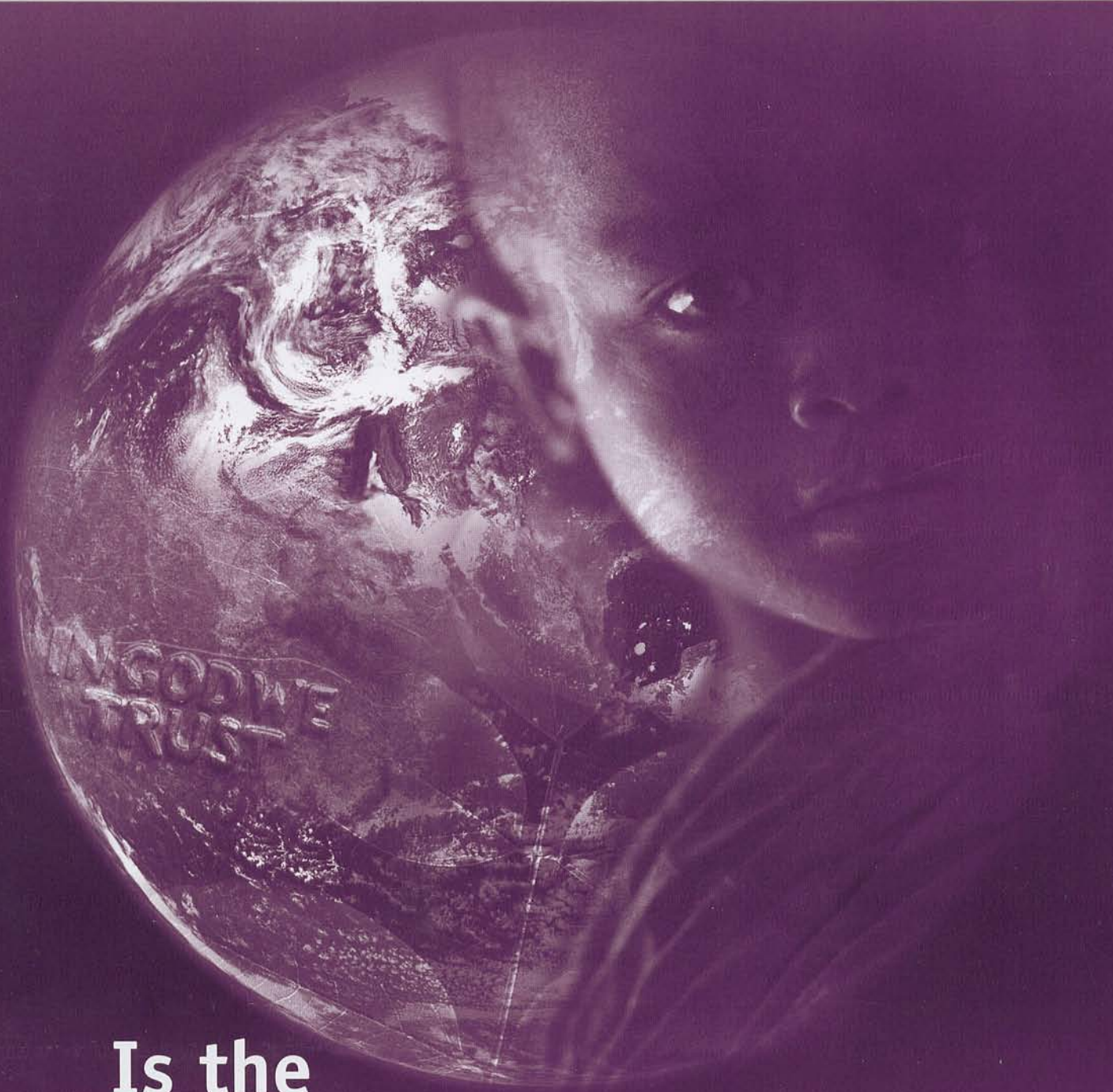


adventist today

NEWS
ANALYSIS
OPINION

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Is the
WORLD getting
BETTER or
WORSE?



The Pillars of Adventism

JOHN MCLARTY

When Adventist missionaries preach in remote regions of New Guinea, how much energy do they devote to teaching about the dragon in Revelation? In Seattle, how hard do preachers work to convince church members that

offerings to the tree gods are dangerous syncretism? Among Amazon tribes, we probably don't have a lot to say about Ellen White.

Adventism is not a monolithic, seamless, homogeneous monad. It is a polyglot, multifarious, dynamic reality changing over time and varying across geography. So, when we go into all the world and preach the gospel, what should we say? Liberals often waffle and equivocate when asked about universal truths, afraid of being accused of cultural imperialism. But liberals must renounce timidity. Human need cries out for bold speech and action. Here I propose five pillars of transcultural, third-millennium Adventism.

Sabbath

In Sabbath keeping, we cultivate our awareness of the reality, activity and presence of God. For believers, Sabbath is a sacrament, an earthly vehicle of the grace and presence of God. Adventists insist that Sabbath is a whole day—a park in time, not a clergy-controlled activity like churchgoing. We will always argue about “proper” Sabbath keeping, but a holy day which guards employees, students and children against the imperious demands of their superiors is finely tuned to meet the human condition, from rural New Guinea to midtown Manhattan.

Creation

Men and women were created together in the image of God to cultivate community and nobility. The doctrine of creation points to a better way than the casual divorce and abortion and the unsustainable consumption characteristic of the West. It judges the sexual and social mores which make millions of women AIDS victims across Africa as well as the victims of domestic violence around the world.

Adventists have been sidetracked by incessant debates over geochronology. It is time for us to turn from arguments about dates to conversation about living in the image of God so that our life together

offers a model of God's intentions in creation. That model must include mutual honor and respect among men and women, healthy marital relationships, restraint in the use of power, attention to physical health and economic well-being, and stewardship of personal and community property.

Progressive Revelation

God has spoken in the Bible and still speaks. We promote the personal and communal reading of the Bible and personal and communal attention to the ongoing teaching of the Holy Spirit. We refuse to discard the Bible because it is old or to ignore advances in truth because they were not explicit in the Bible. Adventists oppose slavery and abortion. We advocate rational health care and higher education. We believe in representative government in both civil society and the church. All of these are innovations, dependent on progressive revelation for legitimacy in a Christian community.

Disciples of Jesus

We worship Jesus as God, trust his forgiveness, follow his leadership, find consolation and hope in his death and resurrection. We believe his words about the Father's regard for his human children and seek to imitate that regard in our interactions with others. We obey Jesus' directives to care for the disadvantaged, to practice radical honesty and integrity, radical sexual purity and forgiveness. We listen for Jesus to say in our day, “You have heard..., but I say....”

Law

Who you are does not change what is right. Presidents, judges, police officers, preachers, parents and God himself are accountable to the moral law. No status or relationship can justify wicked behavior. Moral law is no less universal or consistent than natural law. All societies, including the church, are healthiest when law is transparent and impartially enforced.

These pillars should structure Adventism everywhere, from rural New Guinea to midtown Manhattan, from Berlin to Botswana, from Rio to Sydney to Paducah, Kentucky.

The letters page is open. Send us your list of the “pillars of Adventism.” ■

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contents

cover story

PAGE 7

Is the World Getting Better or Worse?

By Michael Scofield

news

PAGE 6

Gay and Lesbian Adventist Kinship Advisory Meeting

By *Adventist Today* editorial staff

viewpoint

PAGE 12

Wrestling with a Reluctant Church:

The Debate on Women's Ordination, 1973-2003

By Kit Watts

feature columns

PAGE 22

A Few Bleats From One of the Sheep:

A Layman's View

By William Blythe



features

PAGE 14

A Brief History: Seventh-day Adventists and War

By Ronald Osborn

PAGE 16

Where Do We Stand in Iraq?

By Glenn Henrickson

PAGE 17

Noncombatancy: An Adventist Position

By Adventist News Network

PAGE 18

Angel of Death

By Lawrence G. Downing

PAGE 20

Music Guidelines and Contemporary Christian Music

By Ron Corson

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Faith Based on Evidence

I've been a faithful subscriber and humble supporter with small donations for the last few years. I cherish my involvement with *Adventist Today*...I don't think there is anything more important than a faith based on "evidence that appeals to the reason." I believe the faith and science conference to be a landmark in the development of Adventist theology. Please let me see the reports of the conference, and sign me up in your lifetime subscriber list. Thank you for your excellent work.

L. Humberto Covarrubias, M.D., Via the Internet

Moon Dust and the Age of the Earth

The many presentations during the recent Faith and Science conference addressing the age of the earth, while interesting, were, in my opinion, skewed in that they included only terrestrial data.

Moon dust is one such example of celestial data that, I believe, provides far more conclusive evidence of the age of the earth than does geological data tainted by a worldwide catastrophic deluge.

My husband, who is now retired from NASA, worked on the first lunar landing. Since scientists could calculate the rate of dust accumulating on the lunar surface, and believing the world to be billions of years old, there was a concern that the space craft carrying the astronauts would sink into a sea of dust—possibly a mile thick—when they landed on the moon. The NASA fear of a great "dust bed" on the moon was fueled by scientists such as Lyttleton who wrote that the dust formed by erosion of exposed moon rocks by ultraviolet light and x-rays "could during the age of the moon be sufficient to form a layer over it several miles deep" (Raymond A. Lyttleton, *The Modern Universe*, Harper & Brothers, 1956, p. 72). Taking no chances, NASA placed great pods on each "foot" of the lunar lander to keep it from sinking.

Upon landing, as many of us witnessed via television, astronaut footprints reflected only a few centimeters of dust—consistent with the SDA position of a young earth. Recent measurements of the influx rate of dust on the moon continue to support a young moon.

Your Faith and Science conference would have been balanced and, therefore, far more meaningful had the presentations centered not only on contaminated terrestrial data but also on the many aspects of pristine celestial data. In any future conferences about the age of the earth, I hope you will find presenters on both the terrestrial and celestial sides of the issue.

Mrs. Lloyd G. (Ellie) Green, Indian Trail, N.C.

Faith and Science Conference

In the July/Aug issue of AT, I paid particular attention to the report on the Faith and Science conference. This very good report told me some things I had either forgotten or missed.

There is one important correction that you should make (page 10). The signature of copper smelting dust appears in the Greenland GISP2 ice core beginning about 5,000 years ago rather than 500, thus confirming the time independently established by archaeologists for when humans began using this technology.

Bob Wonderly, Via the Internet

"War Can Be Moral"

I would like to comment on Hector Hammerly's letter, "War Can Be Moral," from your July/August magazine. We went to war because our government thought that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and chemical weapons. Much of the foreign advice that Bush received came from Israel. It turned out to be wrong and therefore, Bush had to come up with some other reason to justify the genocide he had created there. That gave birth to the "moral" issue of helping the people of Iraq. The Middle East and Europe look at this war as a big mistake, with only one benefit coming out of it, and that is protection for Israel.... As Henry Kissinger said while working for Richard Nixon, "There is no room for human rights in U.S. foreign policy." We support Israel unconditionally. Israel is occupying four sovereign nations, breaking over 300 U.N. resolutions and breaking the Geneva Accord. It is true that Israel is a democracy, but it is not a republic. A republic protects its minorities. Hopefully, Israel will not be the example for other democracies in the world as the U.S. tries to spread its wings globally.

Barbara Gravesen, Via the Internet

Special Interest

As AT subscribers, we would be interested in receiving the reports from the Glacier View conference. We are finding AT to be of special interest. Wish we had subscribed earlier. I have not checked, but assume back issues can be read on a Web site.

Glyn Grismore

Nothing to Talk About?

Why are Adventist administrators frantically promoting multiple conferences at the cost of millions of dollars to discuss whether or not evolutionary theories constructed entirely on secular science are compatible with biblical teaching? Surely, on this question there is nothing for Seventh-day Adventists to talk about? What we are witnessing is not a series of discussion (because those promoting these "discussions" have a fixed agenda), but a propaganda attempt.

Viktor Christensen, Australia

Maintaining Sanity

We are current subscribers to AT and would like to get all the back and current reports available through e-mail. We live in a very isolated and anti-intellectual Adventist area.

Price ...
stood up and
said that he
had spent his
life trying to
prove that the
earth was only
6,000 years
old, but now
he had to
admit that he
now believed
it to be
millions of
years old.

Anyone who wears a wedding ring cannot hold an office at our little church, not even pianist! I can't relate to these people, though I am a very solid, thinking, praying Adventist. You help me maintain sanity!

William Pellow, Republic, WA, Via the Internet

Faith and Science Reports

We very much appreciate the Faith and Science reports that you have sent via e-mail. We have shared them with some good friends in the area. Thank you for keeping us up-to-date on this very important conference. We are so pleased that AT was there and for the wonderful work that you are doing with the publication.

Ed and Marielyn Hill, Via the Internet

Faith and Science Reports

Thank you for the informative, objective and analytical e-mails on the conference. Outstanding work of timely reporting. I found one of your sentences a statement to be pondered, "Truth is truth and it cannot be parsed." I would think that the conference challenged that statement in its diversity of "truth." I also had to smile when I read, "The clergy outweighed the scientists..." I assume by the context that was body weight and not numerically.

Ralph Weitz, Via the Internet

Couperus on G. Mc. Price

As I was reading your latest report from the 2003 Faith and Science conference, I was reminded of a comment that Dr. Moullerus Couperus, a late dermatologist from LLU, had made at Seattle when *Spectrum* was honoring him and his wife, Dos, for their leadership role in making *Spectrum* a reality.

As Dr. Couperus was accepting the honor, he mentioned his "journey" into realms that were not entirely embraced by the church at that time. He told of a meeting in Glendale when he was mentioning his perception that the world was older than had previously been held by the church. A member of the congregation stood up and said that with those thoughts, Dr. Couperus should not even be a member of the SDA Church. [George McCredy] Price was in the audience and he stood up and said that he had spent his life trying to prove that the earth was only 6,000 years old, but now he had to admit that he now believed it to be millions of years old. That is on one of the tapes from the AAF meetings in 1989.

Betty J. Farley, Via the Internet

Church Doctrine

I have been a member of the church for 31 years. I have accepted EGW as a servant of God, with much of her work being inspired, but not all. The authority that I follow is that of all the Scriptures, with my faith being in the righteousness of Christ, and salvation through his merit only. A

number of our key beliefs are not provable (such as the "Investigative Judgment"). If the church leaders place the 27 Fundamentals as conditions of church membership, [and Ellen White as interpreter of Scripture], I will have to say "So Long" and walk with God alone. I need to know if there is any validity to this statement, or anything close to it, as it will most assuredly affect my relationship with the church. I would hate to leave the church.

Paul R. Ehrlich, Via the Internet

The editor responds: Adventists have long wrestled with how to speak of Ellen G. White and the Bible. I am unaware of any dramatic new developments. I know theologians who give her de facto priority over the Bible and other theologians who remind us that she herself consistently pointed to the Bible as our religious authority. My guess is this will be a reality of Adventist culture until the end of time.

Differences in Origin Surveys

One of the most significant differences between the 1994 and the 2003 survey of Adventist science faculty is the fact that only a little over half as many of those queried in 2003 responded as compared to 1994. In the 1994 survey, 200 questionnaires were sent out and 121 responded, giving a response rate of 60.5 percent; in 2003, 205 questionnaires were sent out and only 65 responded, for a response rate of 31.7 percent. This major difference brings into question any quantitative comparisons between these two surveys. The same factors, whatever they may be, that engendered such a drop in response rate, may be closely related to some of the differences reported for the two surveys. Also the time period between the surveys would seem to be more like nine years instead of "five" as reported by the first word of the article.

Ariel Roth, Loma Linda, Calif.

Petersen responds: I am not surprised about the low response to the second survey on origins. People do not respond well to surveys. When AT published the first survey, the results took a lot of people by surprise. Since that time the church has initiated a major dialog on the issues covered in these surveys.

People now recognize (as is evident even with the low response rate in the second survey) that there is a considerable array of beliefs within the SDA academic community on this topic. And, to this end, the survey served its purpose. We are now learning to live with what is evident.

Floyd Petersen, Loma Linda, Calif.

Letters continued on page 6 »

Send Letters to the Editor:

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Gay and Lesbian Adventist Kinship Advisory Meeting

ADVENTIST TODAY EDITORS

Participants listened to the story of a former pastor in Latin America whose ministry to a large congregation was terminated when his sexual orientation was reported.

One of the best-kept Adventist secrets is the identity of a group of laypersons, pastors, teachers, editors and administrators known as the Kinship Advisory, which meets every November with officers of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. Formed in 1976 and usually known simply as "Kinship" or "SDA Kinship," the organization endeavors to minister to the spiritual, emotional and social needs of gay and lesbian Adventists and their families.

While Kinship endeavors to maintain positive relationships with the General Conference and other Adventist organizational entities, the goodwill is not always reciprocated. A dozen years ago the General Conference failed in a lawsuit to prevent the use of the words "Seventh-day Adventist" in the organization's formal identification. The general Adventist ambivalence toward homosexual persons has resulted in a perceived need for strict confidentiality. Members of the advisory group are unknown by individual names even to the Kinship board of directors, even though the group provides input regarding Kinship's current activities and future directions.

Prominent among this year's considerations was the idea of an invitational conference on homosexuality, tentatively scheduled for the spring of 2005 and expected to result in the publication of a series of papers in book form. The conference and book might include autobiographical accounts of gay and lesbian Adventists, as well as discussions of homosexuality from the perspectives of the natural and social sciences, Biblical interpretation,

Christian and Adventist history, theology, ethics, law and pastoral practice. Funding for this project could come from foundation grants and from donations by interested individuals.

Other educational initiatives included the preparation of a videotape, now in development, of interviews with parents of gay and lesbian Adventists, and a task force to develop a program of inservice education for pastors. Also discussed was the need to provide information and resources to assist teachers in Adventist elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities in responding to the needs of gay and lesbian students.

SDA Kinship endeavors to minister to the spiritual, emotional and social needs of gay and lesbian Adventists and their families.

Earlier in the day-long meeting, the participants listened to a devotional reflection on speaking truth to the church in love, prayed together about individual and collective concerns, reported on their individual activities related to gay and lesbian issues, and listened to the first-person story of a former pastor in Latin America whose ministry to a large congregation was terminated when his sexual orientation was reported to his employing organization, and who is now employed part time by a congregation in the United States. Of the four Kinship leaders who met with the advisory group, three were also former pastors. ■

Letters continued from page 5 »

Seventh-day Darwinians

Clifford Goldstein is certainly an able writer, if one does not get slowed up in reading him by having to consult a dictionary. "Anfractuosities" is only the most recent of his five-dollar words. Unfortunately, either he has a very poor memory of what he writes or perhaps he uses a unique dictionary that defines words in special ways just for him.

In his response to the critique by Ervin Taylor of his "Seventh-day Darwinians," Goldstein says "I never said a word about excommunicating anyone." "Excommunicating" means "excluding someone" in my dictionary. Goldstein says he is ready to "fight" anyone that does not see things the way he does. It is clear that if you do not agree with him he wants you to "go somewhere else...there are plenty of other churches for you...." In plain English, that says, "I say that you don't belong in my church, so get out." This

is clearly a call to exclude from the Adventist church those who do not adhere to the Goldstein party line. Taylor's statement that Goldstein is advocating "effective excommunication" strikes me as right on.

Goldstein also objects to being labeled as the "most visible and vocal exponent of the ATS [Adventist Theological Society] agenda." His defense is that he is neither now nor ever has been an ATS member. However, the allegation was that Goldstein is the most visible and vocal exponent of the ATS agenda, not that he is an ATS member. To use a well-worn expression: "If it walks like a duck, quacks like a duck, and acts like a duck, then there is a strong likelihood that it is some type of duck." If you are pouring gasoline on the floor of a house [Goldstein], while someone else holds the match [the ATS agenda], you can't claim that you are innocent of responsibility when the house burns down. ■

James Hilton, Glendale, Calif.

Is the World Getting Better or Worse?

MICHAEL SCOFIELD

Among Adventists, I frequently observe a pessimistic perception of the world and society—that it is getting worse. This is not an official doctrine, but it is hinted at by Adventist writers, teachers and preachers. To them, the world is getting worse and will continue to worsen until Christ's second coming to rescue us. This belief is generally reinforced anecdotally among many church members, and it is closely related to their perception that the world is a hostile place (at least to us, our values, and our faith). Too many Adventists view the world through ecclesiocentric glasses.

Rather than rely merely upon anecdotes (the September 11 tragedy, bad storms, the occasional earthquake, etc.), we might more usefully seek a more empirical assessment of the world around us.

Today many statistics are available, even in a time-series format (thus revealing general trends) on government and academic web sites. Many of these give us light on areas of education, economics, public health, wealth, quality of life, and other measures of social and moral significance.

Natural world

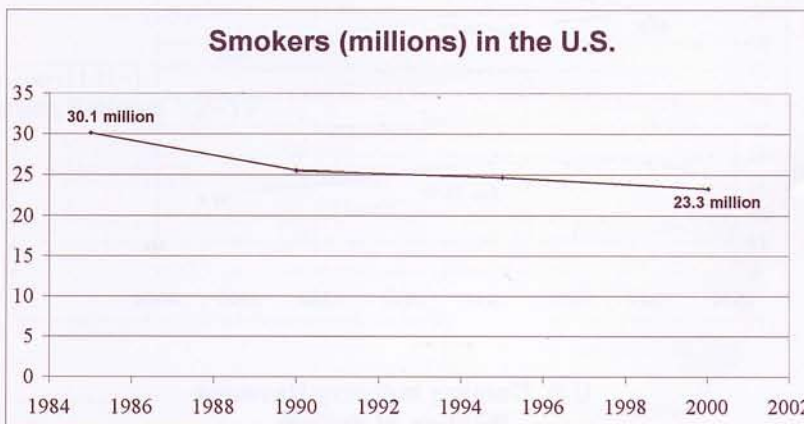
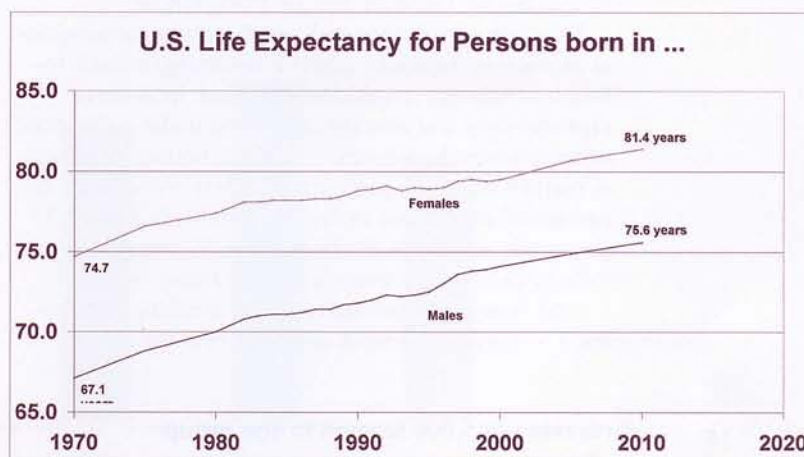
First, we might look to the natural world for indicators of a worsening condition. While

some fundamentalist Christian groups (and their Web sites) and even some Adventist preachers assert that earthquakes are becoming more frequent, there is no credible evidence to support this in any of the academic circles or government experts. While we see some year-to-year variations in the number of major earthquakes worldwide, these fluctuations are well within statistically normal bounds.

The extinction of obscure species of plants and animals, currently decried, has been going on for a very long time. Other than the understandable effects of industrialization and pollution from human sources, we see nothing in the natural world getting worse.

Health

A second major area of interest to Adventists is public



health. A key measure of health is average life expectancy, which in America has been climbing steadily (and continues to climb today) since the turn of the century. Not only are Americans healthier, but many populations overseas are also. This is a partial result of improved diet and understanding of nutrition, better sanitation and improved healthcare delivery. Worldwide, we see a decline in infant mortality. Less sorrow there.

We see a decline in new cases of many communicable diseases in the U.S., including AIDS, gonorrhea, and tuberculosis. We must, however, acknowledge the increase of AIDS in many "third world" nations, particularly in Africa. In a number of the major causes of death, such as heart disease and cancer, we see actual declines

Continued on page 8 »



Michael Scofield

Is the World Getting Better or Worse?

Continued from page 7 »

in the U.S. The prevalence of diabetes is increasing, reflecting the rise in percentage of Americans who are overweight (by any measure or definition). But over all, Americans are healthier and are living longer.

Risky behavior (particularly smoking and consumption of alcohol) in American adults is declining. Indeed, tobacco in America is a declining market, in terms of cigarette sales and acreage of tobacco under cultivation. Consequently, the tobacco industry is finding its growth in markets overseas, particularly in Asia. While only 26 percent of adult males in the U.S. smoke, in Kenya 67 percent do so, and in the Philippines 75 percent.

Risky behavior by teens is also declining. In the United States, teen substance abuse (smoking, alcohol and illicit drugs) has been declining over the past 10

years. This is a good thing! The number of students who had sex before age 13 has gone down. Similarly, the teen birth rate is declining significantly.

Economics and education

In economic terms, Americans are much better off today than in any previous time (in spite of inflation and unemployment). We have more real disposable income, we live in larger homes, more of our homes are air-conditioned, and more of us have second (vacation) homes. Although we drive with greater safety (deaths per million miles driven are in steady decline), unfortunately Americans in urban areas have seen increases in their average time wasted in rush-hour commuting. We breathe cleaner air, with a significant drop in the amount of lead in our atmosphere. These are all quality-of-life issues, and except for commuting, the general trend is positive.

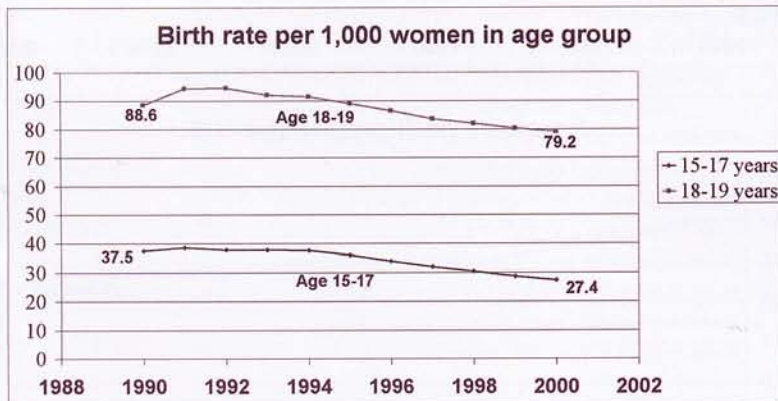
In the area of knowledge, literacy rates are improving worldwide—in all continents. In the U.S., we see a steady rise in the proportion of people who graduate from high school and college. In 1960, only 40 percent of the U.S. adult population had completed high school. That figure had risen to 84 percent in the year 2000. We see a similar trend for college completion. For a church where literacy (and the ability to read the Bible) is important, this is good news.

In the area of human rights and dignity, Adventism places a high value on personal freedom. Institutional Adventism is more critical of the labor movement than are many individual members. While labor union membership in the public sector in the U.S. hovers about 37 percent, we see a steady decline (to 9 percent) in the private sector. Good news for conscientious Adventists.

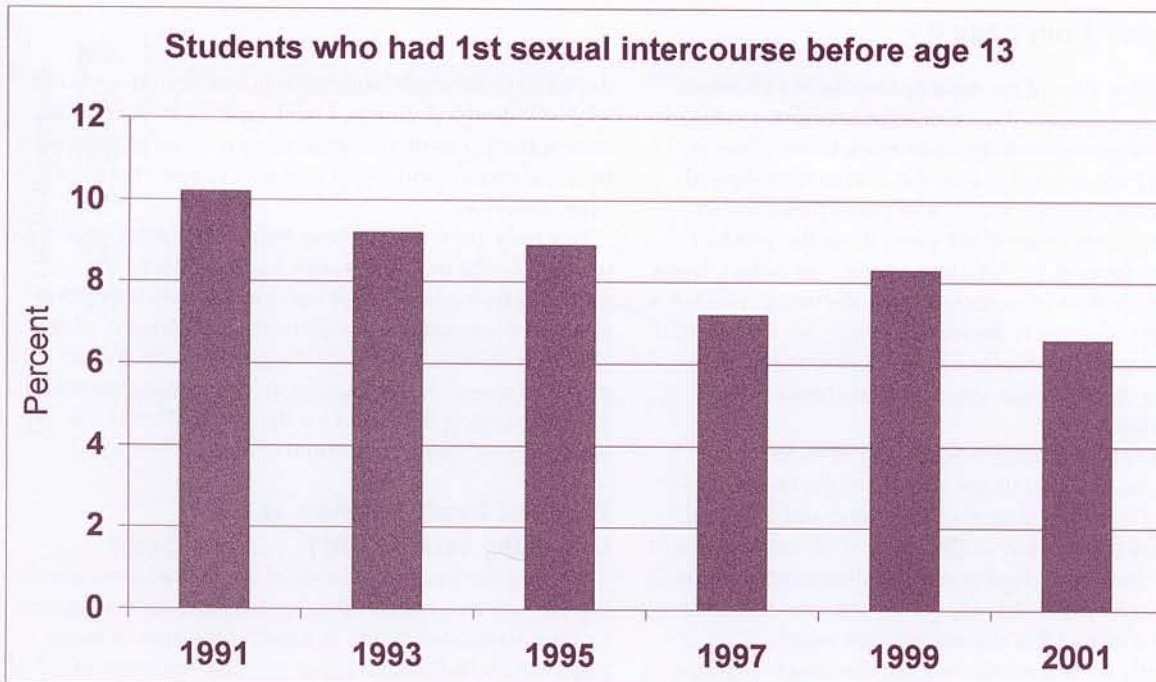
Altruism in America may be increasing, as indicated by a modest but distinct increase in the portion of disposable personal income people donate to charitable and religious organizations.

There are some negatives in American society and culture that do concern me. One is the significant increase in gambling (I am amused at the increasing use of the word “gaming,” which attempts to remove some of the stigma). Total gambling industry revenue (Nevada, Atlantic City, riverboats and Indian lands) has grown from \$34 billion in 2000 to an estimated \$40 billion in 2003. I believe this has significant social consequences.

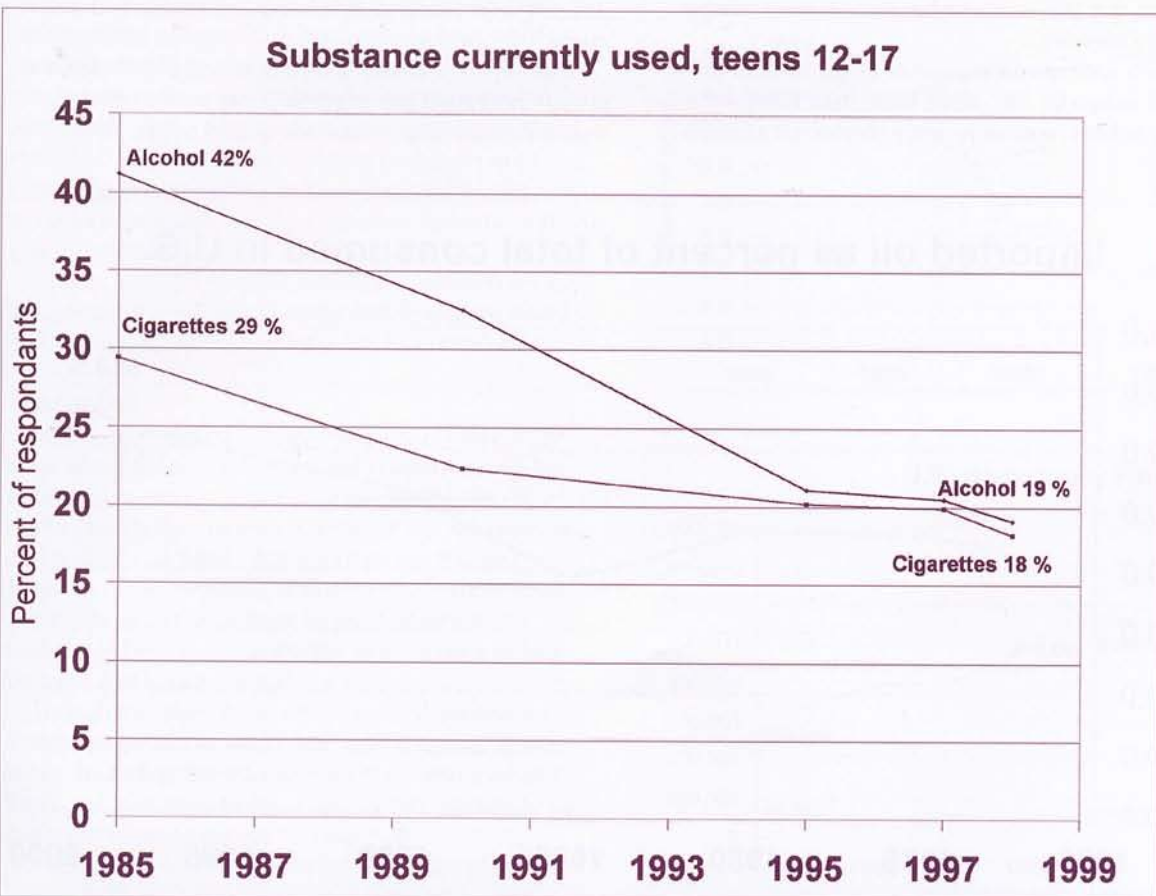
Crime is a concern for many people, and it is an indicator of the total social fabric. With the rising incarceration rate in the U.S. (the prison population has gone from 1.1 million to 1.7 million in 8 years), we do see a general decline in violent and property crime in



Students who had 1st sexual intercourse before age 13



Substance currently used, teens 12-17



Rather than rely merely upon anecdotes (the September 11 tragedy, bad storms, the occasional earthquake, etc.), we might more usefully seek a more empirical assessment of the world around us.

Is the World Getting Better or Worse?

Continued from page 8 »

the U.S. (One cannot necessarily conclude a cause-effect relationship here, however.) The anecdotal nature of sensational news stories tends to mask this decline in crime. Perhaps related to this, the cost of the criminal justice system (police, courts and corrections) is consuming a greater share of the gross domestic product (from 1.15 percent in 1985 to 1.58 percent today). Since 1993, the number of rapes has been declining. While the overall rate of crime is decreasing, there are still substantial regional variations; for example, Florida has a per-capita violent crime rate that is ten times that of North Dakota.

Many Christians decry a loosening of morals in America, as reflected in the content of the media (violence and the trivialization of sexuality) and in actual popular personal behavior. In 1990, of all babies born in the U.S., 26 percent had unwed mothers; that rate has gone up to 33 percent today. Of course (and this is beyond the scope of this discussion) that varies significantly among ethnic and socioeconomic groups. While the teen pregnancy rate in America is declining somewhat, it is still much higher than in most western European countries.

We see a widespread erosion of ethics in business in nearly all industries. Yet, while there have been some spectacular bankruptcies recently (Enron, for example),

the trend of business bankruptcies has been downward, while the trend of personal bankruptcies is increasing substantially. I think this reflects, in part, an erosion in personal morals and ethics and an increase in irresponsible behavior.

Not only are many of these trends indicators of an improved quality of life, but with increasing wealth, particularly, we have more options. Modern transportation and communications allow the exchange of ideas (yes, and communication of the gospel) with greater ease and speed. Is this explosion of communications capacity changing the world for the better? That is not entirely clear, but the potential is there.

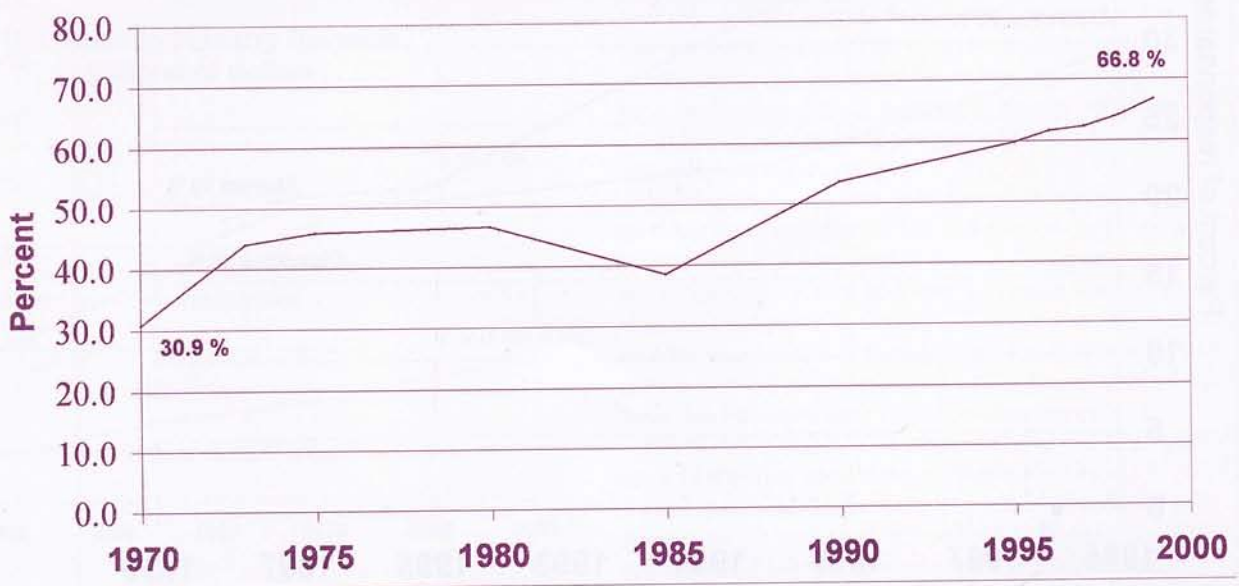
Trends of Steady Processes vs. Impending Catastrophe

Most of the trends I have cited are in statistics describing the processes and collective behavior they represent that are somewhat stable in nature—the sum of many personal and individual behaviors and experiences. However, there are some trends in society that are more difficult to measure, such as emotional stress and insecurity.

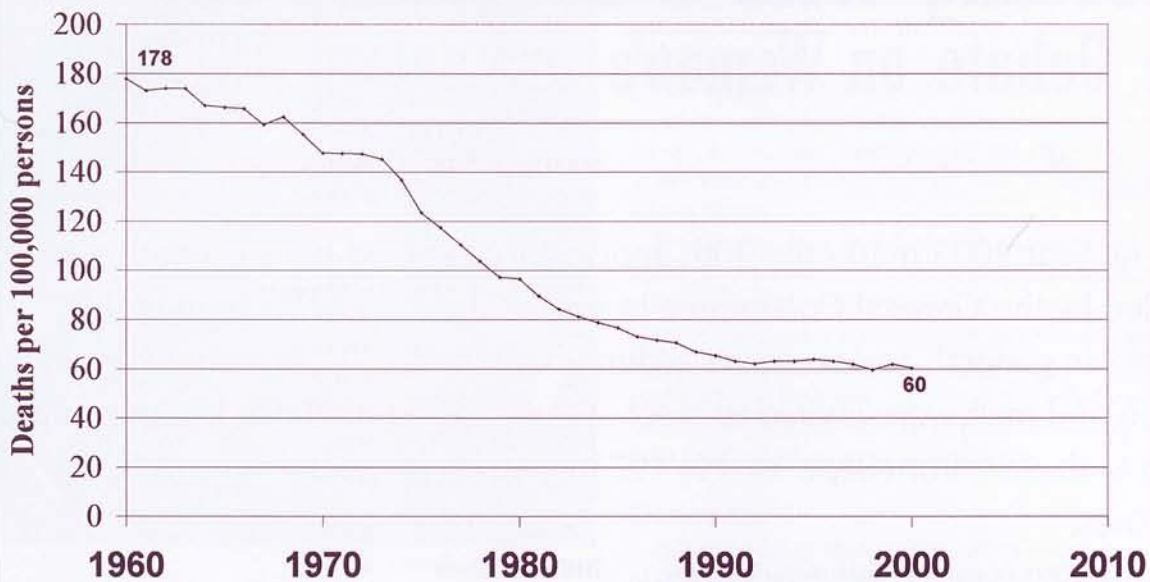
Additionally, I would posit that western civilization is in ever-increasing risk of cataclysmic events which would substantially reduce our quality of life. The

When Adventist preachers and authors make assertions about the world that are not consistent with the empirical evidence, they risk undermining the credibility of the church they represent.

Imported oil as percent of total consumed in U.S.



Deaths from cerebro-vascular diseases in U.S.



United States, for example, has increased its dependency upon imported oil from 32 percent back during the oil "crisis" of the 1970s, to nearly 67 percent today. Personal savings in America is precariously low, while consumer credit has increased substantially, in proportion to personal income. We see rising religious tensions, particularly in the Arab and Muslim parts of the world. However, I would advise Adventist preachers not to try exploiting these tensions to scare their audiences, since to do so would also risk their introducing racial and religious intolerance.

Finally, with the modern mobility of western society, the spread of a virulent communicable disease could be much quicker, with potentially deadly consequence.

Conclusion

When Adventist preachers and authors make assertions about the world that are not consistent with the empirical evidence, they risk undermining the credibility of the church they represent. While there are many social and ethical trends that are negative, the vast majority of the measures of quality of life show improvement. We as a church must be well informed and realistic in how we describe the world in evangelistic rhetoric and in our internal homilies.

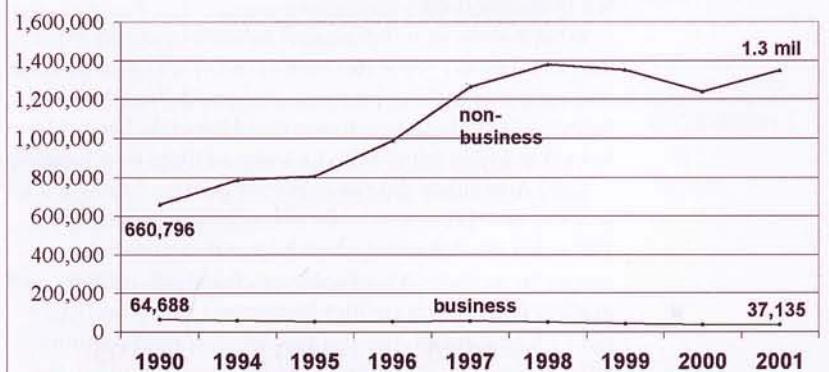
Though the question of the ongoing deterioration or improvement of the world may have theological overtones, including the necessity for the coming advent of Jesus, we may need to focus upon other reasons to explain our expectations of his return. ■

Michael Scofield is an associate professor of health information management at Loma Linda University

U.S. cocaine usage, age 18-25, past year



U.S. Bankruptcy Filings



Wrestling with a Reluctant Church: The Debate on Women's Ordination, 1973-2003

KIT WATTS

The year 2003 marks the 30th anniversary of an ad hoc committee assembled by the General Conference to study “The Role of Women in the Church” in general, and women’s ordination in particular. Twenty-seven women and men were invited to meet at the Ohio Conference junior camp, Camp Mohaven, from Sept. 16-19, 1973. Women made up more than half of the group.

The zigzag history of women’s ordination during the past 30 years emerged during a two-hour presentation for the Association of Adventist Women (AAW) conference in Loma Linda, Calif., Oct. 16-19, 2003. Like that program, the purpose of this article is to provide a quick overview of history.

Many don’t realize that nearly all of the Camp Mohaven participants favored women’s ordination. In fact, they thought it would be approved as early as 1975. Only two or three individuals voiced reservations. Yet, this tiny minority—and those who joined them—have dominated the debate and political responses of the church for 30 years.

Not a New Idea

Although Mohaven participants did not know it, the idea of ordaining women to gospel ministry was not new for Seventh-day Adventists. The first proposal came to a General Conference session in 1881. Why wasn’t it acted upon? One reason may be pragmatic. The GC executive committee consisted of just three men—George Butler, Stephen Haskell and Uriah Smith—and they were certainly overworked.

What is definite is that several Adventist women in the late 19th century were successful pastors and evangelists and carried preaching licenses, along with their male colleagues. According to historian Bert Haloviak, Ellen White helped examine candidates for some of these positions.

Early Adventists did not consider women preachers a scandal or a breach of biblical teachings. In fact, for 100 years the Adventist church issued ministerial licenses to women. After Mohaven, however, money matters and church politics converged to change this policy.* As a result, the last few women holding ministerial licenses in the mid-1970s felt the sting of having them withdrawn.

Hide and Seek

Why did the General Conference call the meeting at Camp Mohaven? Surprisingly, requests to ordain women to gospel ministry arose outside the United States in the 1960s. Church leaders in Finland and Germany wanted to ordain several successful women evangelists and pastors. Then, in 1973, the Brotherhood Church in Washington, D.C., ordained the first woman elder in North America, and Sligo Church in Takoma Park, Md., invited two women to join the pastoral staff.

The Mohaven council made several recommendations to the 1973 Annual Council. Among other things, it urged that qualified women be ordained as elders in local churches, and that women in ministry enter a two-year pilot program leading to an evaluation. The goal was to prepare women for ordination by the year 1975.

Instead, delegates to the 1973 Annual Council voted “to receive the report.” They went on record to say that a woman’s primary role was in the home as wife and mother. Delegates also voted that if women served in ministerial roles they should be given missionary licenses or credentials—on the lower end of church recognition.

Despite the setback, the Biblical Research Institute (BRI) asked scholars to prepare more definitive papers on women’s ordination and related topics in 1974-1975. While neutral in tone—noting that the Bible neither commanded nor forbade women’s ordination—the scholars saw no theological obstacle to ordaining women.

Intentionally or not, the BRI papers were buried for many years. While it was not uncommon for BRI to keep scholars’ work confidential, it was frustrating for every congregation or conference considering women’s ordination to have to begin from scratch.

As time passed, leadership at the Biblical Research



The Un-Policy

At the 1985 Council on the Role of Women, held in Washington, D.C., the 66 delegates spent three days making 50 speeches pro and con on theology, history and cultural issues. What won the day, however, was a procedural issue. No one realized how pervasive the idea would become. At this meeting GC leaders first articulated the “lockstep” concept. No one could ordain women anywhere, they argued, until everyone, everywhere agreed.

This un-voted, un-policy thwarts women’s ordination today. By contrast, other church policies are often adapted by each world division as it sees fit. Consider the issue of equal pay for equal work for men and women. This policy is practiced only by North America and other countries that have laws requiring it. In other words, the General Conference has not required a lockstep procedure in all divisions to provide fair pay.

Yes and No

Political tension charged the 1989 Council on the Role of Women in the Church, which met at Cohutta Springs, Ga. Many of the delegates were division officers anticipating the 1990 GC session in Indianapolis. Although the council reviewed papers, reports and surveys, the real work of the session was done in a private meeting of division presidents with GC President Neal C. Wilson. Together they presented a two-pronged recommendation to be voted up or down. The provision said no, Adventist women could not be ordained. It also said yes, women would be permitted to baptize—if their division agreed.

The floor debate at the 1990 GC session raged for hours. By a fairly close vote, the contradictory “yes/no” recommendation from Cohutta Springs was adopted.

Church leaders did take one positive step for women that recognized some of their aspirations and complaints. Beginning in 1983, the Office of Human Relations at the North American Division (NAD) had sponsored an ongoing women’s commission, first under Warren Banfield and continued by Rosa Taylor Banks. Acknowledging the value and potential of this model, both the NAD and the GC established Women’s Ministries departments in the fall of 1990. (The first “woman ministry” at the GC had been led by S.M.I. Henry, a contemporary of Ellen White’s, in 1898. After her untimely death in 1900, the ministry lapsed.)

In summary, the 1980s were characterized by General Conference councils, debates and arguments over how to interpret Scripture. For the most part, local conferences and churches took the policy-stretching actions favoring women in ministry.

The 1990s—Actions and Reactions

Debate in the 1990s moved into another arena—books. Of the 12 published in this period, only two argued

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Institute changed and views of women’s roles divided sharply. From 1975 to 1995, decisions and church policies about women in ministry continued to be made without the benefit of the scholars’ theological work.

Not until 1984 did BRI reluctantly release 100 copies of the edited papers. This breakthrough came after persistent requests by the Association of Adventist Women (AAW) for its second annual conference convened in Berrien Springs, Mich. And not until 1995 were the papers placed in book form by Pacific Press. They were not noticed. By then, books opposed to women’s ordination were being distributed or endorsed by BRI and key leaders in world divisions.

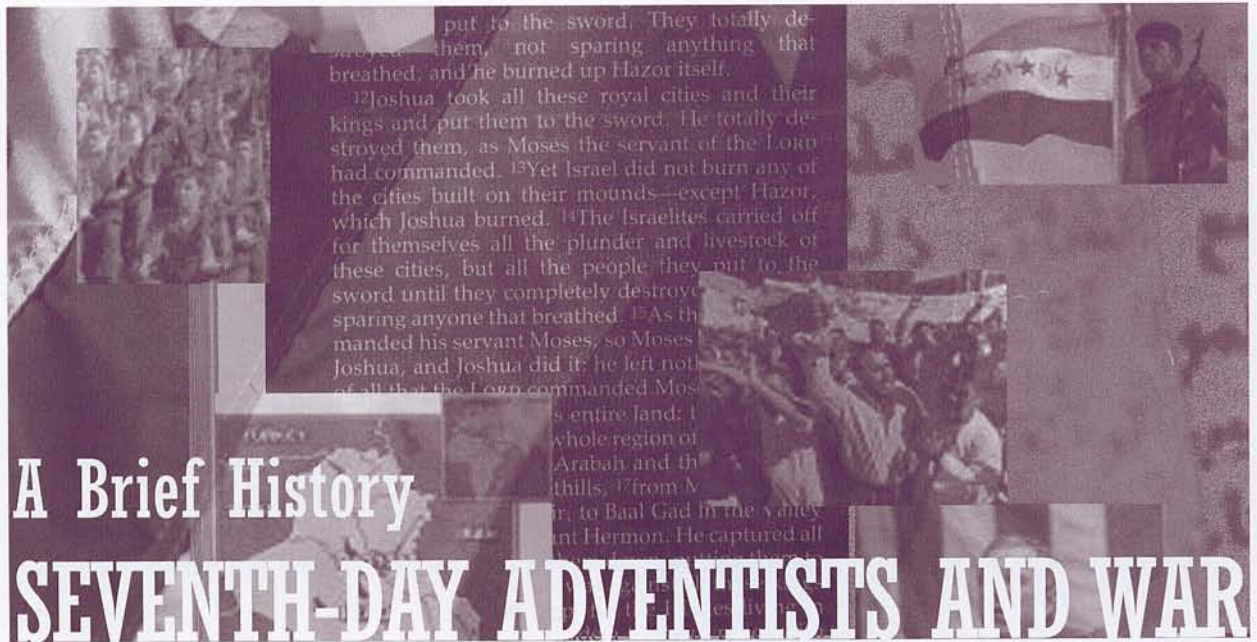
The 1980s—Actions Stimulate Debate

The impact of Mohaven faded. Then two actions in the 1980s ignited new discussions. Following a provision in the Church Manual, the Potomac Conference authorized eight local elders to perform baptisms in 1984. Three elders were women who were also local pastors. The action provoked intense debate at the General Conference. Baptisms by women were soon halted.

In 1986, however, a local church board boldly voted to authorize its woman pastor to baptize candidates if she so chose. Margaret (Peg) Hempe had joined the Loma Linda University Church staff in the late 1960s as a Bible worker. As her work had expanded, she was publicly called a pastor. Hempe chose to baptize. General Conference leaders remained silent.

These actions did cause GC leaders agree to more study on women’s ordination. Three councils on “the role of women in the church” met in 1985, 1988 and 1989. Delegates flew in from around the world; unlike Mohaven, only a handful were women.

Continued on page 23 »



A Brief History

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS AND WAR

RONALD OSBORN

Through the past 140 years the Seventh-day Adventist Church has changed its official stance on military service from strict pacifism and noncombatancy to its present support for “conscientious cooperation” by its members where they feel a personal call to that kind of patriotism. The change did not come easily and it leaves some members troubled.

The church’s founders were New England pacifists who had roots in the Radical or Anabaptist Reformation, and they shared a tradition of social and political dissent that had given rise to Quakers, Mennonites and other religious communities committed to the ethics of non-violence.

This commitment was both formally stated and rigorously practiced by early Adventists, many of whom believed that even touching a weapon was sinful. On May 23, 1865, the *Review and Herald* published a General Conference resolution “as a truthful representation of the views held by us from the beginning of our existence as a people, relative to bearing arms.” The document—composed in the aftermath of a war that had caused many abolitionists to abandon their earlier pacifism—affirmed a legitimate role for the civil government, but declared that Adventists, as a people, are “compelled to decline all participation in acts of war and bloodshed as being inconsistent with the duties enjoined upon us by our divine Master toward our enemies and toward all mankind.”

During the Spanish-American War of 1898, Adventists were outspoken critics of what they saw as America’s imperial foreign policy. In opposition to other prominent churches that embraced the war as a Christianizing and

civilizing campaign, they pointed to the glaring inconsistency of linking the cross with militarism of any sort. “Christian love demands that its possessor shall not make war at all. ‘Put up again thy sword into his place,’ is the word of the Author of Christianity, the embodiment of Christian love,” thundered former army sergeant A. T. Jones. “Christianity is one thing; war is another and far different thing. Christians are one sort of people; warriors are another and different sort of people.” Percy Magan’s *The Peril of the Republic*, rushed to print in 1899, similarly denounced American actions in the Philippines as mere “colonial greed and rapacious lust.” Better, Magan argued, “for a few missionaries to lose their lives at the hands of heathen savages than for heathen savages to lose their lives at the hands of those calling themselves Christians.”

This Adventist commitment to nonviolence was based primarily not upon concern for personal moral purity, but upon a systematic critique of America’s revered institutions of power. According to the Adventist reading of the books of Daniel and Revelation, the United States could not fail as a nation so long as it remained true to its Republican and Protestant heritage. Yet the fact that America would eventually fail was a foregone conclusion. No nationalistic project could replace the divine plan to redeem humanity once and for all. The creedalism and intolerance of the emerging Protestant empire—intent upon a new union of church and state—coupled with the social injustice implicit in the economic order, revealed the seeds of corruption eating at the heart of the American experiment. The United States, declared Ellen White, Joseph Bates, A. T. Jones

and other Adventist pioneers, was the beast of Revelation 13, a morally contradictory amalgamation of dragon- and lamb-like qualities, who “doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles.” Even the best government in human history, these prophetic agitators insisted, had feet of clay.

From Ellen White’s death in 1915 on, however, the Anabaptist ethos of the early church rapidly eroded. This was true in matters of ecclesiastical authority and biblical hermeneutics, but particularly with regard to the military and bearing arms. During World War I, a minority of German Adventists parted ways with the church after being sharply criticized by church officials for resisting the Kaiser’s draft. Meanwhile, in the United States, the Adventist commitment to not taking life remained largely intact; yet church leaders increasingly described Adventists not as conscientious objectors but as “conscientious cooperators.” The consensus of the new generation was that it was no longer the church’s role to question the rightness of military adventures or foreign policy so long as Adventist soldiers were allowed to continue in their peculiar commitment to Sabbath observance.

It was in this spirit of patriotic cooperation with the government that the Adventist Medical Cadet Corps was created, with beginnings in the early 1940s. The Corps sought to prove that good Adventists were also “good Americans,” eager and willing to serve in the military, albeit in noncombatant roles. The Corps thus helped to instill in a generation of young Adventists a love for the military jackboot and bivouac, and the belief that it is honorable to serve power for the sake of order. Unfortunately, these lessons could not be confined to one side of the Atlantic. During World War II, Adventists proudly answered the call to duty in the United States, but also, disconcertingly, in Nazi Germany. While Protestant leaders of other denominations resisted fascism at considerable cost, there was no Adventist “Confessing Church,” and up to the outbreak of the war Adventists even in the United States spoke of Hitler in positive terms as a fellow vegetarian concerned with matters of bodily hygiene.

Nonetheless, Adventists from the 1950s on generally saw World War II as a vindication of violence for a just cause. The idea that loyalty to God and loyalty to the military were fully compatible became powerfully entrenched in the minds of many Adventists, particularly in North America. Pockets of believers in Europe, such as Germany’s Reformed Adventists, retained the older ethics of nonviolence; and Russia’s True and Free Adventists

heroically resisted Soviet totalitarianism in defense of freedom and human rights. But these pacifists—whose convictions placed them firmly in the tradition of the church’s founders—were disavowed and marginalized by presiding church officials. With a burgeoning network of health and educational institutions and ambitious evangelistic campaigns around the world, the church by and large felt that maintaining good relations with government authorities was more important than promoting prophetic and politically dangerous brands of dissent.

With more and more Adventist chaplains rising in military rank, the church was also already too deeply invested in the military as an institution to question seriously the logic of violence or the rightness of American foreign policies abroad. The title of the Adventist chaplaincy’s newsletter, *For God and Country*, revealed just how far pietism and patriotism had come to be wedded in the thinking of church leaders.

By the time of the Vietnam War the Adventist position had thus fragmented into incoherency. Some Adventists evaded the draft, others entered as noncombatant medics, and others avoided direct military action between 1954 and 1973 by volunteering as human guinea pigs in

This Adventist commitment to nonviolence was based primarily not upon concern for personal moral purity, but upon a systematic critique of America’s revered institutions of power. According to the Adventist reading of the books of Daniel and Revelation, the United States could not fail as a nation so long as it remained true to its Republican and Protestant heritage. Yet the fact that America would eventually fail was a foregone conclusion.

Project Whitecoat—a research program with links to the U.S. biological weapons laboratories at Fort Detrick, Md. During the war in Vietnam, significant numbers of Adventists, encouraged by church officials to perform their patriotic duty according to “the dictates of their conscience,” also picked up guns and, for the first time, began to kill according to the dictates of government planners.

This marked a stunning reversal in Adventism’s historic identity. Religious leaders of other faiths, such as Thomas Merton and Abraham Joshua Heschel, decried the war in unequivocal language. But through the countless acts of brutality and depredation against unarmed civilians and their crops, Adventists had little to say. In a tragically ironic twist, even as America acted increasingly like the beast Adventists had long proclaimed it to be, the prophetic movement proved an increasingly timid page at the dragon’s side.

Continued on page 16 »

A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists and War

Continued from page 15 »

In the post-Vietnam era, thousands of Adventists voluntarily joined the U.S. armed forces as full combatants. Adventist chaplains were recruited to minister to these fighters “without passing judgment,” which in turn encouraged more Adventists to enlist. With large numbers of Adventists on active duty, it is not surprising that there was not a murmur of disapproval from the church in the 1970s and 1980s as the U.S. military covertly abetted brutal Latin American juntas in the slaying of tens of thousands of impoverished peasants calling for land reform—many of them Christians.

In 1994 significant numbers of Adventist Hutus in Rwanda participated in the genocide of their Tutsi countrymen, many of whom were also Adventists. Through the 1990s—as Buddhist Nobel Peace Prize winner, Ang San Suu Kyi, attracted world attention in her nonviolent struggle against Burma’s military dictatorship—hundreds of Karen Adventists, whose great-grandparents had been evangelized by legendary missionary Eric B. Hare, engaged in a campaign of guerrilla warfare against the Burmese army with the goal of creating an autonomous Karen nation. And in 2002 rival militias comprised largely of Adventists fought each other for control of the government of the Solomon Islands.

The September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States seemed to mark the final denouement of Adventism as a prophetic movement that could not be co-opted

by nationalistic crusades. Amid the many heartfelt and sincere expressions of grief following the tragedy, churches from coast to coast reflexively wrapped themselves in the flag, no different from the rest of evangelical America. Sligo Church in Washington, D.C., featured a Veteran’s Day service in which a military honor guard marched down the center aisle with bolt-action rifles gripped to their chests. At a camp meeting in Northern California, a patriotic song service was followed by a 21-gun salute with live ammunition.

Little thought was given by the planners of the event to the history of American intervention in the Middle East, the relationship between U.S. military and economic policy, or the many Afghani civilians killed by U.S. bombs. Where Adventists once venerated those Protestant martyrs who died rather than betray their religious convictions, they would now honor soldiers who kill in the name of securing peace but at the bidding of politicians. As President George W. Bush promised to take his war against America’s enemies to far-flung corners of the globe, one thing was certain: many Adventists would soon be shipping out to exotic lands, not as missionaries, but as warriors, assault rifles in hand. ■

Ronald Osborn teaches in the department of arts and humanities, Mission College, Thailand, and is a co-founder of the Adventist Peace Fellowship (www.adventistpeace.org).

Where do we stand on the War in Iraq? GLENN HENRIKSEN

I recently received a report naming a group of personages who now oppose the war of President Bush in Iraq and claiming that they once supported it. As far as I have been able to learn, none of those quoted in this report ever advocated that the United States unilaterally, and in defiance of our allies and the United Nations, take out Saddam.

Saddam was a global problem. Messing up Iraq has done nothing to make America more secure. It has terminated more children, women and elderly in Iraq than were killed in the 9/11 attack on New York. The bragging of the President about how many supporters of Saddam have been killed serves to infuriate the Iraqis and makes them more determined than ever to sacrifice their lives to take revenge against America for taking revenge against them. When will it stop? When someone begins to follow the peace principles

of the Prince of Peace and recognize that the gospel message is a message of peace and nonviolence.

Many so-called conservative Christians do not recognize the gospel as a message of peace. Born-again Christians who rejoice in the torture and death of those we believe are our enemies, from my perspective, are the agents of Satan and his unholy hosts. Saddam killed his enemies with gas. We kill them with cluster bombs? Which is the worst? Which is Christian and which is Pagan? Surely neither is Christ-like! So-called Christian nations who fight violence with violence may be the greatest and most diabolical threat to the rest of the world. I understand that in Canada and Europe the majority of the people believe that the United States is a greater threat to world peace than was Saddam.

So far, the evidence suggests that they are right! ■

Noncombatancy: An Adventist Position

The noncombatancy position held by Seventh-day Adventists has been given attention by the church's Biblical Research Institute. In the October issue of its newsletter, *Reflections*, Dr. Ekkehardt Mueller, associate director of BRI, addresses the issue of noncombatancy in the wake of the recent war in Iraq.

The article restates the church's long-held view on the issue—it advocates noncombatancy. "In different parts of the world church the Iraqi war and other events have triggered a lively discussion on the question of where the Seventh-day Adventist Church stands today and how we should relate to war," Mueller writes.

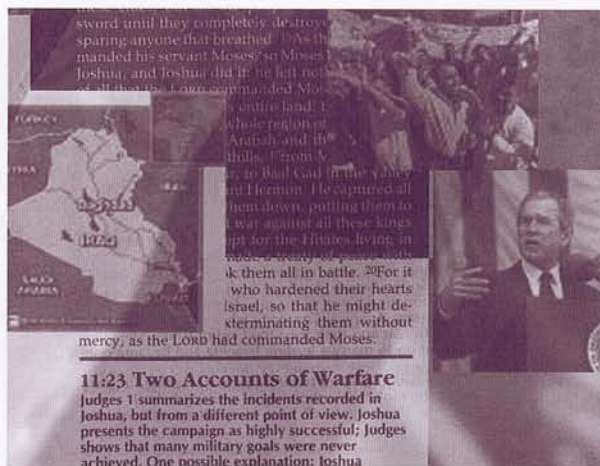
"Some claim 'There are no indications that our Adventist Church today disapproves serving in the army in whatever capacity.' They say that 'the present state is one of uncertainty on the Adventist position regarding serving in the military.' This is not quite true. While the church ministers to noncombatant members in the military, as well as to pacifists and combatants, it recognizes that individuals make free choices and have to follow their informed conscience."

The long-standing official position of the church is expressed in its 1972 statement: "Genuine Christianity manifests itself in good citizenship and loyalty to civil government.

Mueller adds that the church's position on noncombatancy has never been revoked. From the first statement adopted during the American Civil War, the church has recommended noncombatancy.

"Around the world we really appreciate freedom of religious exercise," says Dick Stenbakken, director of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries. "But you don't get freedom to worship for free. That freedom of worship that we so much claim to and desire is paid for with blood of people who fight to be sure that there is freedom. So it's a difficult decision. Do I pay you to fight for me so that I can be free? I think the position the church has taken...is a wise

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choice because it does give guidance, but it does not prescribe. I think in a global community, that's the best you can do."

Stenbakken refers to some countries where people are not given a choice: they must serve with a weapon, or go to jail. "Some say, 'Well, you go to jail.' It's got to be an individual choice.... It's not a cookie-cutter question."

He continues, "I think that sometimes in the struggle, while it's not fun and it's not easy, that's where we grow. And then the decision becomes something that's part of me, rather than me coat-tailing on someone else's decision."

The long-standing official position of the church is expressed in its 1972 statement: "Genuine Christianity manifests itself in good citizenship and loyalty to civil government. The breaking out of war among men in no way alters the Christian's supreme allegiance and responsibility to God or modifies their obligation to practice their beliefs and put God first. This partnership with God through Jesus Christ who came into this world not to destroy men's lives but to save them causes Seventh-day Adventists to advocate a noncombatant position, following their divine Master in not taking human life, but rendering all possible service to save it." ■

Find the Adventist church's statement on noncombatancy at www.adventist.org/beliefs/main_stat52.html.

Angel of Death

LAWRENCE G. DOWNING

On Sunday, Nov. 16, 2003, Discovery Channel aired a two-hour presentation, "The Angel of Death," recounting one of the most horrifying and destructive events ever to take place in a Seventh-day Adventist hospital.

"Angel of Death" is the title Efren Saldivar, a respiratory therapist at Glendale Adventist Medical Center (GAMC), applied to himself after he murdered an unknown number of patients.

No one is sure exactly when Saldivar began to practice his nefarious interventions. What is known is that he received his respiratory therapist credentials in 1989, and he was arrested in January of 1998, released for lack of evidence, rearrested in 2001 and convicted of murder and sentenced to prison in 2002.

From the time of his first arrest, when Saldivar confessed to the murder of more than 50 patients (which he later denied), until his conviction for six murders, authorities investigated more than 230 potential homicides, disinterred 20 bodies from five cemeteries, and examined more than 2,000 medical charts. It is doubtful anyone will ever know how many people he killed, authorities say.

Saldivar's methods for taking life were difficult to trace. Evidence exists that he injected patients with two muscle relaxants, succinylcholine chloride and Pavulon. The first chemical rapidly breaks down in the human body, but the second persists. The question that begs answer is, "How could this have happened?" There are no simple answers.

Suspicion was first raised about Saldivar when a

GAMC employee reported that he suspected Saldivar had killed a patient. Administrators began to examine the therapist's behavior and conducted a statistical study to determine whether a higher incidence of deaths occurred when Saldivar was on duty. No deviations were found. People were assigned to monitor Saldivar, but they did not observe any suspicious activities.

About a year after the first accusation, an individual called to say he heard that one of the medical center employees might be killing patients. When administrators asked for his source, he named a different GAMC employee from the first accuser. Immediately they decided to contact the police.

About a year after the first accusation, an individual called to say he heard that one of the medical center employees might be killing patients. When administrators asked for his source, he named a different GAMC employee from the first accuser. Immediately they decided to contact the police.

This led to Saldivar's arrest. He confessed to the police, then recanted and claimed innocence. The police released him for lack of evidence, but he was fired from the hospital. The police continued to look for evidence for two years, found it, arrested him again,

and put him up for trial. He pled guilty and was sentenced to six life sentences without parole, one for each of his confessed killings, as well as "15 years to life" for trying to kill a seventh person.

These are facts of the case that anyone can find by typing in "Angel of Death" on a Web search engine. But there is more to the story than a recitation of facts. Some may find it significant that no one knows for sure where Saldivar procured the drugs he injected into patients. He told investigators that he got drugs from another hospital where he also worked because they were easier to get there. Others may take comfort in knowing that Efren was not nor ever had been a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The hospital administrators' response to the unfolding crisis is another important factor.

Fighting or fleeing are the first and natural response choices most living creatures make when under threat. Glendale Adventist Medical Center administrators and its governing board resisted these tropisms. Early on they decided to get out the truth; nothing could be held back. They also decided to present the worst and most damaging data first. In this way, they believed, the hospital could control the information stream and assure authorities and the media that they were committed to sharing the whole story.

The administrators pledged to law enforcement officers that they would cooperate in every way. They provided a house to the Glendale police on the GAMC campus. This became the 24-hour-a-day investigative command center.

The day GAMC called the first press conference to brief the media on the unfolding events, dozens of TV trucks jammed the area around the medical center. News helicopters filled the skies overhead. Reporters crowded into the room to demand answers. Mark Newmyer, at the time a GAMC hospital vice president, had been assigned the role of hospital spokesperson. To prepare him for the media frenzy that lay ahead, he had been put through intense mock press-conference grilling. This experience had prepared him for the reporter's harsh and at times hostile questions. Through it all, Mark stuck by the rule: Tell the truth.

The media circus was but a minor part of the unfolding events. The more critical concern to the health professionals was to maintain patient and community trust and to care for the families whose loved ones may have been killed by a hospital employee. GAMC announced to its employee family that volunteers were needed to meet with those in the community who were affected by Saldivar's actions. The medical center worked with the Red Cross, Delta Airlines and other

organizations to help develop a training program for the GAMC counselors as they met with distraught and angry families. Each counselor was given emotional and financial resources to apply as needed. For example, each counselor could, at their discretion, dispense up to \$2,000 for any reason to meet family needs. If more money was needed, the counselor had only to make a request.

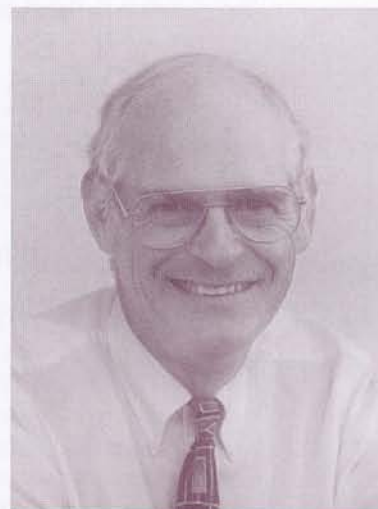
Patient and community support remained strong during the four-year investigation. Community trust remained high. The Glendale City Chief of Police wrote to hospital administrators that he needed a knee replacement and that he would have it done at GAMC.

Not all who were affected by the events were mollified. Lawsuits did result and some are still pending. But the medical center is doing well; community support remains high and staff morale is strong.

Newmyer announced at the first press conference back in 1998 that Efren Saldivar had been dismissed from the hospital staff and that all other respiratory care practitioners were removed from their jobs until each was cleared for return to work. This action was in response to media statements that other respiratory therapists might have known what was going on, or were potentially involved in taking patient lives.

Those early decisions for truthfulness and openness paid off, as had been the case with Johnson and Johnson's response to the Tylenol tampering case years before.

GAMC's response to the "Angel of Death" event has the potential to be the benchmark for health care institutions, just as Johnson and Johnson is the benchmark for corporate crisis management. It is a story other organizations need to hear and to heed, including the church that shares the name with Glendale Adventist Medical Center. ■



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Music Guidelines & Contemporary Christian Music

RON CORSON

At the 2003 Annual Council, held in Silver Spring, Md., a research committee that had been working for two years brought forward a provisional statement on music for the Adventist church.

When one thinks about the wide divergence of styles of music and the many different personal and cultural tastes in the church, one would expect only general guidelines in such a report. Common-sense guidelines would point to music that would uplift a person's thoughts with good lyrics and not interfere with a relationship with God. However, the suggested "guidelines" are much more specific.

What music styles are being referred to? Are rock music and related forms the only type of music that can lead to impure thoughts, etc.? Just what are these related rock music forms, anyway? Is there a certain beat or tempo or rhythm that we must avoid?

This is not the first time influential people have tried to move members of the church to accept their view of music. In 1972 the church approved a document on the subject that went beyond common-sense instruction on music, including the following statement:

"The above principles will serve as effective guidelines in the choice and use of music for the varied needs of the Church. Certain musical forms, such as jazz, rock and their related hybrid forms are considered by the Church as incompatible with these principles" (*Guidelines toward a Seventh-day Adventist Philosophy of Music*, 1972 Annual Council).

Interestingly, the document did not provide reasons for banning jazz and rock music. However, recently certain prominent Adventists have declared their condemnation of rock and much of contemporary Christian music

(CCM), so the issue has once again come to the attention of General Conference leadership.

Have the proposed new guidelines changed from the 1972 position? With the increased use of modern worship music in the Adventist church, does the document approve or disapprove of such "rock-related hybrid forms"? The 2003 document, guideline 14, states: "Christians will shun certain music styles and any secular music such as rock and related forms that open the mind to impure thoughts, lead to unholy behavior, or destroy the appreciation for that which is pure and holy." (The document is available at www.adventistreview.org/2003-1541/Music.pdf.)

What music styles are being referred to? Are rock music and related forms the only type of music that can lead to impure thoughts, etc.? Just what are these related rock music forms, anyway? Is there a certain beat or tempo or rhythm that we must avoid? Maybe a certain timbre of voice is the problem. Much of CCM might be considered rock. Rock and its related forms seem to be the main music of our time. Rock music is heard every day from commercials, children's songs, country music, new age music, even the Muzak in elevators.

Over the last few years I have appreciated the trend of CCM in the church, like the young people now being included in the church service, performing music they enjoy. This gives the worship service a new vigor. However, by the 1972 standards this music would be banned. True, most of the church is ignorant of the 1972 recommendations and thus feels a sort of freedom to choose. A desire to curtail this freedom may be why the new music guidelines are being formulated. If the document is to have any weight it should avoid vague assumptions and hidden meanings. For instance, guideline 14 could easily

be written as follows: "Christians will shun certain music that opens the mind to impure thoughts, leads to unholy behavior, or destroys the appreciation for that which is pure and holy."

The document should acknowledge that what is appreciated by one person may not be liked by another. People have different likes and dislikes as well as sensitivities. People differ in what they get out of a given sermon: Some remember and are inspired by the preacher's words, while others get little or nothing. Music, with its power to take words where they could not go alone, should be allowed the same freedom we see in the sermon. The apostle Paul warns us: "Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way" (Romans 14:13). If music causes a person to stumble in faith, we need to consider these feelings; but if it encourages someone and lifts a heart toward God, we must not declare it evil.

The 1972 document expresses objections to certain problems of rhythm, saying the "raucous style common to rock, the suggestive, sentimental, breathy, crooning style of the night club performer and other distortions of the human voice should be avoided." It tells that "music should be avoided that is saturated with the 7th, 9th, 11th and 13th chords as well as other lush sonorities." Such music, it says, "when used to excess distracts from the true spiritual quality of the text." Why should certain chords distract any more than other chords? While I may not know the correct chord, I can certainly detect an incompatible chord in a tune. The guideline, however, seems to complain not about incompatible chords but rather those that are too lush, sounding too nice.

How will the new church guidelines, if adopted, affect concerts held on our church or school campuses? They state: "Musical presentations in all Seventh-day Adventist educational institutions should conform to the guidelines of the Church. This applies to local talent as well as to visiting artists, groups, and officially sponsored use of media entertainment."

I can accept this as long as the guidelines are not vague. Is CCM acceptable or not? Some people strenuously object to CCM as does Samuele Bacchiocchi in his "Answering Some Questions on Music," *Endtime Issues*, No. 69, May 20, 2001. He states: "The factual information available on the nature and effects of rock music makes it abundantly clear that such music cannot be legitimately transformed into Christian music by changing its lyrics. In whatever version, rock music is and remains a music that embodies a spirit of rebellion against God and the moral principles he has revealed for our lives."

While what he calls factual I would say is pseudo-science, his quote demonstrates that vague assumptions about music are not going to help settle the issue. I have heard too much excellent CCM that is not about rebellion. I don't want to see his view win by default simply be-

cause the Adventist church is content with vague language, as when the 1972 guidelines voiced their opposition to rock music and included CCM in their condemnation. In 1972 the pioneers of CCM, such as Larry Norman and Phil Keaggy, were just starting out. Most likely none at the 1972 conference had ever heard anything of "Jesus Music," the precursor to CCM. Even if they had they would most likely have thought, as did most of the Evangelical churches at the time, that accepting such a collaboration of the good news of God and the sound of the culture was a mistake.

The proposed 2003 document, guideline 11, states: "Christian music recognizes and acknowledges the contribution of different cultures in worshiping God. Musical forms and instruments vary greatly in the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist family, and music drawn from one

Will the church cave in to reactionary elements, proclaiming danger in new music? Will it allow for individuals to let their consciences guide their choices in music?

culture may sound strange to someone from a different culture. As members of a world family, we respect the music of our brothers and sisters in every land who worship God sincerely through culturally conditioned musical idioms."

Certainly, in nations around the world, cultures are no longer homogeneous. It would therefore seem appropriate to allow for variation between subcultures and generational cultures as well. The Jesus Music of the early 1970s may have seemed culturally different and suspicious to the religious community of the day. Its growth in the last 30 years would argue, however, for its ability to touch people's hearts for God.

Can the church present guidelines that allow contemporary Christian music to be played on a continuing basis at Adventist-owned radio stations, for sponsored events and in contemporary worship services? Or will the church cave in to reactionary elements, proclaiming danger in new music? Will it allow for individuals to let their consciences guide their choices in music? Can members of the local church congregation decide for themselves the type of worship service they want, or will the church statements limit their choices? The answers may very well lie with us as we respond to the proposed guidelines. ■

Ron Corson lives in Clarkston, Washington and is associated with the "Progressive Seventh-day Adventist" movement and hosts a Web site: users.clarkston.com/rcorson/mainwebpage.htm which is dedicated to "combating the harmful effects of traditional/historic SDA teachings."

Members who wish to make comments and suggestions should send them to Elder Ted N. C. Wilson, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

A Few Bleats From One of the Sheep: A Layman's View

WILLIAM BLYTHE

With due apologies to C. S. Lewis and professional theologians, it might be well for us to lay out a layman's considered reaction to certain discussions now going on in the church. As Lewis said, "I may have nothing but misunderstandings to lay before you, (but) you ought to know that such misunderstandings exist."¹

I am neither a theologian nor an expert in Biblical studies. I am an "outsider" to those clubs. I am nothing more than a reasonably well-educated layman. I have no real knowledge of Hebrew or Greek (I do own and use several concordances). I am ready to be instructed.

If I do not subscribe to a literal interpretation of the Genesis creation account, must I leave the church?

My first bleat

If I do not subscribe to a literal interpretation of the Genesis creation account, must I leave the church? According to a well-known Adventist author in an official publication of the church, I should.² Apparently I am not allowed even to hold an agnostic view.

I gather that one compelling reason for accepting a literal

seven-day creation week is its culmination in the Sabbath, and the corresponding reference to creation in the Exodus rendition of the commandments. But in Deuteronomy 5 the fourth commandment is enjoined upon God's people by reference to their deliverance from Egypt. What would be the motivation given us today, if this commandment were to be reissued?

Myth is not a bad four-letter word. Quoting Lewis: "We must not be ashamed of the mythical radiance resting on our theology.... If God chooses to be mythopoeic—and is not the sky itself a myth—shall we refuse to be mythopathic? For this is the marriage of heaven and earth: Perfect Myth and Perfect Fact: claiming not only our love and obedience, but also our wonder and delight, addressed to the savage, the child, and the poet in each one of us no less than to the moralist, the scholar, and the philosopher."³ Or, as Professor Kilby states: "Myth is necessary because reality is so much larger than rationality." And again, "The finest explanation of myth is a remark of long ago that man shall not live by bread alone. The truth is that man is less fact than he is myth."⁴

But what do I know of these matters? I look at the scientific evidence, but I am no expert there either. I find

Continued from page 24 »

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Wrestling with a Reluctant Church: The Debate on Women's Ordination, 1973-2003

Continued from page 13 »

against ordination—Raymond Holmes' *Tip of the Iceberg: Biblical Authority, Biblical Interpretation, and the Ordination of Women in Ministry* (1994), and Samuel Koranteng Pipim's *Searching the Scriptures: Women's Ordination and the Call to Biblical Fidelity* (1995).

Yet these two books were the ones chosen for wide distribution by many division and union conference leaders around the world. By contrast, a book supporting women in ministry that also represents the majority view of seminary professors at Andrews University, has been virtually ignored by the church. (Edited by Nancy Vyhmeister, *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives* was published in 1998 by the Andrews University Press.)

Utrecht and After

The North American Division came meekly to the 1995 GC session requesting that the world church grant it latitude in making decisions that affected its mission and ministry. Presenters and delegates on the floor, however, had a laser focus on women's ordination. The vote was a resounding "no" for women. It also revealed a world church ridding itself of North American domination.

After Utrecht, two large local churches that had long benefited from the outstanding ministry of women pastors, chaplains and Bible teachers, considered options. They knew the global church might never ordain women. They knew that only union conferences could authorize ordination credentials that would be recognized universally. They also knew of no policy that prevented them from ordaining a minister to serve a local congregation.

On Sept. 23, 1995, Sligo Church ordained three women and on Dec. 2, 1995, La Sierra University Church ordained two.** The much smaller Loma Linda Victoria Church also ordained its woman pastor on Dec. 2. Similar events occurred in Garden Grove, Calif., in 1996, and at the Loma Linda University Church in 1997. General Conference and division leaders decried the events.

Seeking Fairness

With an increasing number of women pastors qualifying for ordination except for their gender, the Southeastern California Conference (SECC) faced a dilemma. How could it demonstrate that male and female pastors were valued equally? Over the years, the Gender Inclusiveness Commission, SECC constituents and the conference executive committee had called for women's ordination to achieve fairness. In the year 2000, the

SECC executive committee adopted a recommendation from the Gender Inclusiveness Commission to establish a new credential. Men and women would be set apart for ministry at the same ceremony and would receive the same "ordination-commissioned" credential. Having struggled with some of the same issues, the Arizona Conference also adopted the credential. Both conferences have conducted ordination-commissioning services that included both men and women.

Today, most Adventist church leaders believe women's ordination is dead. During the 30 years since Camp Mohaven, they have focused on maintaining a lock-step policy on women in ministry. They believe Utrecht ended the discussion and formalized the policy.

While scores of theological papers and books have been produced since 1973, the majority of Adventist church leaders have endorsed those that portray women in traditional roles.

This is a dramatic contrast to the views of early Adventist leaders. They defended the ministry of many women effective pastors and evangelists, not just the ministry of Ellen White. Nineteenth-century Adventists were strong characters who went against the grain of society and prevailing theology. They preached that church traditions should give way to the Spirit's movement in the last days as prophesied by Joel and the Apostle Peter.

Today, this vision seems to be history. ■

Kit Watts is assistant to the president for communication at the Southeastern California Conference and special projects coordinator for the La Sierra University Women's Resource Center.

Notes

*See Bert Haloviak's paper, "Money and Theology: IRS and Redefining SDA Ministry," written in 1996. This research paper can be accessed at www.adventistarchives.org.

**Sligo Church ordained Kendra Haloviak, religion teacher; Norma Osborn, pastor; and Penny Shell, hospital chaplain. La Sierra University Church ordained Madelyn Haldeman, religion teacher; and Halcyon Wilson, pastor. The Loma Linda Victoria Church ordained its pastor, Sheryll Prinz McMillan.

The 30-page program booklet, "Camp Mohaven to the New Millennium," from the AAW conference on Oct. 18, 2003, expands this article. For order information: e-mail wrc@lasierra.edu; phone (909) 785-2470; or write to WRC, La Sierra University, 4700 Pierce Street, Riverside, CA 91515.

A Few Bleats From One of the Sheep: A Layman's View

WILLIAM BLYTHE

Continued from page 22 »

comfort in the word of God to Job: "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell, me, if you understand."⁵ I want to take refuge in agnosticism.

My second bleat

Can I read Daniel and Hebrews, as well as John's Gospel, and hear God's voice to me, without an understanding of Hebrew and Greek? Can I lay aside the tradition and dogma of my church and, as a respected author said many years ago, be one of the "thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought"⁶? Can I now conclude, without being charged with heresy (as has happened in the recent past) that Jesus, upon ascending to heaven, went directly into his Father's presence⁷ and that the presence of the Father makes any place "most holy"?

Did not the writer to the Hebrews want to tell these Jewish Christians that Jesus was the better way, and that they should lay aside their Jewish traditions? Did he not review their traditions for them, as a starting point to his argument? Isn't it reasonable, or even necessary, to conclude that the sanctuary argument was symbolic, as was the whole ancient sanctuary service itself? Where, in Hebrews, is it even suggested that Christ did not go immediately into his Father's presence? Where does the author suggest a partition within the heavenly sanctuary?⁸ Should we not ask what this letter meant to its first readers?

Can we look back on our history, to 1844 and the years following, and praise God for the care and encouragement he gave those pioneers, Ellen White included, so that they would not "fall away"? Are not Ellen White's comments on the significance of the "cleansing" of the heavenly sanctuary⁹ historically correct, if not biblical exegesis?

I hope I can answer "Yes" to most of the above questions without being deprived of my fellowship in this church. To do otherwise would be to rely merely on the

"experts" and the official position of the church, for this is the way I read the scripture. Finally, what do I do with Revelation 21:22, where John in vision declares: "I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple"?

To again quote C. S. Lewis: "The proper study of shepherds is sheep.... I am a sheep, telling shepherds only what a sheep can tell them."¹⁰ ■

William Blythe, Ph.D., is an active consulting engineer following his retirement as professor of applied mechanics at San Jose State University, Calif.. He has served many terms as member of a local conference executive committee and of a union conference committee, as board member of an Adventist college and an Adventist academy, and as a local church elder.

Notes

¹"*Fern Seed and Elephants*," an essay by C. S. Lewis, published in *Fern Seed and Elephants and Other Essays on Christianity*, by Fontana/Collins (William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1975).

²"*Seventh-day Darwinians*," by Clifford Goldstein, *Adventist Review*, July 24, 2003.

³"*Myth Became Fact*," in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Eerdmans, 1970).

⁴"*Mythic and Christian Elements in Tolkien*," by Clyde S. Kilby, in *Myth, Allegory and Gospel*, ed. John Warwick Montgomery (Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1974).

⁵Job 38:4, from *The NIV Study Bible* (Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1985).

⁶*Education*, by Ellen G. White (Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1903).

⁷For example, John 14:12 and 28.

⁸*The Letter to the Hebrews*, William Barclay (The Westminster Press, 1976).

⁹*The Great Controversy*, Ellen G. White (Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911, p.409-432).

¹⁰See footnote 1.