spread around.

civil rights movements.

Today the Adventist church finds itself in the world 156 years after expecting to be free of it. There is no way to know how many generations to come will need our environment or whether God would have us vote Democratic, Republican or Green in an upcoming election. We do know, however, that salt does no good in a saltshaker, and fertilizer stinks if it isn't spread around. If we live and work advance God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, we can take part in building two kingdoms at the same time. ■

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# pushing the envelope

## a new generation approaches tithing

Craig Van Rooyen

Ever since graduating from Pacific Union College and going to work in Southern California as a marketing manager for a major shoe company, Carey Allington had stopped putting a tenth of his income into a tithe envelope, licking it closed and discreetly placing it upside down in the church offering plate. He is not sick of being Adventist. His paychecks have not transformed him into a worldly worshiper of mammon, drunk on a newfound materialism. In fact, he probably still considers himself within the fold even if it is toward the edge of the flock. But for now, Allington, 27, wants to feel that his money is really making a difference. He uses 10 percent of his income to help support friends who are building churches in Cambodia.

"I don't have as much respect for the church as an organization as I used to," he said. "As I started questioning the things most important to me—my church and religious traditions—I started feeling like some of the traditions are purely human-based, not centered on Christ. I still see a value in organized religion and I still see myself raising kids in the SDA system, but right now I have a problem putting my money in the envelope. It seems like a big hole, so spread out. It doesn't seem personal. I get more satisfaction giving directly to something I know is active."

Allington believes in the tithing principle and plans to continue giving some of his money away, perhaps even returning to stuffing the envelope when his generation becomes more invested in church. "When my generation becomes older and grows into leadership in the church, it will change things for me," he said.

Like Allington, many young Adventists who have finally stopped living on school loan checks are grappling with the issue of financial responsibility and benevolent giving. As an Adventist that means making a decision about tithing. The financial inquiry quickly stirs up other questions linked to coming of age in a religious tradition. Where does my tithe money go? Do I believe in what it is being spent on? If my money is being used to evangelize a world to the unique doctrines of Adventism, how important are these traditions to me? Is there a better way of organizing the church structure?

Of course, young Adventists will not answer these questions in a single voice. However, there seems to be some generalizations that can be made about the post baby-boomer generation and its approach to finances. Many of the people interviewed for this article said they tithe for nontraditional reasons and are often willing to divert some

of their tithe money to causes that they feel emotionally drawn to. Many said they have only a general idea of what the denomination does with their tithe money and expressed a mild skepticism about the mysterious workings of the church hierarchy. They were more interested in seeing their tithe money at work in the local church than seeing it passed on to the General Conference.

Some of those interviewed had stopped paying tithe to the church altogether but were still involved in some form of philanthropic giving. Kiam Kim, a 30-year-old general contractor, now gives sporadically as he senses need, sometimes to causes, sometimes to people down on their luck, only occasionally to the church offering plate. "It's more satisfying," he said. "I do give less money now, but I feel

As I started questioning the things most important to me—my church and religious traditions—I started feeling like some of the traditions are purely human-based, not centered on Christ.

more comfortable knowing where its going. There's less room for abuse."

Church leaders are beginning to sense the importance of keeping young dollars within the fold. In the past two decades, the increases in tithe and offering income to the denomination have not kept pace with inflation. A 1995 study by the North American Division of the General Conference on "Giving Practices and Attitude" concludes that the "segment of the membership that should be the backbone of the denomination's financial support—the 69 percent of members who are either in their prime earning years—or preparing to move into their prime earning years trend to be more critical of church leadership and less supportive as givers." The overwhelming majority of active 'Baby-Buster' Adventists—those born from 1965 through 1981; still believe in tithing, but are significantly more likely to turn in a lower percentage of their income than older Adventists, according to a 1993 Pacific Union Conference study of generational giving habits. Young Adventists are also more likely to divert tithe to the local church budget and to hold back money if they disagree with some church

action. Only five percent of the World War II Generation Adventists surveyed said that one should hold some money back if he or she does not agree with the message the church is teaching. Nearly a quarter of Baby-Busters felt holding some money back would be appropriate.

Michael Quishenberry, a 30-something Adventist, has always paid tithe; however, his reasons for doing so have changed over the years. "At first it was because my parents made me," he said. "Then it was because I just felt like I should (tithe) even if I didn't really know why." More recently, paying tithe has been a way for Quishenberry to participate in his religious community. "There's a spiritual element to it that I haven't quite figured out," he said. "But I don't look at tithing as an obligation anymore. I do see it as showing some appreciation for what the Adventist church means to me. This community is important." Other young Adventists are quick to stress tithing as an expression of spirituality. None of those interviewed mentioned the fact that "stewardship" has been enshrined as number 20 of the church's 27 fundamental beliefs. Often their giving is linked to feeling part of a home church.

Jeanne Johansen, 30, hasn't felt that sense of belonging to a church since her years as a student missionary in Japan after college. Then, tithing was an expression of faith in God's providence. Recently, as she hopped from church to church, she stopped giving regularly, except to other charitable organizations as she saw the need. But, Johansen said, she now enjoys settling down in a home church and paying tithe again.

"When I go to church I go for comfort," she said. "Sometimes to be anonymous. Sometimes to get my spiritual fix. It's important to keep that sanctuary going. The people who make it happen need financial support. I still think tithing is the right thing to do. But I want to see my money in action at the local level."

Of course, a significant segment of young Adventists pay tithe for the same reason their parents do. They grew up believing it was the right thing to do, have never questioned that giving pattern and would not think of holding back their tithe dollars. "There's always that fear in the back of my mind that I won't be as blessed if I stopped paying tithe," said Reiner Roeske, the 31-year-old Loma Linda University Children's Hospital Foundation employee. "It's a non-negotiable for me now." What is negotiable, however, according to Roeske, is how the tithe money is spent. He believes more of it should stay with the local congregation. "I have begun to question where it's going, but I haven't changed my giving pattern," he said.

None of those interviewed for this article has a detailed idea of where their tithe money goes—even those who pay tithe regularly. It is no wonder. A schematic diagram of tithe flow provided by the Southeastern California Conference treasurer looks like the circulatory system of a higher mammal. The denomination has essentially four layers of administration. The Southeastern California Conference is a part of the Pacific Union, which is a part of the North American Division, which is part of the General Conference. Tithe money shuttles up and down the ladder in a complicated system of distribution.

Where those dollars came to rest shows that 20 percent of the money ends up at the General Conference and in General Conference programs. About 33 percent of the tithe money pays the salaries of church pastors. Nearly 11

percent is spent on world missions. About 15 percent goes to pay the administrative costs at the local conference, union and division level. Other tithe dollars go to K-12 education, the youth camp system, Adventist universities and colleges, and services to local churches.

"We need to let young people know where their money is going and what the ministries of the church are," admitted Alfred Kromminga, stewardship coordinator for the Southeastern California Conference. Younger Adventists are much more willing to give their money to specific programs which they benefit from, he said, adding that church members are becoming consumers and not stewards.

The church will feel the full impact of the Baby-Busters' giving habits over the coming decades as older Adventists retire. Whether changing attitudes about finances will translate into structural and theological changes remains to be seen. One thing is certain, Seventh-day Adventism is evolving and growing as it always has.

"People are more focused on doing more for the local congregation instead of seeing a mission out there," he said.

One of the remedies for this perceived problem, according to Kromminga, is to let church members know how their local church benefits from tithe money. The bigger challenge, he said, is restoring the denomination's sense of mission in the younger generation. "We need to go back to our roots; to why we were drawn out of the Millerite movement," Kromminga said. "Our church's peculiarities in theology transmit into mission. We have the message of the investigative judgment, the message of Daniel 9 and Revelation 14. This is the basic message the church should be taking to the world. We need to look at what causes people to lose the vision."

Some young Adventists might answer that their vision has changed but is not lost. Peculiarities in Adventist doctrine may no longer motivate many of them. "I'm not really sure what I think about SDA doctrines," said Janelle Stevenson, a young speech therapist. "I remember as a girl being scared in Bible class. But I don't think I'd be where I am if it weren't for God working in my life. Giving tithe is a way of showing my gratitude; but I don't think it's the only way."

Her husband James is also ambivalent about some church doctrines. "I don't agree with all the do's and don't's of Adventism," he said. "I do believe in the big things, the Christ-centered things. I wouldn't mind my money going to spread the gospel."

Others in the new generation are committed to the

[Continued on page 22]

# Time and my money

James Walters

## Saints, Conservatives and Liberals

**C**hances are you made money in the stock market last year. Today 54 percent of Americans are invested in the market, and given the upscale profile of many AT readers, you may be sitting on a burgeoning portfolio.

You like having the increased wealth, but you might feel a bit guilty. (If you are poor or econo-spiritually content, this opinion piece isn't for you; why not turn the page?)

What's an Adventist with modest wealth to do? Of course, one could just buy a bigger house and a finer car. But let's explore three more interesting options: Be a saint, a conservative, or a liberal.

### The Saint

The saint rejects the modern obsession with money-making and gives to worthy causes, particularly life-saving projects. Bread for the World, for instance, because for every \$1,000 given, x lives will be saved from starvation. How can an Adventist enjoy the security of having \$100,000 in a Fidelity Investments mutual fund if he or she knows that 100 Ugandan children will die if the money sits in Wall



Street? The idea of giving \$25,000 or \$100,000—if not one's total savings—finds strong support in both Chris-

tianity and philosophy. The Christian believes that every life is sacred and that Jesus would have died to save just one person—any one person; and besides, didn't Jesus say that one gains life by losing it? The utilitarian believes that maximizing happiness for all persons on earth is the criterion for deciding the right use of one's money, and surely the sum of world happiness is greater if a significant number of starving children are fed (the rule is: "the greatest good for the greatest number").

This logic for sainthood seems clear enough: sacrifice your own good for the greater good of others. Why aren't there more Christian—or secular—saints? Frankly, it's because we're more interested in ourselves and the well-being of our loved ones than we are in other people—particularly distant strangers. And self-interest is condoned by Jesus in his famous love command: "Love God with heart, soul and mind, and your neighbor as yourself." Jesus presupposed a healthy self-regard. Understandably, there are a limited number of Mother Therasas and Fernando and Anna Stahls who dedicate their lives to saving lives in India, South America, or anywhere. But such saints set an example that keeps us from being even more self-centered.

## The Conservative

Financial conservatives don't so much choose their position; many are destined to it by early Protestant influences. The roots of Protestant conservatism go back to the reformer John Calvin: a life of good works was a sign of being one of God's elect. Hence, Calvinists lived fervent, frugal, good lives as evidence of their elect status. Even after the Calvinist fervor died down, dedication to hard work and frugality endured, and it became the seedbed for modern capitalism, wrote sociologist of religion Max Weber. Influenced by the related ascetic Puritan tradition, Methodism's founder John Wesley wrote that "religion must necessarily produce both industry and frugality, and these cannot but produce riches." Wesley's credo was: Work all you can, Save all you can, Give all you can. It's no wonder that Ellen White, a Methodist before co-founding the Adventist church, emphasized work, frugality, and generosity. Early Adventists were very generous in their offerings and often gave a multiple tithe.

Adventists still give generous offerings, but because of a growing sophistication about giving (and in light of questions about church use of funds), some Adventists of means are cutting back in church support. Deeply influenced by the Protestant ethic, they are continuing to work hard, and they are frugal, but their riches increasingly are conserved in Wall Street, and there they grow and grow. We follow Wesley's first two points, but not the third—and we are a bit uneasy about our wealth, right?

## The Liberal

The financial liberal opens up the checkbook to make the world a better place, but not at all costs. What's the rationale for this moderate, liberal approach to wealth?

First, the liberal sees that beyond just helping others to have a good life, she herself/he himself, was created by God to also live a decent life in the here and now, and so gives liberally but not totally. In other words, it makes no sense to sacri-

fice so that others can have a better life, if that better life is denied to oneself in the first place.

Second, the liberal person benefits from critiquing the saintly and conservative extremes. The problem with the conservative Protestant ethic is that it doesn't make sense. It's absurd to continuously work and accumulate wealth that just sits in Wall Street—as though work and dollars are ends in themselves. The Protestant ethic has a strange, ascetic quality: one earns and accumulates wealth, but senses it is wrong to enjoy it. So the wealthy ascetic avoids any spontaneous enjoyment of life, is embarrassed by outward signs of social recognition, and generally avoids ostentation and unnecessary expenditures. Weber portrays Benjamin Franklin ("a penny saved is a penny earned") as the quintessential Protestant capitalist: "He gets nothing out of his wealth for himself, except the irrational sense of having done his job well." The liberal accepts the senselessness of conservatism: life is more than existing for the sake of work. Rather, one works to live well, not lives to work hard.

The saint teaches the liberal that world need is real; and somebody must address it. But rather than choosing total self-abandonment, the liberal uses personal means and talent to address various needs. Yes, lives in India need to be saved, but also life in America needs to be improved and cultural needs in society and intellectual needs in the church need to be addressed. So educational, spiritual, artistic, cultural, scientific and intellectual projects are all good candidates for help. And that help takes at least three forms: a) personal giving of funds, b) personal investment of time and effort, and c) political involvement and voting for candidates who address real world need.

Often wealthy Adventists have worked hard, and out of fairness deserve to enjoy some fruit of their labor—e.g., an above-average house. But the absurdity of mere conservation of wealth and the great need to save life and deepen its meaning beckon us to financial liberalism. One's Fidelity account will be a little less, but God's world will be a bit better. ■

*James Walters, PhD, is an ethicist and the publisher of Adventist Today.*

How can an Adventist **enjoy** the security of having \$100,000 in a Fidelity Investments mutual fund if he or she knows that 100 Ugandan **children** will die if the money sits in Wall Street?

## Pushing the envelope

[Continued from page 19]

Adventist traditions and give tithe to advance the traditional church cause; the "Three Angels Message." Marvin Lee, a 26-year-old deputy district attorney and his wife Jeannie, who graduated from dental school this year, looked to their Bible concordance when it came time to decide what to do with their paychecks. They base their tithe commitment on the giving patterns of the Israelites and the early Christian church. "At this point in our lives we start to get more of a sense of church ownership," Lee said. "We stop viewing it as a church that our parents run and own." He said that he would like to see more of his tithe money going to worldwide evangelism and less to church administration, but added that disagreements about spending priorities should not be an excuse for withholding tithe.

The church will feel the full impact of the Baby-Busters' giving habits over the coming decades as older Adventists retire. Whether changing attitudes about finances will translate into structural and theological changes remains to be seen. One thing is certain, Seventh-day Adventism is evolving and growing as it always has.

The tithing doctrine is sure to continue evolving, along with the rest of the pantheon of Adventist beliefs, as the church begins the new millennium and it falls to a new generation of Adventists to support the denomination. How these younger church members spend their dollars will depend on how the church grows to include new ideas and reinterpret old ones. Church leaders are beginning to realize the challenge. The North American Division tithing study asks important questions. "The Adventist church has arrived at a crucial moment in history," the study concludes. "Is there a way it can stay, with this generation so convulsed with change? Can Adventism provide a mature, sustaining faith as well as an attractive evangelistic faith?" ■

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## Columbia Union College president resigns

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should be an object of study. No one except Regis Philbin has the final answer.

**AT:** Who are CUC's greatest boosters? What resources do they have?

**CS:** A small circle of alumni care deeply and know that the location is gold; several trustees feel the same way, including the chairman of the board. But the Columbia Union is an accidental territory; no regional loyalty such as you find in the North Pacific or the South binds the constituents together, and so the school has always lacked the ready-made support available to other colleges. This disadvantage is exacerbated

by the fact that CUC has been for years at the vortex of challenges associated with Adventist history: racial separation yesterday, increasing diversity today; a rural bias in the past, the inevitability of cities in the present. Constituents continue to have ambivalent feelings about all of this, although I consider the tide to be changing. Younger Adventists are figuring out that if diversity is good enough for heaven, it's good enough for earth. They know, too, that cities are the heartbeat of opportunity. What is more, they are great fun and they present endless opportunity for ministry. ■

# When All You've Ever Wanted

Jared Boyatt

## Isn't Enough

**W**hen I die will my life have mattered? Americans seem more obsessed with this question than ever. Scan the shelves of your local bookstore and you will find section upon section of self-help books. Late-night cable continually shows self-help gurus telling you how their products will help you find meaning in life. In *When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough*, Harold Kushner explains that the need for meaning isn't a psychological need, but a religious need, a need that must be addressed by turning to the Bible.

Kushner feels that the key to our happiness is the sense that we are using our abilities, not wasting them, and that we are being appreciated.

*When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough* is a well-reasoned approach to help people erase their doubts on whether living is worthwhile. Whereas Kushner's earlier book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, was a case study of the book of Job, this 1987 book deals with the book of Ecclesiastes. Written by a cynical man who was in or past middle age, the author of Ecclesiastes is desperately searching for something to make his life meaningful. He knows that he is going to die soon and he has come to the realization that nothing he has ever done, or will ever do, makes any difference. Kushner uses the author of Ecclesiastes' despair as the starting point for his book, transforming the despair into our main source of reassurance.

Kushner marvelously leads his readers to the same conclusion that the author

of Ecclesiastes came to at the end of his journey. Kushner emphasizes that if logic tells you that your life is meaningless, don't give up on life, give up on logic. If logic tells us that nothing we do with our life will make a difference in the future, then we don't have to live in that future. Instead of becoming cynical with the fact that nothing lasts, accept that as a part of life and learn to find meaning in the moment. Life isn't about building a great stock portfolio, having great power, or being acknowledged for our intelligence, but about loving and being loved.

The author of Ecclesiastes spent the later part of his life looking for the answer to the meaning of life, only to realize that there are no answers, only solutions. The solutions are love, the joy of working, and other simple things that sometimes get lost along the way as people search for fame, wealth, or power.

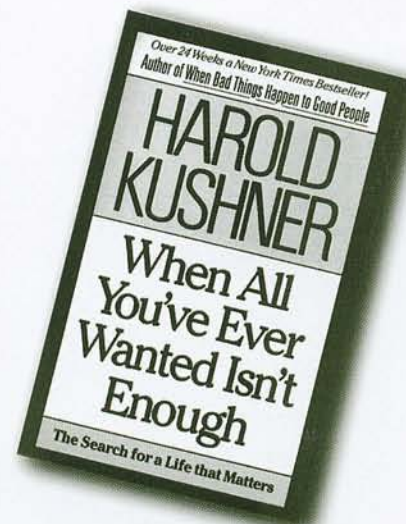
Kushner feels that the key to our happiness is the sense that we are using our abilities, not wasting them, and that we are being appreciated. When we finally come to the stage in our life when we are less able to accomplish, but more able to enjoy, we will achieve the wisdom that the author of Ecclesiastes finally found after so many disappointments.

Kushner argues that a successful life is not determined by a few great moments, but by many, many small ones. The good life asks of us that we relax in our quest long enough to let those moments accumulate and add up to something. When we can find success in the series of small moments that make up our existence, our lives will have meaning. Ultimately, this is Ecclesiastes' advice to us. The writer looked in vain for some-

thing to give his life meaning, and although he failed repeatedly, he could not bring himself to conclude that life was meaningless. He recognized that life was too special, too sacred, and too full of possibilities to be meaningless. He found meaning not in a few great deeds but in a multitude of little ones.

Although written by a rabbi, the wisdom in *When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough* is applicable to people of all faiths. Kushner asserts that Judaism can't keep people from dying, but it can keep them from wasting their lives. Readers will recognize that this applies not only to Judaism, but to many religions. Religion helps us by giving us commands. God has lifted us above the level of mere existence by imposing upon us a sense of moral obligation. Our lives become important when our desire to do God's will becomes greater than achieving professional or financial success. Religion may not give you everything you've ever wanted, but it will help you want the things that really matter. ■

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# The veil —A poem about Alzheimer's Disease

Maryan Stirling

If anybody knows curtains,  
We know.  
We who have loved Margaret.  
If anybody saw the weaving  
Of a curtain,  
Dark and darker,  
We saw.  
We who tried  
To reach her  
Through the veil.  
We saw the sickness  
Throw the shuttle  
Back and forth, weaving  
Dark and heavy,  
A slow and heavy veil,  
The curtain grew,  
And we were there.  
We all were there  
And saw the curtain,  
Watched it grow.  
It shut us out;  
It shut her in.  
We thought she was alone  
On the far side  
Of that dark veil.  
If anybody knew dark curtains,  
We knew.  
If anybody ever tried  
To break through,  
We tried.  
We thought she was alone.  
We really thought that she  
Was all alone.  
One thing we should have known,  
But we forgot,  
'Til someone said,  
"Remember this:  
Bear this in mind  
And never let it go:  
God rent the temple veil  
In old Jerusalem  
Long, long ago.  
Remember that."  
"Yes, yes," we said.  
"Of course he did!" we said.  
If anybody knows  
How to go through  
A heavy curtain,  
God knows.  
He tore that veil  
In two, with a great  
Rending noise

In the twilight, and he knows  
The way it's done.  
If anybody speaks to hearts  
When minds are closed,  
Shut down and dark,  
God speaks.  
If anybody knows, we know  
That God breaks through  
Dark curtains.  
And we know—  
It comforts us to know—  
The truth perhaps our hearts  
Have always known:  
That God goes through,  
And he is not a stranger,  
That God goes through  
And she is not alone!

—In memory of Margaret Provonsha



*Maryan Stirling is charter member of the Gender Inclusiveness Commission of the Southeastern California Conference beginning in 1989. She is a writer and poet and lives in San Diego, California.*

## Who would have guessed?

Who would have guessed that my money is another pair of feet to walk today where Christ would walk if he were still a man on earth?

Or what is my money but another pair of hands, to heal and feed and bless the desperate families of the earth?

What is my money but prayer of intercession suddenly crossing time and space to help answer its own petition in one swift, unselfish gesture?

What is my money but my Other Self; either hard and cold and metallic, like cash in a cash box; or warm and exciting and compassionate—tenderness in action?

It is my Christian life!

—Author unknown