



Seven Questions
for Chris Blake

Adventists and
Lawsuits



Ranking the 28
Fundamental Beliefs

Adventist *Today*

MAY-JUNE 2008 • WWW.ATODAY.COM

AN ADVENTIST PASTOR ONCE TOLD ME THAT WHAT HIS MINISTRY
-3.17 +0.44 -9.27 -0.10 -2.17 -0.12 -6.17 -0.44 -0.17

REALLY NEEDED WAS A MAJOR ECONOMIC DOWNTURN. IT WAS THE
+0.10 -4.17 -2.10 -9.17 +1.44 -3.68 -0.94 -1.57 -9.13 -8.17

LATE 1990S, AND HE WAS CONVINCED THAT THE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY
-0.74 -2.44 +0.18 -8.24 -0.69 -0.81 +0.34 -6.04 -0.90 -4.27

OF THAT TIME WAS KEEPING PEOPLE FROM RECOGNIZING THEIR TRUE
+1.93 -12.17 -2.40 -0.87 +0.30 -6.09 -1.01 -12.35 -0.22 -5.67

NEED FOR GOD. AS A RESULT, A RECESSION WAS JUST THE CURE FOR
-11.10 -6.67 -3.13 -8.17 -0.04 -4.87 +0.01 -1.17 +1.93 -10.01

THE SPIRITUAL APATHY HE SAW AMONG HIS COMMUNITY AND HIS
+0.08 -7.13 -0.08 -12.16 +0.98 -5.57 -0.54 -2.09 -0.08 -12.77

OWN CHURCH MEMBERS. I FOUND THIS PASTOR'S PERSPECTIVE TO BE
-1.10 -1.07 +0.34 -13.17 -10.05 -0.07 -3.94 -8.07 -0.04

INTERESTING BUT SLIGHTLY MASOCHISTIC. AFTER ALL, WHAT TYPE OF
-0.97 -0.29 -2.45 +1.03 -3.09 -0.08 +0.64 -2.87 -0.01 -2.97 -0.67 -1.47

PERSON HOPES FOR A RECESSION—A TIME WHEN MANY PEOPLE LOSE
-0.44 -6.37 +0.80 -2.57 +1.53 -0.36 -0.09 -3.37 -0.40 -2.81

THEIR JOBS, HOMES, AND ABILITY TO FEED THEIR FAMILIES—JUST TO
+1.09 -3.91 -0.52 +0.93 -0.82 -0.77 -3.08 -0.22 -2.41 +0.23

BRING MORE PEOPLE TO CHURCH? **RECESSION AND THE CHURCH**
-0.27 -0.01 +4.10 -6.09 -1.77 -0.95 BY DAVID BECKWORTH, ECONOMIST



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Adventist Today (ISSN 1079-5499) is published bimonthly by Adventist Today Foundation, P.O. Box 8026 Riverside, CA 92515-8026. Periodical postage paid at Riverside, California, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Adventist Today*, P.O. Box 8026, Riverside, CA 92515-8026. Copyright © 2008 by Adventist Today Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering open dialogue in the Adventist community.



The Problem With Generational Loyalty

Andy Nash

A few semesters ago I asked a group of 25 Adventist university students a simple question: If you had a choice, would you rather grow up when you actually did or when your kids will? These students, ages 18 to 20, were born in 1987-89. (Clinton was the first president they remember.) Generally speaking, their kids will be born starting in 2012.

Of the 25 students, a total of zero said they would want to grow up in the next generation (when their own kids will grow up). Even when I reminded them of the advances in technology and medicine, they held firm: They wouldn't want to grow up in the 2010s and 2020s. No way, they said, shaking their heads in unison.

"Why not?" I asked.

"Everything's gotten so materialistic," said one young woman.

"It's like all kids want to do is play video games," said another. Other students nodded.

"But that's what everyone thinks about your generation!" I protested. "Didn't you guys sit around playing video games?"

Yes, to some degree, they said. But it's getting much worse.

"At least we knew how to play outside," said one guy. "And we were more family-centered than kids are now."

"So you're saying the culture is going downhill," I said.

Yes, they replied. Things are getting worse.

"Okay," I said, "we've gone about 25 years into the future, and you're saying it's worse. Let's go 25 years the other way." I wrote a couple of dates on the board: 1962 and 1937. "This is when your parents and grandparents were born. How many of you would rather have grown up when they did?"

The students paused; some of them smiled.

"How many?" I repeated.

Three students raised their hands—two of them confidently, one not so sure.

"Three," I said. "A total of three of you would rather have grown up in your parents' or grandparents' generation. That leaves 22 of you preferring to grow up when you did."

"You know what you're saying, don't you?" I said. "You're saying that you grew up at the perfect time in history. Things were gradually improving until your time. Then everything fell apart."

We all laughed. I told them that I probably would have answered the same way. I loved the era in which I grew up: the '70s and '80s. Without a doubt, the music of the late '80s (my high school years) is the greatest music of all time. And '80s clothing styles are the coolest too. They laughed quite hard.

It's true. Most of us view "our era" as the perfect balance between yesterday and tomorrow. Life was still "simple," and yet we had the modern conveniences that we couldn't imagine living without. For me, it was a personal computer. For these students, it was email and cell phones.

We talked about the attributes of each generation. "Let's take your grandparents," I said. "Chances are, they're very patriotic people. Very loyal to their country and to their churches. Right?" The students nodded.

"They were hardworking, and they were frugal." I paused. "And they were probably racist. To this day some of them still carry racist attitudes."

The expressions changed as students recognized the truth of the statement when applied to their own grandparents and other relatives—perhaps a shocking offhand remark made at the holiday dinner table.

We feel a loyalty to our generation—to the good as well as the bad. Grandma and Grandpa were no different. As children of the '30s and '40s, they learned how to be patriotic—and they may have learned how to be racist.

Generational loyalty can be just as much a problem for the rest of us. For example, while college students today are, thankfully, less racist than those who went before them, their generation has its own problems, including disrespect for authority. In a sense, this generation is loyal to disloyalty.

"The challenge each of us faces," I said, "is to keep the good and throw out the bad."

For some of us, that can be as hard as admitting that those cool college clothes . . . just aren't cool anymore.

Most of us view "our era" as the perfect balance between yesterday and tomorrow.

March-April Issue

This past Sabbath it snowed in Alabama, and it was the perfect excuse to stay home and hang out together as a family! But after I got the mail, I couldn't put *Adventist Today* down long enough to cook lunch! Wow. Feature after feature captivated me.

Thanks for an excellent issue that I thoroughly enjoyed front to back! I'm proud to be a 32-year-old subscriber.

KARAH THOMPSON
Birmingham, Alabama



I'm not a big magazine fan, much less a Christian magazine fan. My tennis magazines sit decoratively on my coffee table so people can know that I play, and if I'm lucky I skim through a few issues for interesting tidbits before spring cleaning rolls around each year.

But the new *Adventist Today* caught my eye and made me think—probably for the first time ever about a Christian magazine—“That looks interesting enough to read.” A number of the titles grabbed my attention, and I found that not only did it make me think “that looks interesting,” but I was enticed into reading it as well! And enjoying it!

Great job on the magazine. It looks really professional and even turns out to

be a fun and informative read—a great way to make people think about the topics that are relevant to our church.

ERIC BAERG
Chattanooga, Tennessee

Boarding School at 14

Regarding Melanie Eddlemon's “Should You Send Your 14-Year-Old to a Boarding Academy?” (March-April):

I have directed a number of surveys over recent years for several conferences in which we asked Adventist parents about their attitudes toward boarding academy.

There are clear data showing that the market for boarding schools is drying up. A majority of Adventist Baby Boomers simply do not want their children at age 14 or 15 or even 16 to be away from home. Even larger percentages agree among Gen X and the Millennial generation. The net effect is a decline in the share willing to consider boarding academy—to the single digits in the most recent generation. The assessments I have seen indicate that 32 boarding academies is probably four times the appropriate number to balance demand with cost.

Some are tempted to chalk this up to “lack of belief in Christian education,” but the surveys show that is not true. Support for Adventist education is largely unchanged over recent decades. This is why there is a growing demand for day academies. There is also a demographic factor. The median age for Adventist members in North America is increasing, and there are fewer families in the age frame to have teenage children; consequently there are fewer teenagers, regardless of where they go to school.

MONTE SAHLIN
Springboro, Ohio

As the product of four years in a boarding academy (Monterey Bay Academy), I felt

your recent article on whether boarding academies are good for young people presented a fair and balanced perspective. However, the implication is that boarding academy enrollments are declining because of parental discomfort in sending their children away from home. Your interview with Dennis Plubell highlights the financial challenges of operating a boarding academy in the face of declining enrollments.

I feel an even bigger issue today is the inability of most Adventist parents to afford sending their children to a boarding academy unless they are church workers receiving education subsidy or part of the upper middle class. Nowhere mentioned in the article are tuition, room, and board costs, which average around \$14,000 annually, not including many incidental expenses. Even this rate is highly subsidized by most conferences. Given the low hourly rate paid for student on-campus work, which won't help pay for much of this expense, this is a cost few Adventist parents can afford today. We have an image of Adventism being a solidly middle-class church, but in reality that is not the case. A 2001 U.S. Congregational Life survey discovered that 63 percent of Adventists attending church on the Sabbath chosen for this national study made less than \$50,000 in annual household income. Results of this year's UCLA CIRP study of the freshman class at Pacific Union College found that 34 percent came from families making less than \$50,000.

Family budget studies recently completed by a local conference treasurer looked at two modest budget scenarios for elementary church school attendance. A single parent making \$40,000 per year paying a faithful tithe with one child attending an elementary school costing \$4,320 a year would have an annual budget shortfall of \$10,920. A two-parent

scenario making \$75,000 a year with two children and \$8,640 in tuition costs would have a \$16,898 shortfall. In these scenarios, a family would be faced with a choice of paying for tuition or tithing. Neither budget provides for extra luxury items; both are “bare bones” budgets.

Recently arrangements have been made for Adventist families to be able to borrow for their children to attend K-12 schools, which will make it even more impossible for them to attend college, where students are also borrowing to attend.

Unless the sponsoring conference subsidizes tuition to an even greater extent or local churches contribute more for helping middle-class families to afford to attend a boarding academy, the enrollments will decrease even further. Many conferences are already at maximum subsidies if they want to offer a balanced program that includes more than operating K-12 schools and providing a subsidy through the union to their local college/university.

RICHARD OSBORN, PRESIDENT
Pacific Union College
Angwin, California

Maybe some of the monies spent by conferences on one area (boarding schools) could be better spent to hire some progressive, interesting, dynamic, and grace-filled youth pastors to work in our small local churches. Then kids from rural areas would have another option besides leaving home. These youth workers could minister to our kids (and the community), and the older folks could listen to—and maybe even learn—some new things. When my sons want to talk (at 11 p.m.), who should be available for them to talk to? Why wouldn't I want it to be me?

NANCY LARSEN
Bemidji, Minnesota

Folkenberg Responds to ShareHim Report

I've given a great deal of thought to Vanessa Sanders's report on ShareHim (“Folkenberg's New Deal”) published in the March-April issue of *Adventist Today*. Frankly, I was pleased with the majority of the article. However, some of the arguments offered were so superficial, hackneyed, and contrary to the mission of the Adventist Church, I could not ignore them. So, I've spent quite a few hours trying to summarize some of the most significant points that I felt needed to be raised.

BOB FOLKENBERG, DIRECTOR
ShareHim Ministries
Charlotte, North Carolina

Note: Because of space constraints in the magazine, we have placed Bob Folkenberg's full document on our website. —Editors.

Balancing Sabbath

I particularly appreciated Andy Nash's editorial, “Balancing Sabbath.”

A family that I know moved to a Midwestern town where the Adventist Church is dying. The church does not have a phone number, and the retired pastor will really retire in a few months. Before this family arrived, the regular membership was about 12. The average age of the members was 70-plus. There was no children's Sabbath school. When I suggested that the newcomers rest on the Sabbath and worship at a Sunday church, they rejected the idea. For this family, worshipping on Sunday with non-Adventists is tantamount to leaving the Adventist Church. I'm sending the family a copy of Nash's editorial.

ANDY HANSON
Chico, California

Having been a teacher, principal, and pastor, I understand where Nash is coming from, partly. However, I have



friends who were Adventists but who now attend church on Sundays. They “praise the Lord” every time I see them—happy they have been set “free.” This article only gives fodder to backsliders, dissidents, and liberal Sabbath keepers.

STEPHEN YOST
Apopka, Florida

Who Should Work on Sabbath?

Regarding Ben McArthur's “Who Should Work on Sabbath?”:

I am a retired special agent of the FBI. Acquaintances have often asked me how a person can justify the mixture of an Adventist belief and an earnest dedication to law enforcement work—when civil duty may require him to work on Sabbath.

There are certainly other ways of doing good on the Sabbath than in the medical, educational, or pastoral areas. There are two powers in this world: those of God and of Satan. I firmly believe we can do good on the Sabbath by fighting the power of Satan, who has perverted the state of man's mind. I certainly did not seek out work on the Sabbath, but when it became an absolute necessity (usually in a homicide, fugitive, or kidnapping matter), I willingly did so.

JIM VYE
Yountville, California

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Adventist Publishers Face Changing Markets

Aging readership and drifting young adults necessitate new approaches.

By Katherine Brownlow

Adventist book publishers are in a predicament. With an aging customer base and a generation of young readers who often look elsewhere for spiritual nourishment, the market for Adventist books is shrinking. In addition to reaching out to secular markets, Adventist publishing houses must now also chase after their own readers.

“If you look back 30-40 years ago, Adventists read only Adventist books,” says Dan Wegh, sales representative for Review and Herald Publishing Association. Now “outside Christian publishing has become a competitor.”

Russell Holt, vice president of product development for Pacific Press Publishing

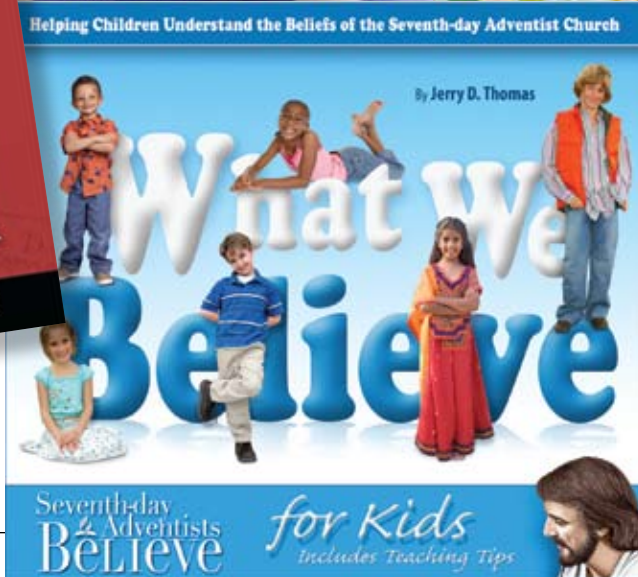
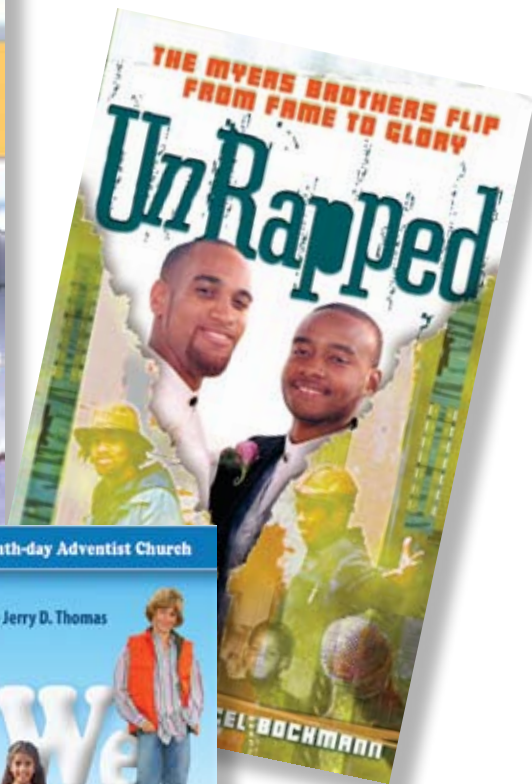
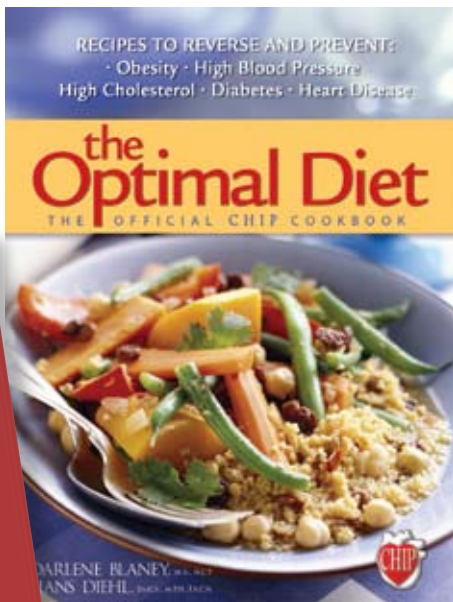
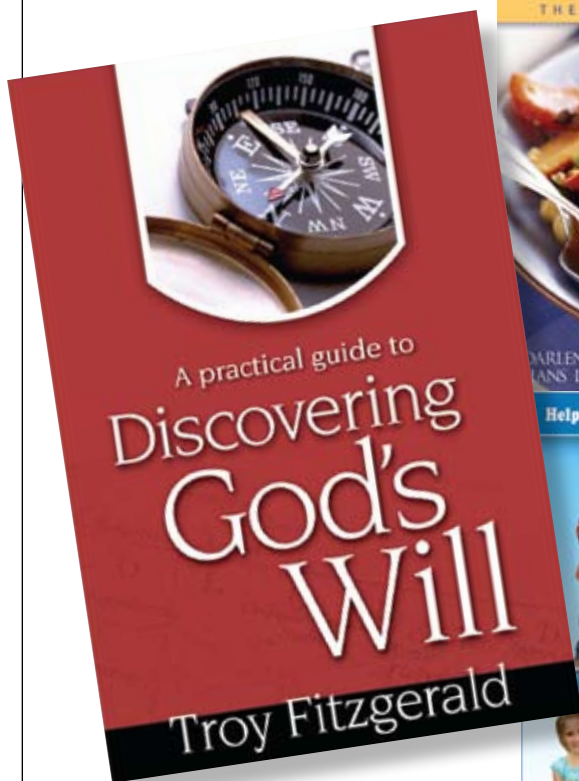
Association, agrees. “It’s increasingly true that Adventists of all ages are looking beyond Adventist publishers and Adventist Book Centers for religious books. This makes it more crucial to produce titles that can compete in terms of perceived value.”

But in today’s world, with an ever-increasing emphasis on diversity, figuring out what Adventist readers want is no easy task.

An Aging Audience

One challenge involves demographics. The median age of Adventists in North America is 58, according to a study by Ron Lawson, a professor of sociology at City University in New York City. That number includes unbaptized children in Adventist families.

The advanced age of the Adventist population is the result of two factors: mature converts to the denomination and a steady exodus of young people from the church.



“As we develop materials,” says Doug Church, vice president of marketing and sales at Pacific Press, “we try to keep in mind the cross section of the church. It is no surprise that our largest customer base is the more mature portion of the church. In our quest to reach the younger audience, we do not want to forget this section.”

In fact, it is often older church members who are buying many of the books targeted for young people. “A lot of books are given as gifts,” Wegh explains. “It’s always a challenge to design something that young people will open but grandparents will pay for.”

But as the traditional buyers of Adventist books mature, publishers must find a way to reach the younger generation that would take their places at the checkout counter.

Clifford Goldstein, a top-selling Adventist author, says he has noticed downward trends in the sales of his books. “My fan base is basically dead,” he says. “There’s a whole new generation coming up.”

Facing the Future

When marketing to young adults, Adventist publishers are increasingly competing against mainstream Christian publishers. In an informal *Adventist Today* poll conducted recently at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tenn., 22 juniors and seniors in a class called Mass Communication and Society were asked whether they had purchased any Christian books in the past year. Six said they had bought at least one book from an Adventist publisher, while 13 said they had bought a book from other Christian publishers. One student reported buying five or more books from an Adventist

2007 Top Sellers

Review and Herald Publishing Association

- | | |
|--|--------|
| 1. <i>Life Without Limits</i> (sharing)
By Clifford Goldstein | 82,223 |
| 2. <i>Unrapped</i> (junior sharing)
By Melanie Bockmann | 38,220 |
| 3. <i>The Optimal Diet</i> (cookbook)
By Darlene Blaney & Hans Diehl, M.D. | 16,802 |
| 4. <i>Life Without Limits</i> (hardback)
By Clifford Goldstein | 16,300 |
| 5. <i>Refiner’s Fire</i>
(Sabbath school companion book)
By Gavin Anthony | 14,120 |
| 6. <i>God’s Book of Wisdom</i>
(Sabbath school companion book)
By Jonathan Oey & Kathleen Kiem Hoa Oey Kuntaraf, with Lois Moore | 12,146 |
| 7. <i>Christmas in My Heart #16</i>
By Joe L. Wheeler, compiler and editor | 7,344 |
| 8. <i>Way of Escape</i>
By Doru Tarita | 4,077 |
| 9. <i>Guide’s Greatest Mystery Stories</i>
By Lori Peckham, editor | 4,070 |
| 10. <i>Every Good Thing</i>
By Mike Tucker | 3,890 |

Pacific Press Publishing Association

1. *Love Makes a Way* (devotional book)
By Herbert E. Douglass
2. *God Loves Me 28 Ways* (children’s book)
By Linda Koh and Charles Mills
3. *For Better or Worse*
(Sabbath School companion book)
By Gordon Christo
4. *Called to Discipleship*
(Sabbath School companion book)
By Bertram Melbourne
5. *Curse Proof* (children’s book)
By Eric B. Hare
6. *What We Believe for Teens*
By Seth Pierce
7. *What We Believe for Kids*
By Jerry D. Thomas
8. *Passionate Prayer*
By Brenda Walsh
9. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*
By General Conference Ministerial Dept.
10. *Could It Really Happen?*
By Marvin Moore

Note: Pacific Press chose not to provide sales figures, and their list doesn’t include sharing products—inexpensive, short booklets that people can share with friends, co-workers, and family.

publisher in the past year; four students said they bought at least five books from other Christian publishers.

Matt Herzel, 23, of Columbia, Md., says he’s heard Adventist beliefs all the way through school and doesn’t need to read them again in books. “We want new perspectives on Christianity, not the same doctrine we know by heart,” he says. “Constantly re-emphasizing our own viewpoints to our own church members can only lead to stagnation.”

“The church doesn’t allow for much questioning,” says Brittany Friestad, 22, a senior at Walla Walla University in Walla Walla, Wash. “That needs to change, because it was questioning that got us to where we are today. Plus, there is so much in today’s society that the church needs to address for the youth.”

In recent years Pacific Press and Review and Herald have taken slightly different approaches in their book offerings. Pacific Press has focused its

attention on items that are distinctively denominational, including several titles on what Adventists believe. “We need to stick with what makes us Adventist,” says Nicole Batten, director of publicity and public relations at Pacific Press.

Review and Herald also offers many Adventist-focused products, including books about Adventist heritage and traditions. “There’s a big emphasis on nailing down our history—where we came from—so we know where we’re going,” says Jeannette Johnson, assistant vice president of the book division at Review and Herald.

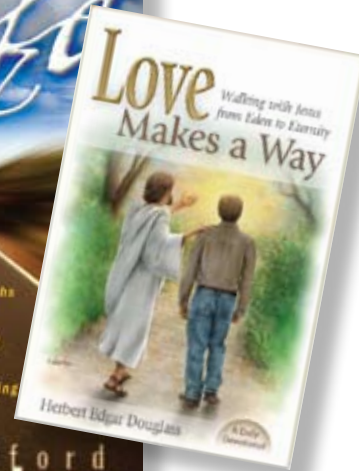
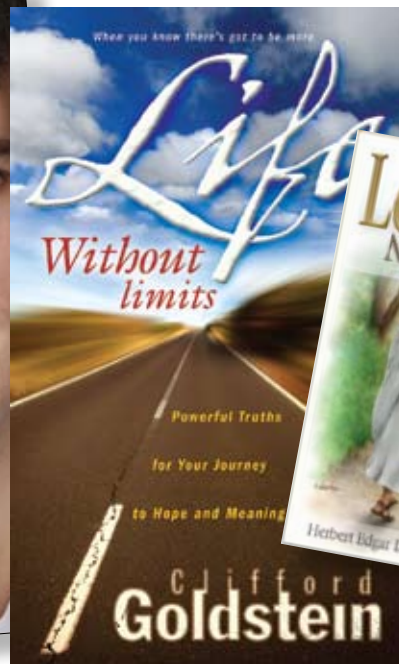
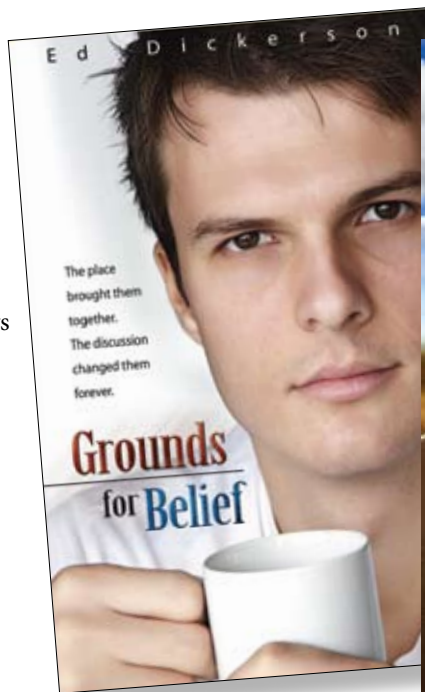
Review and Herald also offers, through its Autumn House line, books of a more general Christian nature, such as *Martha and Mary* by Patty Froese and *The Optimal Diet* (cookbook) by Darlene Blaney and Hans Diehl.

Tim Lale, acquisitions editor at Pacific Press, says Adventist publishers are aware of the need to produce culturally relevant content that addresses the questions and concerns of a new generation. “We’re reaching out with products to awaken interest [in young adults],” Lale says, citing books such as *Discovering God’s Will* by Troy Fitzgerald and *Grounds for Belief* by Ed Dickerson that address the postmodern worldview of many younger readers.

Lale says that, although many Adventists are drifting away from the church in their 20s and 30s, many will return as young parents who want to renew their faith as they raise their children.

New Avenues

Like other Christian publishers, Adventist publishing houses are also dealing with the challenge of doing business through new mediums. In the past, books were



traditionally sold through Adventist Book Centers and at camp meetings. But as camp meeting attendance shrinks and fewer people walk into bookstores, executives at Review and Herald and Pacific Press say they can’t afford to rely on old marketing methods.

Marketing online has proven a successful way to reach book buyers. Nearly \$1 million worth of Seventh-day Adventist books were sold through the

Adventist Book Center’s website, www.adventistbookcenter.com, in 2007. Both Pacific Press and Review and Herald also use Amazon.com as well as Google Books, a service that allows readers to search for books using key words and then preview excerpts.

“We’ve got to spread our borders and go to where people are,” says Johnson. “It’s important to be everywhere, using every medium you can.”

Adventist Book Centers: Time for a Makeover?

Although an increasing number of people buy books online, the popularity of Border’s and Barnes & Noble show the potential for a local bookstore. *Adventist Today* invited Adventist young adults to share their thoughts on Adventist Book Centers.

“I think the biggest problem with the ABC is that they are only marketing to an older generation. If they don’t start being more flexible in their appearance and market to young adults, their clientele is eventually going to die off.”
—Logan Ehlert, 21, Mountain City, Tenn.

“It’s so eerily quiet in there that it scares me. There should be a little study room, with sofas

and tables, for young adults to enjoy.”—Shaira Sujei Coley, 21, Trujillo Alto, Puerto Rico

“I’d like to see better advertising and marketing. I think we have great books, but no one ever knows about them.”—Jared McNeil, 23, Philadelphia, Penn.

“What if the target audience wasn’t just Adventist? What if the ABC felt like a Barnes & Noble inside with a McDonald’s playplace outside?”—Renée Baumgartner, 21, Norristown, Penn.



ANALYSIS

Adventist Publishing Then and Now

By James Stirling

In the good old days when people would respond to a ring of the doorbell, I was part of the army of colporteurs who were an important feature of the marketing of Adventist books. Though I always had misgivings about who would show up to open the door, I got enough civil and even warm responses to my “home health” approach that I was able to persuade many to buy. For some I was a welcome sight, and the good reading I brought was new and refreshing.

Later I worked in the editorial department of Pacific Press and for a brief year at Review and Herald, which gave me insight into how much they depended on the sale of traditional books by Ellen White and other church leaders like Arthur Maxwell. Their principal readership, of course, was among church members who read them and bought “missionary books” to give to their neighbors.

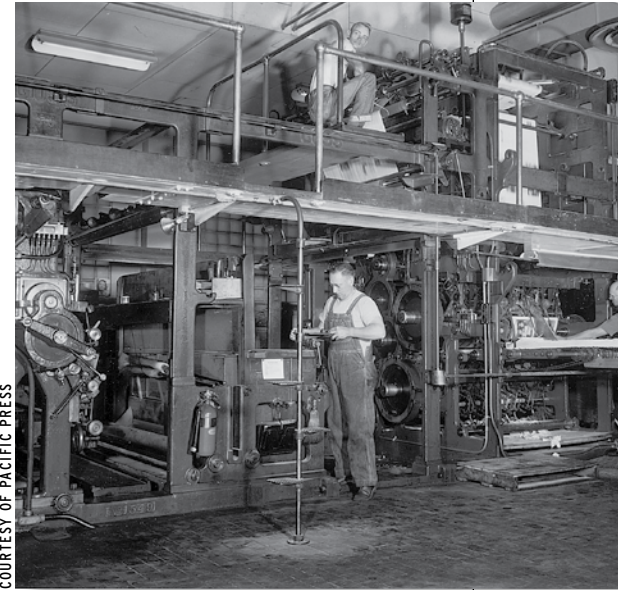
But it is a different world now. I have met a few hardy souls who still make direct sales, but not many people wait for strangers to bring them books. An ambitious plan called Project Gutenberg has digitized many books from the public domain and made them available for free downloading on the World Wide Web. Amazon has promoted a book-reading device called Kindle that allows a person to call up onto its handheld book-size screen almost any book in print, anywhere, anytime, to be read page by page. And still more marvels are undoubtedly lurking behind the curtains. With such a multitude of media for entertainment and information within easy reach, some gloomy commentators have even predicted the end of print journalism.

Are people really giving up on books—the kind you hold in your hands and curl up with on an easy chair? Ask the publishers of the Harry Potter series, whose millions of sales made their author possibly the richest woman in the world. Or the Left Behind series, equally fictitious but with a biblical veneer that captured the imagination of millions of readers. Many Americans were passionate about one or the other of these two series; I met some adults who couldn’t wait for the next installment of the Potter books, and others who wouldn’t dream of reading them because they were sure the devil was behind every chapter.

The Harry Potter books focused on a teenager who confronted problems typical of youngsters in his age group and found magical ways to deal with them. Whether or not young Adventists read the Potter books, they have interests and needs for which some of our Sabbath School publications are being adapted. *Insight* magazine, for example, features striking layouts and real-life stories that help supply the good role models teenagers need as they grow up.

College students and young parents who have been exposed to publications outside the church’s domain have come to look for reasoned thinking beyond the apologetics of writers who simply affirm “the truth” with greater emphasis. They expect that writers who deal with large questions about life and science will demonstrate their sympathetic acquaintance with reasonable, divergent views.

Our publishing houses have presented few books on the pressing needs of the day—environment and global warming, population stabilization, peacemaking,



COURTESY OF PACIFIC PRESS

migration. There is a need for faith-based books that approach these topics in a human and experiential way. One authority, Lester R. Brown, is calling for, among other things, an end to meat-based diets. Cattle are too wasteful of natural resources, and they produce methane to clog the atmosphere. He says the need for moving the world onto a path of sustained progress is so urgent that “our generation will make the choice, but it will affect life on earth for generations to come.” Can Adventists show the world how that objective can be met by happy and healthy people?

I hope so. I would like to think that Adventists have a large view for “the message to all the world in this generation.”

James Stirling, Ph.D., taught anthropology at Loma Linda and La Sierra universities. Previously he served as copyeditor at Pacific Press Publishing Association and worked at the Review and Herald Publishing Association. His colporteur years included summers in San Diego and Vancouver, Washington, and full time in Klamath Falls, Oregon.

DURING TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES, CHURCH ATTENDANCE TENDS TO

-3.17 +0.44 -9.27 -0.10 -2.17 -0.12 -6.17 -0.44 -0.17

GO UP AT EVANGELICAL PROTESTANT CHURCHES—AND DOWN AT

+0.10 -4.17 -2.10 -9.17 +1.44 -3.68 -0.94 -1.57 -9.13 -8.17

MAINLINE PROTESTANT CHURCHES. AN ECONOMIST EXPLAINS WHY.

-0.74 -2.44 +0.18 -8.24 -0.69 -0.81 +0.34 -6.04 -0.90 -4.27

AN ADVENTIST PASTOR ONCE TOLD ME THAT WHAT HIS MINISTRY really needed was a major economic downturn. It was the late 1990s, and he was convinced that the economic prosperity of that time was keeping people from recognizing their true need for God. As a result, a recession was just the cure for the spiritual apathy he saw in his community and among his own church members.

I found this pastor's perspective to be interesting but slightly masochistic. After all, what type of person hopes for a recession—a time when many people lose their jobs, homes, and ability to feed their families—just to bring more people to church?

Although intriguing, the argument was seemingly one that would never be tested. Observers at the time were talking of a “New Era” in which economic prosperity and rapid economic growth would be the norm for the future. For many, the long economic boom that began in the 1990s had no end in sight.

Everything changed in 2000. Late that year, the stock market crashed and was followed the next year by a recession in the United States. I was not able to find out what happened to this pastor's ministry during the economic downturn, but I did have an experience at that time that made me take his view more seriously.

The experience took place one Sabbath while visiting my sister's church, which was located in an area that had been hit hard by the recession. During part of the church service, a microphone was passed around to individuals who shared with the rest of the congregation either a praise or prayer request. This was a regular part of the church service that, during my previous visits, typically resulted in an even mix of praises and prayer requests. But this was not a typical Sabbath. All who spoke up

PRAYING FOR A RECESSION?

BY DAVID BECKWORTH

had just lost a job and were asking God for help. I was stunned at the amount of economic hardship being expressed during this open-mike time. Maybe the pastor who had been hoping for a recession was onto something.

I began to wonder whether this experience might be representative of a much broader, systematic relationship between religiosity and the business cycle. If so, would it always be countercyclical—with people getting more religious during economic downturns and less religious during economic expansions—as suggested by the pastor? Could the relationship ever go the other way, creating a procyclical component to religiosity? These questions raced through my mind as I mulled over this experience.

What Economic Theory Tells Us

Several years later I finally took time to formally investigate whether there was a cyclical component to religiosity. Though this question could be examined across many faiths in a wide variety of places, I focused my efforts on Protestant Christians in the United States. I turned to economic theory to see what it had to say about the relationship between the business cycle and religiosity. Much to my surprise, I found that economic theory had a lot to say about this relationship. It did so, however, in a way that suggested it was inappropriate to lump all Protestant Christians into one grouping.

The first thing economic theory had to say is that the cost of being religious can change over the business cycle. During an economic boom, individuals may find increased opportunities for higher earnings. The potential for higher earnings, in turn,

makes time-intensive religious activities like church attendance costly for these individuals. Consider, for example, a Southern Baptist from a low-income family being offered the opportunity of getting overtime pay to work at a retail store on Sunday morning. For this Southern Baptist, going to church suddenly becomes a lot more costly and thus increases the likelihood of him opting for work instead of church.

On the other hand, during an economic downturn, time-intensive religious activities become less costly as opportunities for earnings decline. Here, the overtime opportunity for the Southern Baptist disappears and church attendance suddenly becomes more affordable. This idea that higher earnings lead individuals to replace leisure activities (like going to church) with more profitable ones (like working) and vice versa is called the *substitution effect*. It implies that there should be a countercyclical component to religiosity.

There are, however, two countervailing forces against the substitution effect. The first one, called the *income effect*, says that higher earnings also mean that individuals can work fewer hours than before and still get the same pay. They therefore have more time for leisure activities, like church attendance, without a loss of income. Consider, for example, an Episcopalian whose consulting business was able to increase its fees because of the increased demand for its services during an economic boom. The Episcopalian can now afford to take on fewer consulting projects, without a loss of income, and enjoy more time at church. During an economic downturn, however, the consulting fees would drop. The Episcopalian would now need to work more hours to

maintain his income, leaving less time for church.

The second countervailing force is something called the *wealth effect*. The wealth effect says that as individuals' wealth increases from valuation gains in their homes, stocks, and other assets, they have less need to save and thus less need to work. In turn, there should be more time for church attendance. Imagine now that the Episcopalian had a large amount of funds in stocks during a stock-market boom. His wealth would increase dramatically and make leisure activities like church attendance more affordable. Both of these effects imply that there could be a procyclical component to religious activities.

Economic theory is generally silent on which of these effects dominates the decision to work. Research has shown, however, that evangelical Protestants typically fall into a lower socioeconomic grouping than mainline Protestants (Pyle, 2006). This suggests that the substitution effect should be more important for evangelical Protestants. In other words, since evangelical Protestants are starting from a lower income level, like the Southern Baptist above, they should be eager

sense of certainty or appeal to an all-powerful, job-providing God. Individuals, therefore, may choose to join an evangelical Protestant denomination rather than a mainline one during a recession.¹ Consequently, the consumption-smoothing ability of churches also points to a stronger countercyclical component for evangelical Protestants.

What the Data Revealed

Are these theoretical predictions borne out by the data? The first part of my research was to see how evangelical and mainline Protestant religiosity in the United States changed during the last officially recorded recession of 2001. This was accomplished by taking data from a Pew Research Center Survey administered near the end of that recession to assess the determinants of religiosity, as indicated by weekly church attendance. A number of factors were examined in a statistical model to see what drove weekly church attendance, with special emphasis given to employment status. The key issue examined was whether being unemployed affected church attendance in a meaningful (i.e. statistically significant)

IF, IN FACT, A RECESSION BEGAN IN THE U.S. ECONOMY DURING THE THEN THESE RESULTS SUGGEST THAT THE FIRST HALF OF 2009 TO BE HOLDING EVANGELISTIC MEETINGS.

to take advantage of higher earning opportunities, whereas mainline Protestants, like the Episcopalian above, who already have relatively high income levels may see less need to do so. Moreover, mainline Protestants have more wealth and should therefore be more sensitive to the wealth effect compared to their poorer evangelical Protestant brethren. A priori, then, the changing cost of being religious points to evangelical Protestants being more countercyclical in their religiosity than mainline Protestants.

The second thing economic theory has to say about this issue is that individuals generally desire to have a steady stream of housing, clothes, food, and other consumption over the business cycle. During a recession, individuals may become unemployed or find their earnings fall. To prevent these developments from being disruptive, individuals may turn to churches for consumption needs such as shelter and groceries. Individuals may also turn to churches for less tangible consumption needs, such as a sense of certainty and divine guidance in a job search. Such a response implies there should be a countercyclical component to religiosity. Note, however, that the wealthier mainline Protestants are in far less need of churches to provide consumption for them. In addition, mainline Protestant denominations often place less emphasis on absolute truths than evangelical ones and, as a result, are not able to create the same

way, after accounting for other potential influences. Other influences that were controlled for included the effect of 9/11, age, education level, marriage status, race, gender, and income level.

A first set of statistical models were run, and in all of them, being unemployed was a significant determinant. These models showed on average a 42 percent probability of any one person in the sample attending church weekly; but if that person were unemployed, the probability jumped nearly another 10 percent. A second set of statistical models were run to see if employment status had a different effect on weekly attendance for the two types of Protestants. Again, the probability of weekly attendance averaged around 42 percent; but for an unemployed evangelical Protestant, that probability increased almost another 30 percent, compared to a 0.06 percent probability increase for an unemployed mainline Protestant.² These striking numbers seemed to confirm what economic theory had predicted. Still, these results were not entirely satisfactory, since they were based on only one recession experience and only one measure of economic distress: unemployment.

One can easily think of other ways economic distress could occur and affect individuals' religiosity without their actually becoming unemployed. For example, some individuals may have become more religious during the 2001 recession not because they had lost their jobs, but because they were fearful they would lose

their jobs. Moreover, the effect of the business cycle on religiosity may be richer than indicated by looking at just one recession.

To get a broader perspective on this issue, I next looked at the annual growth rates of 25 Protestant denominations—11 mainline and 14 evangelical—over the years from 1968 through 2004. The data came from the periodical *The State of Church Giving Through 2004*. Here, the membership growth rate was used as the indicator of religiosity. Certain macroeconomic variables were examined to see if they could explain movements in membership growth. The macroeconomic variables used included the following: a recession variable that indicated whether or not there was a recession in a given year, the unemployment rate, inflation-adjusted GDP (Gross Domestic Product, a broad measure of economic activity), the inflation-adjusted S&P 500 stock market index, and spot oil prices.³

Table 1 presents some of the results from this exercise. It shows for both Protestant groupings the effect on the membership growth rate from a typical positive shock, or unexpected change, to each macroeconomic variable. Where there are dashes and

TABLE 1.

Variable Shocked	Mainland Protestant Avg. Growth= -0.9%	Evangelical Protestant Avg. Growth= 1.1%
Recession Indicator	–	+0.54% Recession Years
Unemployment Rate	–	+0.17%
Inflation Adjusted GDP Growth Rate	–	–
Inflation Adjusted S&P500 Growth Rate (1 year prior)	+0.21%	-0.17%
Spot Oil Price	–	+0.19%

rate, though, more modest growth rate responses of 0.19 percent and under emerged from shocks due to unemployment, the stock market, and oil prices. All evangelical responses, however, indicated a countercyclical component to membership growth. Mainline Protestants, on the other hand, were not found to be significantly related to most of the macroeconomic variables. The only significant variable reported here, the stock market index, actually showed a positive relationship, meaning a booming stock market implied stronger growth in mainline Protestant churches—the opposite of the stock market response found for evangelicals.⁴ These results are consistent with the findings mentioned earlier: mainline Protestants typically are wealthier than evangelical Protestants and therefore should have a larger stake in the stock market. For them, a booming stock market indicates more wealth and increased affordability of religion. For the poorer evangelicals, a booming stock market is a leading economic indicator pointing to higher earning opportunities and the increased cost of being religious.

These results and the others that are reported in my study confirm what was found using the Pew Research Center Survey: evangelical Protestants are sensitive to business-cycle movements in a countercyclical fashion. The results further indicate that about 39 percent of all movements in evangelical Protestant denominations could be explained by movements in the economy. Mainline Protestants were also found to be sensitive

FIRST QUARTER OF 2008, WOULD BE THE OPTIMAL TIME

no numbers, it means no meaningful relationship was found. The table also shows the average annual growth rate for each Protestant group in order to put the importance of each shock into context.

For evangelical Protestants, the table shows that during recession years the membership growth rate jumped 0.54 percent. The total effect is that during recession years, evangelical membership grew 1.52 percent compared to 0.98 percent in non-recession years, a huge increase. Relative to the average growth

Reaching the Unemployed in Your Community

By David Beckworth

What does a recession mean for your church? One answer is that it provides a great opportunity to start a jobs ministry.

As reported in the accompanying article, evangelical Protestant denominations—including Seventh-day Adventist—can expect increased attendance from both existing members and seekers. A jobs ministry is a great way to serve these individuals, and it draws upon the unique strengths of a church community.

Unlike secular-based job programs, a jobs ministry deals with both the physical and spiritual

needs of the unemployed. Any organization can teach skills like résumé writing, interviewing tips, and effective networking. Only faith communities, however, can offer these practical skills and provide spiritual counseling, discovery of God's plan for your life, and other faith-building exercises for the unemployed.

In addition, the church is a great place to make contacts for future work. Many jobs come from networking and referrals; having concerned fellow believers may open up employment opportunities.

Finally, a church is more than a human resource

clerk. It is a family of believers who take seriously the plight of the unemployed in their church.

A survey conducted by Monte Sahlin in 2000 finds that only 9 percent of Seventh-day Adventist churches have a job-finding or job-training ministry. There is a need for more of these ministries in the Adventist Church, particularly now as the economy weakens. Those interested in starting a jobs ministry program should consult the "Job Finding and Placement Programs" chapter in Monte Sahlin's book *Ministries of Compassion* (2000).

to economic conditions, with about 45 percent of membership growth being explained by economic conditions. They, however, were more procyclical in nature.⁵

Where does the Seventh-day Adventist Church fall in all of this? First, the Adventist Church is considered an evangelical Protestant denomination by most observers and was one of the 14 evangelical denominations used above. It too, then, should have a countercyclical component to its growth. Second, further analysis using data on the number of quarterly Adventist converts for the period 1950:Q1 through 2006:Q4 confirmed that there is a countercyclical component to growth of the Adventist Church.⁶ Two examples of the statistical analysis performed on this data that confirm the countercyclical tendency can be seen in Figures 1 and 2.

Figures 1 and 2 show the usual Adventist growth-rate response to a typical shock affecting inflation-adjusted GDP and the unemployment rate during this time. These responses can be

The solid line shows the mean response while the dashed line shows 95% confidence bands, a measure of precision. As long as the confidence bands fall outside the zero line, there is statistical significance.

FIGURE 1.

Adventist Growth-Rate Response After Shock to Inflation-Adjusted GDP

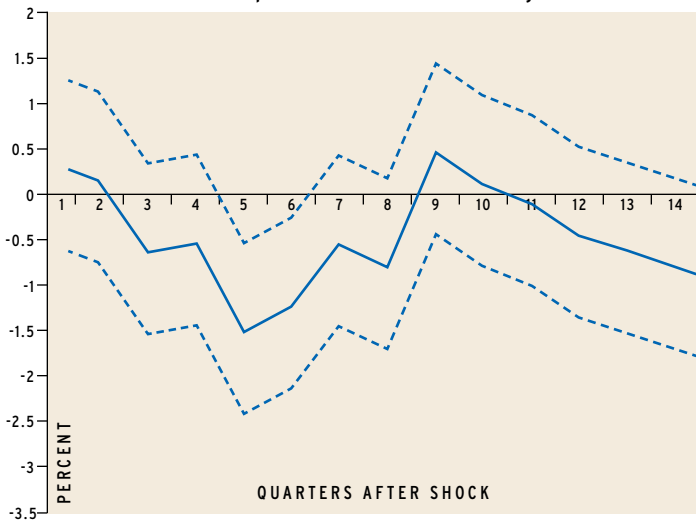
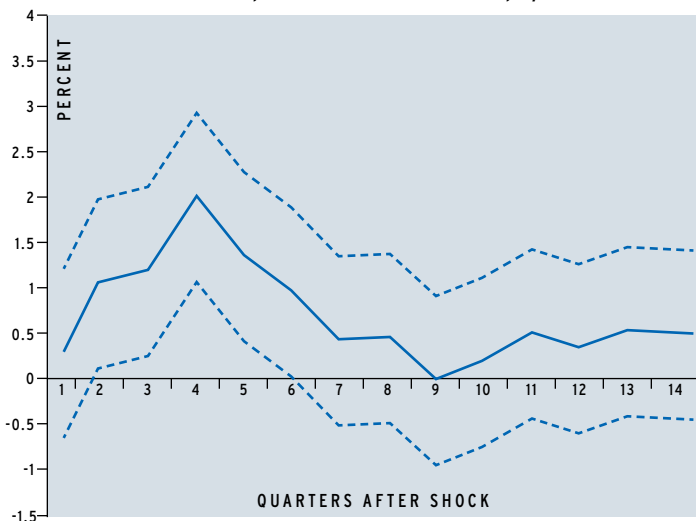


FIGURE 2.

Adventist Growth-Rate Response After Shock to the Unemployment Rate



viewed as deviations from the average quarterly Adventist conversion growth rate of 0.9 percent for this period. The solid line shows the mean response, while the dashed line shows 95 percent confidence bands, a measure of precision. As long as the confidence bands fall outside the zero line, there is statistical significance. Figure 1 shows that a typical positive GDP shock leads the conversion growth rate to decline and bottoms out at a negative growth rate of about 2 percent five quarters after the shock. Figure 2 shows that a positive unemployment shock leads to an increase in the conversion rate that peaks at just over 2 percent four quarters after the shock. Both figures suggest that Adventist evangelistic campaigns would get their best results 12 to 15 months after the economic shock. If, in fact, a recession began in the U.S. economy during the first quarter of 2008, then these results suggest that the first half of 2009 would be the optimal time to be holding evangelistic meetings.

Conclusion

Both theory and empirical evidence, then, seem to confirm what a frustrated Adventist pastor told me in the late 1990s—at least for evangelical Protestant Christians. Economic hardship does seem to make people who gravitate toward evangelical Protestantism more aware of their true need for God, even if it does mean they first approach God from a cost-benefit perspective. On the other hand, mainline Protestants may find God more easily during prosperous times. These results suggest, then, that it may not be a bad idea for leaders of evangelical Protestants to be hoping—dare we say be praying—for a recession this year.

David Beckworth is an assistant professor of economics at Texas State University and formerly was an international economist with the U.S. Department of Treasury. His blog can be found at www.macromarketmusings.blogspot.com

¹Conversely, these same individuals may find a mainline Protestant denomination more appealing than an evangelical one during an economic upturn when the need for certainty and employment are less pressing concerns.

²All estimates except those of the unemployed mainline Protestant were statistically significant. Employed evangelical Protestants had a 20 percent probability increase, while employed mainline Protestants actually had a 12 percent decline in probability. Both of these latter estimates were statistically significant. Interestingly, then, being an unemployed mainline Protestant has no statistically significant effect on weekly church attendance, but being an employed mainline Protestant does affect church attendance in a negative manner.

³Several yield curve spreads were also used and found to be highly significant. For the sake of brevity, discussion of these variables is omitted. See Beckworth (2007) for details.

⁴The only other significant variable found for mainline Protestants was the yield curve spread. See footnote 3.

⁵They also had a mild countercyclical component when the yield curve was used in the analysis. See footnotes 3 and 4.

⁶The quarterly data comes from the NAD Secretariat's Quarterly Statistical Report.

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A Calvinist on Monday, Wednesday, Friday

By Alden Thompson

Is my title wishful thinking, conviction, or playfulness? Yes! But I'd choose "conviction" if I could. I'd love to enter the soul of a real Calvinist, not to wreak havoc, but to understand, and not like a doctor understands a patient, but from the patient's own perspective. It would be like sharing a beautiful sunset as two people are drawn together in awe and wonder. Or the sharing of a luscious, fresh peach. Knowing glances and happy noises reveal a common joy.

But if sunsets and peaches bond us naturally, theology requires miracles. In the words of Thoreau, "Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other's eyes for an instant?" Yes, theological unity needs miracles.

And I'll be honest: I want a miracle. Why not? Miracles are biblical.

But do I need a miracle to become a Calvinist? Didn't Calvin earn his Adventist spurs with a chapter in Ellen White's *The Great Controversy*? Not exactly. At least one devout Adventist has gone into print with the line: "The Satanic God of Calvin." Strong feelings those!

And thus looms the great question that keeps dividing believers: Is our future in God's hands or ours? Does God choose us, or do we choose God?

Now if you simply answer "yes!" and wonder what the problem is, you're in good company. As C.S. Lewis has noted, Paul, without explanation, puts the two perspectives back-to-back in Phil. 2:12-13: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," "for it is God who is at work in you."

Our trouble is the temptation to choose one or the other instead of keeping them together. Indeed, even though Paul puts both together in Philippians 2, elsewhere he comes down so hard on the divine side of the equation (e.g. Romans 9-11) that he is often seen as virtually the opponent of freedom-

loving James. Historically the two sides have clashed again and again: Augustine (400s), Calvin (1500s), and Whitefield (1700s) arguing for divine sovereignty; Pelagius, Arminius, and Wesley defending human freedom.

Adventists typically are free-will people, more at home with Methodists than Presbyterians or Lutherans. But as I see it, our free-will roots have kept us from really hearing Paul—hence my conviction that I should be a Calvinist three days a week.

It happened as I was reading devotionally in the Gospel of John and was surprised by two familiar verses. I'd read them many times before but hadn't heard them. In John 12:27, Jesus wonders about asking the Father to "save" him. "No," he says. "That's why I came." Suddenly I heard the other prayer in the Garden, "Let this cup pass from me" (found in the Synoptics but not in John). In John 15:16 I was startled again: "You did not choose me, but I chose you."

I had always "heard" the human side of those experiences: Jesus' human desire to escape death and my freedom to "choose" God. It's time for me to hear the divine call, not just the human will. Maybe it can happen on MWF. That's a curious kind of Calvinism, to be sure. But by God's grace, miracles can happen.

It may be, however, that in this case I'm expecting too much. Instead of being like a shared sunset or luscious peach, my love for Calvinism could be like my appreciation for my wife's love of high mountain peaks that plunge into deep, dark chasms below. She revels in the heights; they terrify me. But because I love her, I love to see her exhilaration—as long as I don't have to go to the edge myself. We'll see. In the meantime, I am going to be a MWF Calvinist.

**Does God
choose us,
or do we
choose God?**



DR. EARLE HILGERT, FORMER ANDREWS University seminary professor and professor emeritus at McCormick Seminary, in his presentation at the inaugural Richard Hammill Lectureship at Loma Linda University Church, examined what he termed the Essentials and the Accidentals of the Christian faith. He defined Essentials as those properties that are fundamental to an object or person. He defined Accidentals as those properties that are part of an object but are not essential to its being. Hilgert employed the metaphor of a triangle to illustrate his point. The angles of a triangle will add up to 180 degrees—always. This is an Essential. The area of a triangle is an Accidental.

Hilgert's search to discover the Essentials of the Christian faith led him to discover what appear to be the earliest New Testament confessionals. From his examination of these confessionals, Hilgert concluded that the first Christians counted the following as Essentials: Jesus Christ is Lord, he was crucified, and he rose from the dead.

Examples of Accidentals, using Hilgert's definition as a starting point, include the Nativity story—Matthew and Luke describe Jesus' birth; Mark, John, and the other New Testament writers don't. These authors do not tell us where he was born, and they make only oblique reference to his virgin birth. We find similar divergences when we read what the New Testament authors wrote about Jesus' divine/human nature and the relationship between Jesus and the Father.

I believe that Hilgert is "on to something," in that he offers an explanation for the current theological divisions in the Adventist Church and the growing influence of administrators on theology and practice.

Hilgert chose geometry as his metaphor to illustrate the difference between Essentials and Accidentals. He might also have used a musical note. A trumpet, piano, flute, or violin each has the ability to generate a tone. When a tone is produced with approximately 440 vibrations per second at 72° F, it is an

"A." The vibrations per second produce the Essential. The harmonics, or Accidentals produced by the individual instrument, are what differentiate one instrument from another. This is how we know the difference between a trumpet and a bassoon.

What we discover, however, is that when one examines individual instruments from within the same subgroup, accidentals have a subtle yet significant role. A concert violinist, when given the choice, will select a Stradivarius over a 21st Century mass-produced violin.

While triangles and musical instruments are one thing and religious belief and practices are quite another, the metaphor is instructive. Religious organizations subscribe to commonly accepted Essentials, such as belief in the existence of a higher Being-God, and the notion that human beings have the potential to become better in some broadly defined moral sense.

Subgroups within the Christian metagroup affirm a subset of Essentials.

BY LARRY DOWNING

essentials

ACCIDENTALS

When we major in minors, we sometimes find ourselves minoring in majors.

These are beliefs regarding the Trinity, baptism, forgiveness of sin, salvation by faith in Christ alone, and the authority of Scripture. What differentiates one Christian group from the other is the emphasis that a specific entity places upon the Accidentals. The Seventh-day Adventist Church emphasizes a particular day for worship. Baptists believe in an eternal hellfire and in baptism by immersion. Roman Catholics affirm the infallibility of the Pope, and Mormons believe that the president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is endowed with the prophetic gift.

What one subgroup identifies as an Essential may be viewed as accidental, inconsequential, or heretical by another group. For example, both Methodists and Baptists believe in baptism. The Methodists baptize by immersion or sprinkling. Baptists do not accept sprinkling. The mode of baptism is an Essential to the Baptists; it is an Accidental to the Methodist.

As one more closely differentiates between subgroups, Accidentals tend to become Essentials. Because Accidentals are what define and give character to individual subgroups, the more distinct the Accidental, the more importance it may have for the group. To illustrate this point, I will reference the church I know best.

The Adventist Church has a set of 28 Fundamental Beliefs. These are its Essentials. This list includes several beliefs commonly accepted as Essential by other Christian groups: God is the Creator, salvation is by faith in Christ alone, and Scripture is God's authoritative word. There are, however, other statements of belief within the 28 that most Christians do not accept: the seventh-day Sabbath; the 2300-days prophecy found in Daniel 8:14; abstinence from tobacco, alcohol, and unclean meats; tithing; and the belief that Ellen White was a prophet of God. These Accidentals-turned-Essentials provide the subgroup with its unique identity and have become basic to its continued existence.

Religious subgroups sometimes consider it mandatory to persuade members of its metagroup to accept their beliefs and adopt their Accidentals as Essential. These refinements tend to further isolate these subgroups from others in the metagroup. Energy and effort are required for the subgroups to defend and promote these doctrines. If members of a subgroup challenge one or more of these "official" beliefs, group leaders may try to mediate differences and/or attempt to enforce established doctrine.

Christian church history suggests that there is a common thread of paranoia and intolerance in subgroups as they more carefully define and emphasize the aspects of the beliefs that differentiate them from the metagroup. As a subgroup begins to focus on and promote its peculiar characteristics, Accidentals tend to become Essentials, and the subgroup becomes increasingly certain of its unique role in the cosmic scheme of things. As a consequence, it perceives its Essentials to be of increasing importance. The gulf

between the subgroup and the metagroup increases, and members of the subgroup come to believe that if they modify or abandon their unique Essentials, their identity will be lost and their existence threatened. Ironically, this course of action may weaken their influence within the metagroup and lead to their eventual irrelevance and dissolution.

Today, Seventh-day Adventists are under pressure to decide if it is possible for one member's Essentials to be another member's Accidentals. While

Can the Seventh-day Adventist Church permit a diversity of belief without destroying the Christian fellowship of its members? For some Adventists this question is debatable; for others it is not.

the majority of Adventists accept the Sabbath as an Essential, there is less support for the church's official position regarding inspiration, eschatology, a short-earth chronology, and a worldwide flood.

Can the Seventh-day Adventist Church permit a diversity of belief without destroying the Christian fellowship of its members? For some Adventists this question is debatable; for others it is not.

There are those

who believe it is important to define the Essentials and set precise doctrinal boundaries. These members expend energy and resources to promote what Hilgert defines as Accidentals. The end result of these efforts is division, infighting, and loss of credibility. To the extent this continues, the Adventist Church's contribution to the world's progressive understanding of Essential Christian theology may become heavily discounted.

Larry Downing is a retired pastor now working part-time at the White Memorial Medical Center in Los Angeles, California.

Ranking the 28 Fundamental Beliefs

By R. Lynn Sauls

Ranking the 28 Fundamental Beliefs can be a useful exercise.

It can be useful in helping us know and understand what we believe. It can be useful in helping us avoid the heresy of putting too much emphasis on accidental beliefs and not enough emphasis on essential ones.

As useful as ranking the 28 Beliefs may be, it can be difficult. For one thing, most of the beliefs are very interrelated. They make up a tapestry. As imperfect as some of the threads may be, they make one fabric. How do we determine which threads are less important than others?

Another difficulty is that the beliefs are more than their titles. They are presented as paragraphs composed of anywhere between three and 11 sentences. In some cases the first sentence is the belief in a nutshell; additional sentences expand and explain the belief. In other cases several sentences within the paragraph are really a collection of separate, but related, beliefs. Some of these related beliefs seem to be more important than others. Some may have stronger scriptural support than others.

No. 16 (The Lord's Supper) provides an example. It contains three beliefs: the Lord's supper, the foot-washing service, and open communion. Three of the Gospel writers, as well as Paul, indicate that "the Lord's Supper is a participation in the emblems of the body and blood of Jesus." Only John's Gospel, however, refers to the foot washing—and it is the only part of the Bible to do so. Although foot washing can be a good thing to do ("If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them"), is it as important as eating the bread and drinking the grape juice? If not, Belief No. 16 contains an accidental as well as an essential. Some of the other beliefs, it seems to me, do the same thing.

We cannot expect everyone to come up with the same ranking. The order of rankings can be determined by the unifying idea and the beginning belief chosen. The architects of the 28 Beliefs began with No. 1 (The Word of God). My wife, Helen, would begin with No. 6 (Creation). I begin with No. 9 (The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ).

"In Christ's life of perfect obedience to God's will, His suffering, death, and resurrection, God provided the only means of atonement for human sin, so that those who by faith accept this atonement may have eternal life, and the whole creation may better understand the infinite and holy love of the Creator. This perfect atonement vindicates the righteousness of God's law and the graciousness of His character; for

it both condemns our sin and provides for our forgiveness. The death of Christ is substitutionary and expiatory, reconciling and transforming. The resurrection of Christ proclaims God's triumph over the forces of evil, and for those who accept the atonement assures their final victory over sin and death. It declares the Lordship of Jesus Christ, before whom every knee in heaven and on earth will bow. —Fundamental Beliefs, 9

What led me to begin with No. 9?

First, I thought of some texts of Scripture that focus on what is essential. It would be a revealing exercise to read the entire Bible through looking for such texts. Here are a few from the New International Version that come to mind:

Matt. 22:36-37: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Compare Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18.)

Micah 6:8: He has showed you, O man, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

John 3:16: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 17:3: Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

1 Cor. 13:13: And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

1 John 4:7-8: Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Ah! That's it. "God is love" is the most central and succinct teaching of the Scriptures. "God is love" is how Ellen White begins *Patriarchs and Prophets*, the first book in the Conflict of the Ages series. She ends the series with the same three words: God is love.

With that central doctrine in mind, I attempt to rank the 28 Fundamental Beliefs, disregarding the parts of any of the beliefs that seem to me to be accidentals. I put them in five concentric circles.

The center circle contains the words "God is love."

The first ring around the center circle contains the following beliefs that are, to me, the most

22. Christian Behavior.

- 13. The Remnant and Its Mission.
- 17. Spiritual Gifts and Ministries.
- 18. The Gift of Prophecy.
- 21. Stewardship.

- 7. The Nature of Man.
- 23. Marriage and the Family.
- 10. The Experience of Salvation.
- 11. Growing in Christ.
- 12. The Church.
- 14. Unity in the Body of Christ.
- 15. Baptism.
- 16. The Lord's Supper.
- 24. Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary.
- 25. The Second Coming of Christ.
- 26. Death and Resurrection.
- 27. The Millennium and the End of Sin.
- 28. The New Earth.

God is love

- 9. The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ.
- 8. The Great Controversy.
- 4. God the Son.
- 3. God the Father.
- 5. God the Holy Spirit.
- 2. The Godhead.
- 19. The Law of God.
- 1. The Word of God.
- 6. Creation.

important extensions of "God is love" or ways by which God's love is revealed:

- 9. The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. I begin with this belief because Jesus is the clearest evidence that God is love. The natural world points to a designer who is interested in the preservation of the species. Jesus gives evidence that the designer also loves the individual.
- 8. The Great Controversy. This belief explains how evil exists in the world created by a God of love and how that God will bring an end to evil. All of the other beliefs are part of the story of the Great Controversy.
- 4. God the Son.
- 3. God the Father.
- 5. God the Holy Spirit.
- 2. The Godhead.
- 19. The Law of God. This belief indicates that the principles of God's law, embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ, express God's love.

- 1. The Word of God. The Bible reveals how a loving God interacts with man throughout history, and it provides the historical record of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
- 6. Creation.

The second ring expands items of the first ring:

- 7. The Nature of Man.
- 23. Marriage and the Family.
- 10. The Experience of Salvation.
- 11. Growing in Christ.
- 12. The Church.
- 14. Unity in the Body of Christ.
- 15. Baptism.
- 16. The Lord's Supper.
- 24. Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary.
- 25. The Second Coming of Christ.
- 26. Death and Resurrection.
- 27. The Millennium and the End of Sin.
- 28. The New Earth.

The third ring contains the following:

- 13. The Remnant and Its Mission.
- 17. Spiritual Gifts and Ministries.
- 18. The Gift of Prophecy.
- 21. Stewardship.

The fourth ring contains the following:

- 22. Christian Behavior.

I'm not completely satisfied with my rankings. It is a work in progress. There must be hundreds of ways to rank the 28 Fundamental Beliefs, each way as meaningful for the one who does the ranking as my first attempt is for me. What design would you come up with?

Note: For lack of space, I have not explained why I placed each belief where I did.

R. Lynn Sauls, Ph.D., is a retired professor of English and journalism.

“IN THE WORLD BUT NOT OF THE WORLD” is a great-sounding Christian motto. But is it truly achievable in our complex modern society?

Perhaps nowhere is the challenge more clearly seen than in dealing with liability and potential litigation. What should church leaders do when someone claims to have been wronged by the Adventist Church, by a church institution, or by a church employee?

Essentially, we have two models: one that’s of the world, and one that’s defi-

liability—whether you’re guilty or not.

The goal of the legal profession is winning—not truth or justice. And with few exceptions, when the Adventist Church employs that model, the aggrieved walks away estranged and alienated.

By contrast, the Jesus model advocates dialogue—carried on in a gentle, conciliatory, truly concerned tone. It advocates agreeing quickly with the aggrieved—before the ongoing debate creates an additional mountain of grievance. It advocates going beyond the call of duty—

might have used that seeming show of weakness to chop off your head?

The power of Jesus’ approach lies precisely in the fact that it’s so totally counter-intuitive. It catches the aggrieved off guard and disarms through the element of surprise. It’s truly a not-of-the-world approach. And it’s either God-ordained or absolute folly.

If church leaders initially employ the Jesus model in dealing with a grievance, it greatly impairs, if not destroys,



The ADVENTIST CHURCH and LAWSUITS

By James Coffin

nately *not* of the world—at least, not our current world. The approach advocated by Jesus is diametrically opposed to the approach used by today’s legal profession.

The adversarial stance of attorneys in advising a client typically includes: Don’t admit guilt; in fact, deny it, whether your denial is justified or not. Don’t apologize for anything—because any apology is tantamount to an admission of guilt. Avoid conversation and interaction with the aggrieved; remember, the aggrieved is out to get you. If you must speak, seek to downplay the magnitude of what has happened—which will help to minimize liability. Employ any argument that works to your advantage; don’t worry about whether it’s germane to the matter at hand. Seek to throw as much blame as possible back on the aggrieved; it mitigates culpability. Seek to impeach the overall credibility of the aggrieved; act as if any mistake ever made in any area of life renders the aggrieved unworthy of redress. Always look for loopholes that might remove or reduce

not doing just the absolute minimum. It advocates turning the other cheek—even when it would be more natural to vigorously defend oneself. The goals are not only truth and justice, but also redemption, pastoral care, and nurture.

Clearly, what Jesus advocated is impractical in today’s world. If the church doesn’t go all out to defend itself, large sums of the Lord’s money could be lost. In fact, even when the risk of losing money isn’t the issue, might not any admission of guilt by church leaders cause a loss of faith in leadership and in the corporate structure in general? Is it not more practical to sacrifice a few aggrieved along the way than to place the Adventist Church at risk?

Of course, the approach of Jesus has never been practical. Is it any more impractical to turn the other cheek in an era when someone might use that seeming show of weakness to extract large sums of money than to have turned the other cheek in an era when someone

their ability to switch midstream to the adversarial model advocated by today’s attorneys. Having demonstrated concern over the plight of the aggrieved, having apologized for what has transpired, having sought to repair the damage done, the case becomes so “compromised” as to render the legal model all but useless.

On the other hand, if church leaders initially react to a grievance using the legal model, the reverse is equally true. Having in essence declared the aggrieved to be the enemy, having circled the wagons and hunkered down for the battle, having refused to engage in dialogue except to discredit the aggrieved and to minimize the magnitude of what has happened, having denied that anything improper has been done, it’s nearly impossible to suddenly switch to the Jesus model. The power of that model rests in its first-impression impact and its disarming openness and vulnerability.

Adventist Mediation Service Finds Few Takers

By Jim Walters

What if you create a spanking new Dispute Resolution service, and few come calling? That's a question the country's largest Adventist conference will answer this fall.

In 2004 the Southeastern California Conference voted to establish a Justice Commission as a pilot. The program aims to resolve disputes at the lowest level possible, staying *within* the church—a notion at least as old as Jesus' admonition in Matthew 18. The conference has 30 church members whom it trained in Christian mediation. They are ready to work, overseen by eight Justice Commissioners. If the mediators

can't help resolve matters, the Commissioners could sit as a church court. But courts are confrontational; the Commission emphasizes mediation. Mediation can be win-win, and both parties can experience Christian growth.

This is Adventism's first such comprehensive program. In 1999 a California court ruled that even grievous wrongs in churches might

go unchecked due to the country's historic separation of church and state. The late Lynn Mallery, then conference president, was concerned that in Adventist polity the same administrators initiate policy, administer it, and then adjudicate any policy disputes. Mallery and others envisioned the Justice Commission becoming a third arm of conference governance, analogous to the checks and balances in some long-established Protestant denominations.

The Justice Commission founders first looked at the Presbyterian Church (USA), which has an independent judicial system interlocking all levels of church structure. But desiring a more conciliatory approach to resolving disputes, we turned to the Mennonites, long known for their promotion of peace, and their model of biblically based mediation became our primary focus. Southeastern's model blends these two traditions.

The pilot program began January 1, 2006, and has had eight serious

inquiries, none of which reached mediation, plus four inquiries that are pending, of which one is in active mediation. No cases have come to a mediated conclusion. The majority of church members who consulted with the Justice Commission cited either domestic problems or contract disputes with other church members. Two other church members cited disagreements with a church organization, and a third member alleged defamation of character. Domestic issues ranged from divorce negotiation, to child-visitation rights, to a family dispute among four siblings. Contractual issues involved such matters as a house rental and payment in an automobile sale.

If the pilot program isn't adopted, it won't be for lack of effort: The *Pacific Union Recorder* ran a two-page article titled "Justice Commission Begins Ministry in SECC," mailed a multilingual DVD featuring Dan Matthews and 4-color posters to all conference churches, and strongly promoted the program in pastors' meetings.

The Commission is now planning an educational initiative for interested congregations.

The conference twice surveyed its pastors, finding them divided on the program's overall helpfulness. Two pastors' comments were typical: "It's a new program . . . it takes time for the comfort level [to rise]" and "While the program looks great, I don't see any interest from the church family." More than half of the pastors cited the program's newness as a challenge. Two-thirds thought members were culturally, religiously, or personally uncomfortable with some aspect of it.

The lack of ready acceptance surprised founders. Regardless of why the program has had a slow start, the Southeastern California Conference constituency session will convene October 26, 2008, and decide the Justice Commission's fate.

Jim Walters chairs the Justice Commission and has worked on the concept from its inception.

The Adventist Church must fight any given skirmish in one armor or the other. It doesn't have the luxury of switching back and forth.

Tragically, the Adventist landscape is littered with spiritual debris from cases in which the adversarial legal model has been employed. A quick read of the book *Betrayal*, by Merikay Silver, provides a devastating chronicle of what happens when the church's leaders fail to employ the Jesus model of conflict resolution.

Without question, it takes extreme spiritual courage to use a seemingly anachronistic approach to dealing with grievances when the best legal minds

of our generation advocate a seemingly far saner and far safer alternative. On the other hand, Christianity's founders readily acknowledged that what they advocated is nonsensical from an of-the-world perspective.

It may be that the approach of Jesus is hopelessly outdated and no longer viable. Maybe it's an idea whose time has come and gone. Or perhaps its time never was. Maybe God would have us adopt a new model to address the litigious times in which we live. In the Old Testament, he seems to have allowed a more pragmatic approach to a wide variety of issues, based on prevailing circumstances. So maybe the Seventh-day

Adventist Church as an entity is justified in making such allowances once again.

At the very least, though, it would seem that if the not-of-the-world approach of Jesus is no longer truly viable, our church leaders should declare such. It seems unfair to expect individual members to operate under a radical not-of-the-world standard when the leaders at the corporate level of our church have too often declared—by default if not by decree—that such an approach belongs to a different time and place.

James Coffin is pastor of the Markham Woods Adventist Church near Orlando, Florida.

7 QUESTIONS for...Chris Blake

By Andy Nash



Chris Blake was baptized a Seventh-day Adventist Christian in 1976, becoming the only Adventist in his family. Following his graduation with an English degree from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, where he

played NCAA basketball four years (point guard—great D, paltry hoops), he began his teaching career at Valley View Jr. Academy in Arroyo Grande, California. In 1986, he became editor of *Insight* magazine, where he helped develop Youth Summits, Ultimate Workout, Expressions of Jesus prints, Giraffe Society, and A Reason to Believe. During the *Insight* years he won national writing awards for feature, humor, and editorial, as well as many awards for editing. In 1993 Chris joined the faculty of Union College, where he currently serves as associate professor of English and communication, and as sponsor of the Union College chapter of Amnesty International. In 1999 Chris published his best-selling book *Searching for a God to Love*, which has been translated into five languages. In 2001 with his wife, Yolanda, he wrote *Reinvent Your Sabbath School*. Chris's latest book, *Swimming Against the Current*, was released by Pacific Press in 2007. Among his hobbies are playing disc golf, reading, traveling, and mountain biking over the precipitous peaks of Lincoln, Nebraska.

Chris, thanks for being an *Adventist Today* contributing editor. Are you ready for "7 Questions"?

Yes. That's one.

2. Moving on now. In your latest book, *Swimming Against the Current*, you write: "Frankly, I've had a problem with how to 'do my best,' because I don't exactly know what best means. Study and work 18 hours a day? Focus primarily on excellent nutrition? Go to extremes in prayer or exercise or friendships? Now I aim to 'do my balanced best'—and I counsel overwhelmed students to do the same." Talk some more about finding balance.

The book is subtitled *Living for the God You Love*, a living that naturally means doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God.

All of us will always struggle with maintaining

balance. This balancing act hinges on a healthy, disciplined perspective of time-space realities: a) We are not the center of the universe, b) Universal laws will not adapt to us, and c) God is not totally dependent on any particular people to finish anything.

In tune with these realities and out of grateful love, we do our balanced best.

3. Another topic you addressed is the issue of interscholastic sports. You were heavily into sports in college; you played point guard for Cal Poly in the NCAA tournament. Yet in your book you discourage interscholastic sports and favor the type of intramural program used at many Adventist colleges and high schools. Why?

We live in a watching culture. An antidote to our vicarious obsession is active participation in redemptive activity. I believe that one person playing sports with energetic love is better than 50,000 people watching sports out of boredom or fanaticism.

Life is essentially 1 percent competition and 99 percent cooperation. Even competitive sports are mostly cooperative, including agreeing on rules, equipment, and location. When we emphasize cooperative teamwork, we come nearer to the new-earth ideal.

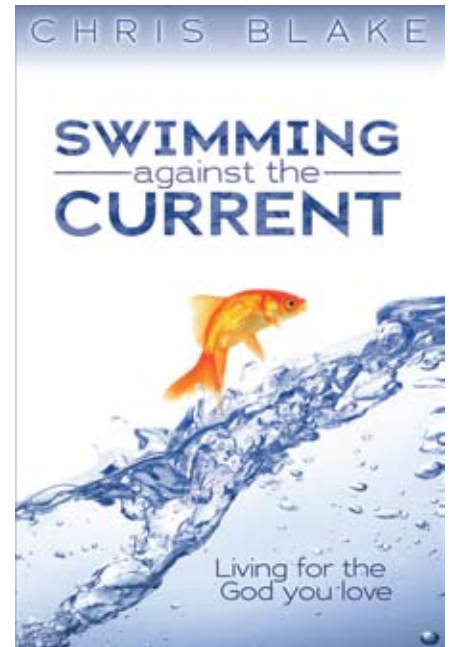
4. You've taught for the past 15 years at Union College, which recently hit 1,000 students. Why has Union been growing?

We've enjoyed a happy confluence of factors. About a decade ago, Gene Edelbach, the top enrollment services guru in the Adventist Church, helped boost our enrollment by about 300. New programs such as Physician Assistant and International Rescue and Relief aided recruiting efforts. People here work hard within an atmosphere remarkably free of intrigue. The Holy Spirit is alive and well on campus.

Union College has been called "a great secret in the Adventist Church." Fortunately, the secret is getting out.

5. Your previous book *Searching for a God to Love* (published by Pacific Press and Thomas Nelson) at one point included an endorsement from someone called "Yolanda B." How did that come about?

I'm so glad you brought that up! Again! Well, it was one of the most embarrassing



moments of my professional life. In an effort to help with marketing, I had sent to one of the aforementioned publishing houses a few appreciative reader comments about the book. The testimonials—each bearing a separate name—were emailed from my wife's account. Her name is Yolanda. Imagine my rapturous joy when I saw in print one of the comments with her name affixed.

As a result, I'm planning to introduce an entire line of testimonials based on relatives' comments. "Great book, Dad!" "Son, this looks like it must have taken some time. Maybe that's why you couldn't call your mother more often?" "Pretty good, but don't forget to pick up the soy milk before you come home. -Yolanda B."

6. Any thoughts on the Adventist Church's current retirement program—a 401(k) model introduced in 1999?

Since I had understood that the Adventist Church's stand was against gambling, I admit to being somewhat confused by this ethos. Last quarter my VALIC retirement account lost more than \$1,500 simply because the stock market dipped. Subsequently, I growled like a bear. I understand that the institutionalized church was in a financial kosher pickle and had to do something, but I'm not typically prone to gambling, which is what I've now been reduced to. "C'mon, market! Daddy needs new shoes! For the assisted living center."

7. Got time for one more question?

Yes. That's it.

Building Momentum—Thanks to You

Dear Readers:

It could be a big summer and fall for *Adventist Today*. Let us share some of our plans with you.

Major Articles

- Is it time to abolish race-based conferences once and for all? This piece by a renowned Adventist pastor has the potential to dramatically change the Adventist Church in North America. With enough additional donations, we can overprint this issue and mail it far and wide.
- Who makes what—and why: a forthright look at remuneration in the church and our healthcare institutions.
- Who will be the next world church president? Is the selection process fair? Does one person have an inside track?
- What is the place for a female pastor in the Adventist Church?
- Has the church fully replaced Israel—or does literal Israel play a role in the endtime?

New Website

Coming later this month: our new website, which will reach thousands more Adventists and help move the church forward.

This will be a subscription-only site, and as a magazine subscriber, you get full access! (Just use your subscriber number on your mailing label.)



Big Marketing Push

Quite often we're asked why we don't overprint and mail thousands of copies to potential new subscribers. The answer: money.

Though our subscriptions are up substantially this year, we still depend heavily on donors to keep *Adventist Today* growing.

Here's the bottom line: With enough donations this spring, we can really spread the word about *Adventist Today* this summer and fall. No matter what you can give, from \$5 to \$50,000, every donation helps. To give, go to www.atoday.com or mail a check to *Adventist Today* Foundation, P.O. Box 8026, Riverside, CA 92515-8026. All donations are tax-deductible, and we spend the money carefully.

Andy Nash, editor
Adventist Today

Adventist Man

Historic Claims, Sabbath Evening, Jesus the Omnivore

Why do we no longer refer to other churches as the "apostate daughters of Babylon's whore"? I'm "concerned" about this rampant liberalism, which denies our historic claims.

—Colin MacLaurin, Melbourne, Australia

Brother Colin, as you're doubtless aware, this is one of many sad and sordid vestiges of "creeping compromise." No longer do we hear of the clearly defined contours of "dark counties"—those regions greedily suckling at the teat of impious worship on any day other than Sabbath. No longer do we point at "godless infidels" who eagerly devour a spurious Diet of Worms.

Oh! for a return to the "good old days"—when we called a "rook" a "rook" and all "non-Adventists" were merely "heathens destined for a long swim in the lake of fire." We were different then, and proud for a myriad of sanctified reasons. For not being ashamed to "give the trumpet a certain sound," for relishing being known as "a peculiar people," for "finding the Sabbath a delight" without going so far as to actually enjoy it.

But perhaps we might discern a silver lining within the dark cloud of detestable runaway indulgence. Perhaps as earth's true believers continue our righteous quest to identify and decry every scintilla of evil within earshot of the third angel's warning, we may also find space and time for becoming a kinder, gentler people. Just a thought.

Which day is "Sabbath evening"? Does that refer to Friday or Saturday?

First, Adventist Man is appalled that you would use the word "Saturday" in an Adventist publication. Didn't your parents raise you better?

Despite an informal Adventist Man Poll® that found Adventists evenly split on this vital matter, "Sabbath evening" quite obviously refers to Friday night. That nocturnal interlude is, after all, the only evening on Sabbath.

Adventist Man recognizes that this creates a problem for sanctified believers who righteously refuse to mention the word



"Saturday," thus spurning a worship of Saturn, the ancient Roman god of agriculture. (Yes, the other days are okay to mention. Let us not be too picayunish.) Then what should we call the evening following Sabbath?

Adventist Man suggests "first night," as it is the actual first night of the biblical week. Using this will not only identify you as a member of the remnant but will confound anyone who doesn't know our special language, which is another mark of the remnant.

With any encouragement, you should shortly be able to watch the 3ABN show *First Night Live*.

Why wasn't Jesus a vegetarian?

Jesus lived up to all the light he had.

In addition, when Jesus declares: "It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles" (Matt. 15:11, NRSV), he must mean something other than what he's saying.

Do you have a tough question? Adventist Man has "the answer." As a former member of "the remnant of the remnant," Adventist Man was ranked 8,391 of the 144,000—and working his way up. Now he relies solely on grace and friendship with Jesus. You can email him at atoday@atoday.com

