

ADVENTIST WOMEN CONFER

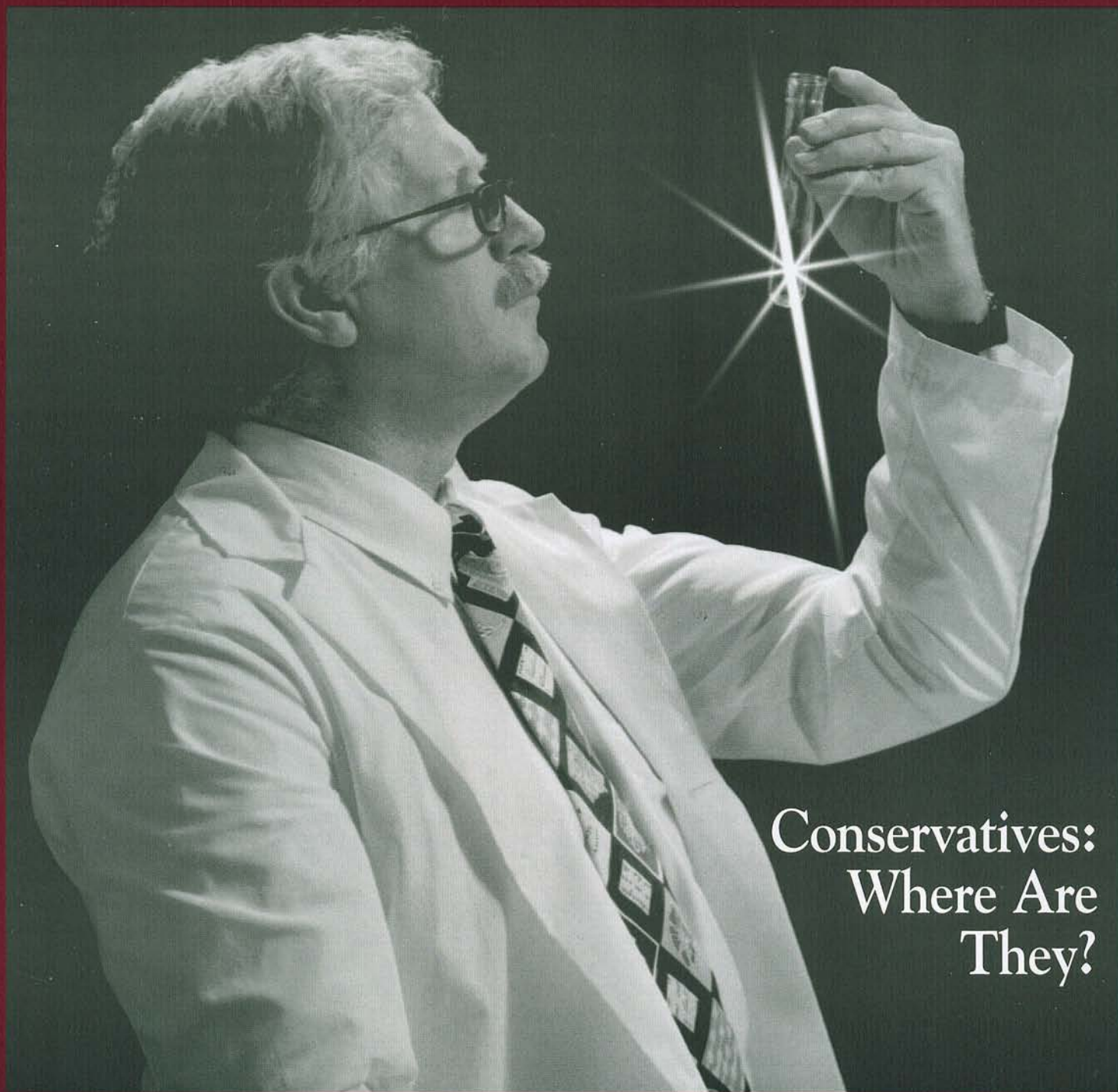
NEWS • ANALYSIS • OPINION

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ADVENTIST TODAY

VOL. 4, NO. 6

NOVEMBER • DECEMBER 1996



**Conservatives:
Where Are
They?**

Can Science Analyze Faith?

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Branches on the Old Adventist Tree

Diversity Is In and Inevitable

In America it is politically correct to favor diversity. Similarly, in Adventism, diversity is in. We Adventists talk favorably about diversity, and I hope we are truly appreciative, because we surely are a diverse people. Just look at this issue of *Adventist Today* for starters. Examine the diversity on what it means to be an Adventist (Greenwalt and Whidden) and on the words of Jesus (Max Phillips). Back in the “good ole days” when we Adventists were a handful of Caucasian, rural believers in New England, we were much more homogeneous.

The Old Tree of Judaism

Of course, Adventism is not the first religious group to move from uniformity to diversity. Significant parallels between Adventism and Judaism are illuminating. Both are people of the book and of their sacred commentaries. Both are Sabbatarian and obedient to dietary laws. Both prescribe a total way of life and a unique subculture. Both are traditionally based on special divine revelation and election.

And Adventism, like Judaism before it, is growing into identifiable religious branches. Judaism has Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform communities. What separates these branches of Judaism is the degree to which they have accommodated to contemporary culture: the Orthodox very little, the Conservative to a moderate degree, and the Reform to a considerable degree.

Which branch represents the authentic Jewish existence? If the criterion is to maintain the traditions of thousands of years ago, the Orthodox believer is the good Jew. However, the Conservative Jew would claim this label, believing he/she has conserved essential features of Judaism and made them relevant to contemporary life. The Reform Jew, the most liberal, wouldn't claim to be a good traditional Jew, because his/her behavior is fundamentally informed by contemporary concerns, but this Jew also deeply appreciates basic aspects of Jewish culture and upbringing.

The point is that Jews of all three branches are indisputably Jewish, are accepted by society as such, and are appreciated for who they are. Adventism is experiencing an identity crisis, and we could benefit from exploring fully the Jewish analogy that can only be outlined here.

Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Adventist Branches

Tens of thousands of Adventists across the country identify with orthodox, “historic” Adventism. They desire a return to a supposedly pristine past. This is Adventist orthodoxy: a commitment to traditional values such as modest lifestyle, plain dress, strict Sabbath observance, a literal reading of Ellen White, and the imminent Second Advent.

Hundreds of thousands of Adventists—by far the numerical majority—are “conservatives.” They, like their Jewish counterparts, identify closely with their tradition's religious history and practices. Yet they acknowledge and appreciate the modern culture in which they find themselves.

Conservative Adventism reaches out and draws from the world around. It is unquestionably and deeply rooted in traditional faith, but simultaneously accepts the modern world in large measure—its technologies, fashions and even some of its ethos. For a conservative Adventist, personal religion and business/professional life are often two quite different spheres. For example, I have a student who is theologically very conservative; he plans to be a medical missionary. But he is quintessentially American in his can-do view of medical economics.

A third branch are the thousands of Adventists and former Adventists who are like the reform Jews. Their primary sense of who they are comes from multiple factors, such as the morning newspaper, their professional education, and great literature, as well as their Adventist upbringing. Many identify with the church, but others sense that they are unwelcome among orthodox and conservative Adventists, and they have left the church organization. Some who have left get together for alumni reunions, funerals and other special occasions, but they don't often appear in the doorway of the local Adventist church.

We at *Adventist Today* truly value this diversity in the church, and, although we do not wholly agree with any one branch, we wish to nourish this whole, great Adventist tree.

Jim Walters

Due to rising costs, *Adventist Today* must raise its subscription rates, the first increase ever. Beginning January 2, the cost will be \$24 per year (\$40 for two years).

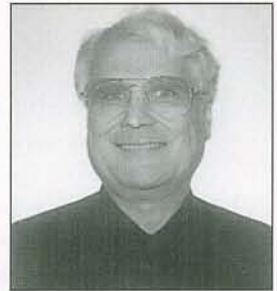
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Cover photo by Richard Tinker

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FIRST CLASS



Independent Ministries

Maryan Stirling's analysis "Voices in the Wilderness" struck a chord with me. After resigning approximately one year ago from the board of directors of a prominent independent ministry which [issues] a monthly publication, I find myself relating to many of her observations. For some years now the Seventh-day Adventist Church has struggled with the issue of how to relate to the growing presence of the independent ministries in its midst. Many believe that some of the more outspoken and radical of these ministries constitute a threat to the unity of the church body. Others see them as parasites siphoning the vital and somewhat limited resources of the church for their own selfish agenda. And yet others believe these ministries constitute the last and only hope for a church suffering from a Laodicean paralysis.

While many of these ministries represent the differing theological and ideological views of the SDA church itself, this simple fact falls short of explaining the strange manifestation of blind loyalty that is sometimes seen in both the leaders and supporters of some of these independent ministries. I believe there is a very real danger confronting the SDA church, of taking sides and getting sucked into a "we" versus "them" mentality that feeds on pride, paranoia and bigotry for its nourishment. While the danger of giving full and sometimes blind support to mere [humans] is just as real within the church structure as it is in the realm of independent ministries, ...I have found, in my experience, that it is more subtle and consequently more dangerous in the presence of some self-proclaimed ministries.

The great danger in the latter scenario is that the independent ministry which proclaims a higher standard for the

church seemingly can do no wrong of itself and far too often the only criteria used for ascertaining their eligibility for support is the issue of whether or not the ministry is independent of the church structure and professes to be a reform ministry. If it is, not only is it supposedly worthy of support, but also is considered to be exempt from censure itself. Rather than asking for an intelligent list of criteria for determining the ethics of the ministry's endeavors and its internal processes, support is given based on presumptions that are often incorrect. This can unfortunately lead to independent ministry leadership taking liberties and actions that if known, would probably result in the loss of support for its endeavors. The absence of informed supporters only emboldens these leaders, often causing the erection of subtle yet dangerous forms of dictatorships.

My nearly 10 years of serving on the board of one of these ministries has led me to not trust in charismatic leaders for answers to the problems God alone can solve. It is not safe to assume that just because an independent leader or organization preaches and publishes the "historic" Adventist message, they are any more inclined to live or operate at the standards they claim to uphold. For those who are inclined to support these ministries, I urge you to make some inquiries of them. First, ask them for a copy of their latest annual independent audit. If you are a supporter, they owe it to you. If you are thinking of becoming a supporter, insist on it. The board of the organization I was formerly involved with voted to do this four or five years ago, but to my knowledge nothing has ever been provided to its supporters to this date. Secondly, if you send a donation earmarked for a specific project, inquire of them whether the whole amount will be

delegated to that project or whether a portion will be siphoned off to their general operating fund. Again, the organization I was involved with voted to extract 10 percent of earmarked monies for their general operating fund without notifying the donors of this practice. Finally, ask them for their list of board members including addresses and ask them to identify which ones are employees of the organization. Typically, a non-profit board of this type should consist of a minority of employees as members, as an employee tends to be more malleable to pressures brought by the leadership in these organizations. Unfortunately, the organization I was involved with is heavily lopsided with employee-members, and I believe this situation has strongly contributed to their ongoing ethical lapses.

Although many of these ministries initially started out by seeking to cleanse the church of its errors, they have since come to view themselves as a replacement, worthy of full support, but answerable to no one. However, the truth be known, many of these so-called "correctors of iniquity" have committed far greater errors than those they sought to correct. I believe these ministries, having no prophetic appointment, will ultimately be doomed to failure, focusing on the perfection of the external and forgetting the inner perfection of the heart, which calls for tolerance and charity.

Dan West

Belfair, Washington

Abused by Magazine

I have been an avid reader of your magazine *Adventist Today* for over a year. In previous issues, I have generally found your articles to be of sufficient interest and fairly well presented, that I would often share them with a friend. Your attempts to present an even-handed cov-

erage of contemporary issues of importance to Adventist church members have started off well but seem to be gradually deteriorating. Your issue bearing the front cover title, "One Third of Adventists Abused," is an example of this deterioration. We have been tricked by your front page cover into thinking that you are referring to sexually and physically abused children. In reality your term "abuse" has been expanded to include cases of "spiritual abuse... Since you have opted to be so flexible with the terminology, why not expand it to include "emotionally abused," "financially abused," "ethnically abused," "intellectually abused," and any other form of abuse? That may have allowed you to say, "All Adventists Abused." I certainly felt abused by this issue.

Robert Osuna
Albany, New York

Negativity in Coverage on Abuse

In your March/April, 1996 issue, you ran a big headline on the cover: One Third of Adventists *Abused*... I do not believe this to be true, after being in the church all my life as a member, teacher and pastor; not unless you are using the broadest kind of definition of the word *abuse*... I would plead for clear definitions to accompany assertions of abuse. Anything less than that is demagoguery.

I am uncomfortable with [Mitchell] Henson's swipe at evangelists and pastors, with his implication that they "put emotional pressure" on students to make a decision to be baptized. With his viewpoint, he would have accused the Lord himself of using emotional pressure. I have seen that happen, to be sure. But for every 1 child pressured into baptism, I have seen 10 who were never, ever even invited to be baptized. Also, I could say that for every one pressured, I have seen five who requested baptism who have been pressured to put it off for the selfish motives of a parent who later pled with a minister to persuade their teen-ager to be baptized!... I have sometimes suggested to parents since they had presumed to play the role of the Holy Spirit back then, maybe they should try to do that now! I

am often amazed at the incongruent blather I hear on this subject.

Lastly, I, along with others who have written, appreciate the objectivity your independence gives you in discussing church news and events. But I too am disappointed in the overwhelming negativity of the journal. ...I read every article, every issue, so I appreciate what your goal is. So far, I think you are missing the target to the left.

Elden Walter, Pastor
Springfield, Oregon

Abuse in Adventist Families

I write in response to the letters in your last publication addressing the special issue on abuse in Adventist families.

Several persons wrote of their shame that the postman should see the truth about abuse in Adventist homes. Ironically, the shame expressed in those letters is part of the abuse that takes place. With very innocent intentions, the act of requiring that the victims of abuse be silent in order to maintain a pretense of godliness before the world, heaps additional abuse and sometimes more indelible injury upon the heart because of the subtlety of the message.

I feel an outrage that the preservation of the postman's ignorance is of more significance than the reality that we have much to learn about loving and healing one another. And the first step to healing is truthfulness.

I appreciate the attempt that *Adventist Today* is making to bring back into Adventism the space and place to tell the truth as one experiences it, and a dialogue about what that means in our daily lives. Truth often creates discomfort, but so do lies, hypocrisy and pride. Every denial to hear the truth is a reinforcement of the evil that exists. Truth brings healing; lies do not.

Eileen Greenwalt
Walla Walla, Washington

Personal Convictions versus Corporate Beliefs

It has now been a year since the Utrecht General Conference session. Some of the observations made and issues raised in your articles bear more in-

depth examination. I think an issue devoted to an examination of what it means to be a world church might be very timely. What are the advantages and disadvantages of our world structure as it is now set up? What kind of structure might allow for greater autonomy in decision-making in the various divisions while still preserving some sense of unity and shared mission? How does our structure compare to Catholic and [to] other Protestant structural models?

Another issue that also needs closer examination and analysis is the current trend toward greater control and uniformity in theological belief, and the discouragement of open debate and questioning of church policies, operations, or beliefs. Elder Folkenberg's discussions of the use of scripture and church authority in the *Adventist Review* have included many disturbing statements.

The trend is especially disturbing in light of the early history of the Adventist church which placed great emphasis on convictions gained through personal Bible study, and strongly resisted detailed corporate statements of belief. We praise the minority groups throughout history (Anabaptists, Waldenses, early Protestant reformers) who placed personal convictions of scriptural interpretation ahead of erroneous corporate beliefs. Our whole sense of identity as the remnant church is built on the presupposition that a minority can have a clearer and more correct understanding of God's will than a majority.

And yet, despite this historic praise of and identification with minority interpretations of scripture, we now appear to be creating an atmosphere that not only stifles discussion, but condemns and rejects individual convictions that differ from the majority or official view! Is there any possibility for continued growth and development in an organization that discourages the sort of questioning and discussion that gave birth to it in the first place?

Michelle Rader
Ellicott, Maryland

The Right Day to Keep

I do not wish to renew my subscription. Too many negative articles about

my church. Also, for example, we as second and third generation Adventists know that the seventh day Sabbath is the right day to keep. We do not need some former SDA minister that has left the church telling us why he believes that the seventh day Sabbath is void.

Don Gerald

Silver Spring, Maryland

Leery of Exegesis by Statistics

Desmond Ford's defense of seventh-day sabbatarianism has so many logical leaps, classic fallacies, sleights of hand, it's hard to know where to begin. But for now, I take this cue: "Form criticism reminds us that the Gospels preserved only details which were relevant for the church after the cross. And they had many references to the Sabbath."

(1) We must be clear that the issue today isn't over the presence of sabbatarian practice in the biblical era. The issue is the validity and historicity of a universal, insistent form of sabbatarianism. (2) The gospels—or for that matter, the entire New Testament literature—did indeed preserve "details which were relevant." But the question remains as to precisely what significance was perceived at different stages, by whom, and for whom. Which leads to the next point. (3) In determining what was significant (let alone what is significant), we should be more leery of exegesis by statistics than is Dr. Ford.

By his count, the New Testament contains 149 supposedly positive references to Sabbath versus only one potentially negative one. If this matters, it should also matter that there are zero commands, instructions, or recommendations clearly proposing sabbatarianism to Gentiles. It should also matter that there are only 2 Sabbath references in all the epistles—the most obviously expository body of theological writing in the New Testament. There are only about 15 passages of direct teaching about sabbath/s and days of worship and assembly in the entire New Testament. It should matter that the Resurrection figures in at least as many passages as does the Sabbath, and that its impact is meditated upon consid-

erably more often. This is especially notable in the speeches and writings attributable to Peter or his circle.

Compared with theologies of Sabbath, there is relatively little discussion within Adventism about the Resurrection. Perhaps it's because, subconsciously, it is recognized that matters of truly great salvational significance always generate worshipful outcomes. Such an epoch-making revelation as the Resurrection would not have failed to have liturgical consequences. And it didn't.

As Christianity grew in its appreciation of the Resurrection's implications, so did its worship evolve. There were other mitigating factors. But the essential, causative factor was "the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." (1 Peter 1:3) Such a realization needn't threaten either Adventism's enjoyment of Saturday assemblies or Dr. Ford's rest. But it could undermine a lot of supremacist cant.

Paul Johnston

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Just a Day Off?

I'm a baby boomer. I remember 29-cent gasoline and where I was when Kennedy was shot. Then, keeping the Sabbath meant baths taken on Friday, meals prepared for the next day, newspapers and magazines hidden away. Reading was from the Book and Bible House, music was from the hymnbook, and money didn't change hands for any reason.

Now, the Sabbath-keeping of my North American-born, well-educated Adventist contemporaries can include eating out, attending professional meetings, paying admission to concerts and museums, buying gasoline, and purchasing potluck food at a deli. I find it particularly ironic that the white-collar salaried children of blue-collar hourly parents who fought to get Saturday off will themselves put in work time, if needed, on the Sabbath. Whether one of these activities is "right" or "wrong" is one thing; how this happens as quietly as it does is a whole other subject. My question is, has this evolution in Adventist Sabbath-keeping resulted from deliberate thinking or has it "just happened?"

I was startled recently to read in an Adventist publication a positive reference to a person joining the Seventh-day Adventist Church because the Adventist church worships on the right day. I reacted as I did because, if I were to wear a futurist's hat, I would predict this: Before the end of the decade, in North America, for many Adventists, the transformation of the seventh day into the day on which one goes to church, primarily, will be completed. And the rest of the day? Under the guise of rest, it will be just a day off, a day defined in absence, not Presence.

However, I also predict that two opposing reactions, which have already begun, will both grow. For some Adventists there will be a move toward a more Jewish Sabbath-keeping, for others, a move to a new definition of Christian Sabbath-keeping. New for Adventists, that is.

Then again, I fear that I must dispute my own prediction. I continue to be astonished that so little attention has been given in Adventist publications to the immense changes in Adventist Sabbath-keeping and to fresh and creative thinking about Sabbath-keeping. Though I appreciated the thoughtful and honest articles about the Sabbath day in your Sabbath issue, I had hoped that more attention would be given to Sabbath-keeping. Perhaps the greatest irony of all would be for the Adventist church to lose the lead in Sabbath advocacy to the increasing number of publications from other Christians.

Sharon Johnston

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

The Bible and the Sabbath

We are indebted to Jerry Gladson for an excellent synopsis of current evangelical scholarship on the question of Christian obligation to the seventh-day Sabbath. On his conclusion that it is elective rather than binding, these observations:

The statements and practices of the early Christian church are inconclusive, since the Apostle Paul saw apostasy developing even in the first century. (2 Thess 2:7)

At the Jerusalem council of Acts 15, the Ten Commandment law, including the seventh-day Sabbath, was not on the agenda. The discussions were concerning ceremonial observances.

If Christ did not expect the Christian church to observe Sabbath, his efforts to clarify the meaning of its observance were pointless and exposed himself to unnecessary criticism.

All the patriarchs, priests and prophets of the Old Testament and Christ and the apostles of the New Testament observed the seventh-day Sabbath. To us who claim the Bible as the ultimate authority, their example is a weighty factor.

Rolland M. Ruf

Collegedale, Tennessee

Meeting a Need

Your publication is definitely meeting a need. Though the tone of many of the articles may be harsh or critical, they still inform me of things in my church that I might not otherwise know. Realizing that 75 percent of your readership is either middle of the road or conservative theologically and 57 percent either very traditional or usually traditional regarding Adventist doctrines, it would be nice to see a greater representation of these viewpoints among your writers.

Ed McCluskey

Amazon Mission Boat

As a coordinator of three past Amazon River trips for the students of Union College, I was greatly disturbed by the tone of Pastor Downing's article in your July/August, 1996 issue. I draw your attention to the following references with my added comments:

1. "We found that even the smaller towns in Brazil have hospitals and clinics staffed by trained physicians and nurses." I found one city that had a hospital [and] one village that had a clinic. The physicians at the hospital begged us to spend a couple extra days with them because they were so backlogged with patients. We stayed for one day and helped them, our physicians seeing more than 200 patients in the 14-hour work day.

2. "The most remote villagers have

generators and satellite dishes." We found a chief of one village that had the above mentioned equipment. But that is the only one we have ever seen, and I have been in dozens of villages.

3. Downing refers to the unwillingness of the boat captain to initiate or allow health lectures. I have had three different captains on my three trips and all of them were not only eager for us to use our flip charts and do our health lectures but asked if they could keep some of the materials.

4. Comments were made about the boat captains and their limited medical knowledge. Their methods are very primitive, but they are at least out there trying. Our medical professionals very kindly and graciously offered to help them learn as much as they wanted; both groups worked together and learned from each other.

5. "The boat crew practiced primitive dental techniques. The syringes looked like cast-offs from a large-animal veterinary practice." Union College personally has equipped many of those boats with dental equipment donated by dentists and not veterinarians. The Luzeiros continually need supplies, so we provide cases of new needles, anesthesia, syringes, and forceps.

6. I agree with Downing's environmental concerns. It hurts to see trash thrown overboard. We chose not to do that and asked our captain if we could just keep it on board and get rid of it in another manner. He was very obliging.

7. The "better way" as described by Downing is a wonderful idea that could provide better health care and more follow-up. The boat captains currently have more training and experience than Downing's suggested "basic first aid."

8. Downing's frustration with how much was left undone is very real. It has motivated our Sabbath School to collect an offering for the work on the Amazon. That frustration can motivate us to get practically involved with constructive alternatives and possible solutions.

9. "No one on board was prepared to give a gospel presentation, unroll the classic Sabbath School picture rolls to tell eager Brazilians about Jesus, nor pre-

sent a health talk when we stopped along the river." In contrast, our captains all had some type of visual aids and provided help everywhere we stopped. One of them even had a slide projector and a long extension cord with a set of 1950s type evangelistic slides which the people at each village loved.

Pastor Downing closes with a conclusion about how guilt-free he is now that he did not fulfill his childhood promise to be a missionary. With a different attitude my students and medical professionals came away changed people as they saw first hand the need and opportunity to help. We have a waiting list of people eager to go on the next trip.

Rich Carlson, Chaplain

Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska

Response to Chaplain Rich Carlson

Chaplain Carlson's remarks illustrate the risk one takes when commenting on a situation from a narrow and limited perspective. My article is one person's limited experience. We learned that the Luzeiro is a U.S. funded project and largely staffed by Americans. This is not necessarily a negative situation, although some missiologists question the viability and effectiveness of long-term projects that depend on wealthy benefactors for their continuance. Other questions arise: is the present program an effective use of economic resources? Should consideration be given to the establishment of programs that train and support nationals to provide health care and monitor community hygiene within their surrounding area?

Our group, too, was inspired by their experiences aboard the Luzeiro. People did receive help. Affirmation for the program does not, however, preclude consideration for methods that more directly involve the people who live in the areas one serves. It is assuring to know what others have experienced on the river and I like to think Carlson's experience is normative.

Lawrence Downing

Anaheim, California

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Adventists in the Primordial Soup from Mars

The recent discovery of what appear to be one-celled, bacteria-like fossils in a four-pound meteorite supposedly from Mars has stimulated both excitement and skepticism. Many people find the idea intriguing, even using supposed UFO sightings to substantiate the claims of Martian life.

Others, like author Ray Bradbury, find the discovery unconvincing. In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times* he said, "It's ridiculous. They don't have any proof. They're not even sure [the rock] came from Mars. It's a theory."

In an article printed in the *Los Angeles Times*, medical writer Thomas Maugh II explains that scientists are using chemistry to examine the nature of the possible fossils. They have found four different families of compounds in one location in the meteorite, four compounds that occur together wherever there is life.

On the other hand, Maugh continues, these chemicals could have developed naturally by inorganic processes.

In order to confirm the presence of ancient life, scientists will have to find traces of DNA or RNA. In the meantime, however, the presence of the four compounds—carbonate, magnetite, iron sulfide, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons—in one location strongly suggest

that life could have existed there.

The question many are asking is this: if evidence shows that there is or has been life on Mars, will that affect our theology and our understandings of how life began? Would such a discovery lend credibility to the theory of evolution? Would it alter our understandings of how God created the world and of how long it took?

A telephone survey of Adventist scientists and theologians concerning ramifications of this possibility reflects the diversity of beliefs within the church regarding the origin of life. Most felt that the news stories have been inconclusive; they felt that they couldn't form opinions without more evidence. Some did not want to comment publicly about the possible theological implications for creationists.

"Those who believe that the earth is 6,000 years old will be very disturbed by this," says Ervin Taylor, a third-generation Seventh-day Adventist and an anthropologist at the University of California, Riverside. "Since I don't think scripture teaches how old the earth is, I have no problem with it."

"Not being a biologist, I don't know enough about this discovery to offer an opinion," says Rick Rice, a theology professor at La Sierra University. "But it raises

interesting questions on how conclusive our evidence is for our traditional beliefs. The jury is still out."

Both Taylor and Rice say Adventist opinion and belief vary about how to relate the Genesis 1 creation story to the conventional understanding of earth's history.

"[The Martian fossil evidence] we have now is not all that clear," says Jim Gibson, director of the Geoscience Research Institute at Loma Linda University. "In the first place, I am skeptical that it's accurate. The evidence seems to be good that a meteorite came here from Mars. If it shows evidence of life, that is another question. Is what's on the meteorite really bacteria?"

John Baldwin, who teaches issues of origins and contemporary theology at the SDA Theological Seminary at Andrews University, feels the need to look at it more.

"I couldn't give an informed opinion," he says. "We need to hear from scientists on all sides of this. Is there contamination on what we have from Mars? How did it get here?"

Baldwin says he doesn't know whether or not this discovery from Mars is an analog for "primordial soup," that theoretical traditional evolutionary origin of life on this planet which supposedly began 570 million years ago.

"There is not enough evidence to judge," says Dick Davidson, who teaches Old Testament at Andrews University. "We have no specific revelation on the status of planets. Mars could be part of an unfulfilled state of creation. Yet we can by no means be certain. I believe there is life in other worlds, but I'd be surprised to find it in our solar system."

Meanwhile, scientists are executing long-term explorations of Mars. On November 7, 1996, NASA's Mars Global Surveyor blasted off from Cape Canaveral. Its destination will be a 235-mile-high orbit around Mars from which it will take and transmit detailed pictures of the whole planet. The Russian spacecraft which was supposed to follow Surveyor and drop landers onto the planet crashed into the Pacific Ocean approximately one week after Surveyor's launch. One final launch is still scheduled for 1996.

NASA plans to launch a pair of spacecraft to Mars every 26 months for the next 10 years.



Adventist Women Confer Regarding “Crossroads”

by Emily Tillotson, free-lance writer
College Place, Washington

“You would anticipate sharing recipes or making quilts,” says two-time Association of Adventist Women annual conference attendee, Tara VanHyning, a sophomore at Columbia Union College. “It amazes me how multitalented these women are. They sort of do it all—homemaker, professional person, church leader.”

The 14th annual AAW conference, meeting at the historic Mission Inn in downtown Riverside, California, November 1-3, appealed to grass roots AAW members and first-time attendees alike with diverse speakers and workshops discussing topics from women’s sexuality to how to interpret scripture.

This year’s theme, “Women at the Crossroads,” resounded from the pulpit throughout the convention from both Hyveth Williams, Senior Pastor at the Loma Linda Campus Hill Church, and Madelynn Jones-Haldeman, Professor of Theology at La Sierra University, who preached the sermon on Sabbath morning.

The conference drew women and men from around the world and all walks of life, including students from Columbia Union College, La Sierra University, Pacific Union College, and Walla Walla College. A total of 149 women and 1 man registered in advance for the whole conference, and 30 more people registered for selected portions. As many as 50 more arrived at the last minute for separate sessions and for the Sabbath services, making an estimated total of 230 people involved.

One of AAW’s largest contributions to the church, says John Cress, Chaplain at Walla Walla College, has been raising awareness levels concerning women’s issues in the Adventist church through education and discussion. Doug Clark, Chair of Theology at Walla Walla College, credits the growing numbers of female theology students to the efforts of AAW and related organizations like

TEAM (Time for Equality in Adventist Ministry).

“The world needs more visionaries. Courageous women. Women willing to speak out against injustice” says the AAW brochure. Leslie Bungardner, pastor at the Walla Walla College Church

ed this award for 1996. She described these recipients as “beautiful:” Hertha Ehlers, Pat Habada, Erna Krueger, Leona Running, Otilie Stafford and Helen Ward Thompson. All six were presented lifetime achievement recognition for their service to the church and women everywhere.

In addition to ministering to women within the church, AAW also seeks to include women who are less involved. “AAW has been a place for me, a disillusioned Adventist woman, to find faith in spiritual community and the gifts I have as a woman,” says Lori Flemming, business owner in Seattle.

The conference drew women and men from around the world and all walks of life, including students from Columbia Union College, La Sierra University, Pacific Union College, and Walla Walla College.

and long time AAW member, agrees, saying, “AAW has taken a broad perspective to women’s issues. They have not sought to be divisive in the church, they have sought to be of service. People have begun to listen to AAW because they are not stone throwers.”

AAW focuses on heightening awareness of women’s issues through a newsletter aimed at supporting women’s contributions and encouraging women throughout the church. AAW also seeks to widen the range of opportunities available to women in the church by seeking greater equality in denominational hiring and by highlighting the gifts of women specifically.

Each year AAW recognizes outstanding individuals through the Woman of the Year award. Verla Kwiram coordinat-

AAW addressed plans for the future, including the election of a new president, Alyce Pudewell, at the business meeting that concluded the conference Sunday morning. The business meeting also served as a sounding board for ideas and updates on plans already in the works.

Although some feel the frustration of 14 years of endeavor, one member commented, “You have to get radical or no one will pay attention to you.” Others seek to continue AAW’s style of committed persistence. Tara VanHyning summed up her experience by saying, “Right now, I’m not sure who in the church is listening to me. But soon I’ll have what it takes to make a difference, and that’s what AAW will help me do.”

NAD Commission Encourages, Affirms, and Advances Women

by Georgia Hodgkin, Immediate Past Head Elder, Loma Linda University Church

The North American Division's President's Commission on Women in Ministry met this summer on June 18 and 19 and again on July 17 and 18 at the General Conference headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. North American Division (NAD) president Alfred McClure invited 25 pastors, Union Conference presidents, Adventist academics, and lay leaders from across the NAD to attend. NAD leaders set the tone of the meetings with the words *encourage*, *affirm*, and *advance*; they summarized the direction the commission was to take.

Monte Sahlin, NAD ministerial secretary, gave us an overview of the NAD's demographics. The division's membership totals 850,000, and approximately 165,000 children attend the Sabbath Schools. Of the 4,600 churches in the NAD, only 100 of them have women pastors. Of the 10,000 local elders in the division, 1,500-2,000 are women. In contrast, between 50 percent and 60 percent of the 45,000 local church board members are women.

The commission subsequently divided into small groups for brainstorming sessions; 34 strategies emerged from the dis-

A significant recommendation was that the NAD hire a woman pastor as an Associate Ministerial Secretary. Finally, commissioners discussed the need for a "theology of ordination" based on intensive biblical and theological study.

In July the commission reconvened to formalize the June recommendations. It submitted a job description for the proposed Associate Ministerial Secretary for recommendation to the 1996 NAD year-end meeting. (That recommendation was not presented; the commission chairman gave only a partial report of the meetings.)

Further, the commission recommended rewriting policies to describe the functions of ordained and of commissioned ministers as being the same.

The committee also sought to encourage conferences to hire women pastors with funding which the NAD would provide. Further, it recommended that women receive employee benefits equivalent to those of men. Members also called for the appointment of a panel of theologians to research the theology of ordination.

Some observed that the commission could accomplish all of its recommendations very simply—by ordaining women pastors. With one simple vote, the committee work could have been over, and history would say that justice had finally prevailed. Harold Baptiste, commission Chair and Secretary of the NAD, reminded us, however, that Utrecht had voted, and that vote must be honored. (What exactly had Utrecht voted? Was it that the *North American Division* could not decide that women could be ordained as ministers for the Seventh-day Adventist world church?)

At the end of the July session the commission voted to thank President Alfred C. McClure "for his strong leadership relative to women in ministry and the appointment of this commission."

The next meeting date has not yet been set. These commission sessions, however, hold promise. The dedicated, talented, spirit-filled women who have been called to minister to us as servants of God hold the potential for unlimited contributions to the church. It is the goal of the commission to help them to realize this potential.

With one simple vote, the committee work could have been over, and history would say that justice had finally prevailed.

In June the commission reviewed its purpose in the following recommendations:

1. Recommend ways to expand the role of women in ministry. (We identified "women in ministry" as the paid women clergy.)
2. Recommend ways to recognize and deploy the gifts God has given to women.
3. Recommend ways to increase the participation of women at the decision-making levels of the church, from the local congregation to the General Conference.
4. Recommend ways to increase the participation of women in the organizational and professional levels of the church.
5. Recommend ways to affirm women in pastoral and other spiritual ministries.

cussions. Recommendations included policy changes to eliminate gender bias, to raise awareness of the church's affirmative action position, and to open all church offices to "ordained or commissioned" ministers.

Another recommendation was the development of a resource center for women pastors. This center would provide a professional association, electronic linkage, a newsletter, a database of job openings, a speaker's bureau, and travel funds for continuing education. The commission outlined strategies for funding internship budgets, for mentoring, and for hiring and advancing women in ministry. We suggested ways to increase the visibility of women pastors, including inviting them to speak at camp meetings as keynote speakers for the 11:00 A.M. Sabbath services.



Can Copernicus Conquer the Christ of Creed?

by Max Gordon Phillips

It's Christmas and you're torn.

On the one hand, the gentle-but-intense alto solo, "Now is Christ risen from the dead," in Handel's Messiah still thrills and haunts you. On the other hand, you struggle with what seem to be mistakes, contradictions and historical inaccuracies in the gospels.

At least I do. For example, right now I'm sitting here in front of my computer keyboard leafing through the pages of a book entitled, *The Five Gospels: What Did Jesus Really Say?* (Polebridge Press, Macmillan Publishing, 1993), produced by the fellows of the Jesus Seminar (JS).

Five Gospels? Aren't there only four?

Not any more. The JS fellows have given equal footing to the gospel of Thomas, discovered in 1945 near the Egyptian town of Nag Hammadi. And they have included it with Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in Five Gospels as part of the new translation they call the Scholars Version (SV).

Some Christians cannot accept a fifth Gospel. Others can. Many will see it as just another confirmation of faith. Just as were the Dead Sea manuscripts, such as the Isaiah scroll. The spade confirms the book, right?

Unfortunately, the situation's not quite that simple.

The reason: If you accept the first scientific finding, don't you then have to

accept the next? And the next? And then what happens when you're confronted with one that doesn't confirm what you learned at your Sabbath School teacher's knee?

Will your internal integrity permit you to deny it? And if so, won't you soon find yourself selecting out only those that do confirm? What happens to your internal integrity then? Your open mind? Your soul?

But, you say, this is all theoretical. You'll wait till you're hit with solidly disconfirming scientific findings.

Fair enough. In Five Gospels the JS fellows reach the following scientifically driven conclusions:

- No gospel was actually written by Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. After 70 CE (CE same as AD) unknown people in the early church composed them and assigned the evangelists' names.
- Most of the words these anonymous Bible writers attributed to Jesus weren't spoken by him at all, but were created half a century later.
- The fifth gospel, Thomas, is far more

accurate in revealing the historical Jesus than is, for example, the gospel of John.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

During the past two centuries, leading biblical scholars at some of the world's greatest universities have been researching the historical Jesus. Their marching orders: to use the scientific method to distinguish the Jesus of history from the Christ of faith or creed.

But until recently the investigating has occurred behind the serene walls of the scholars' own collective ivory tower. Such serenity could have continued into the indefinite future, except for the founding of the Jesus Seminar by Robert W. Funk,

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holder of a Vanderbilt Ph.D., and 30 other scientific scholars in 1985 under the auspices of the Westar Institute in Sonoma, California. Now, some 200 strong, the JS fellows have released the Five Gospels to the world.

"Fellows of the Jesus Seminar," says Dr. Funk, "have decided to update and then make the legacy of two hundred years of research and debate a matter of public record."

But by so doing they have begun earth tremors. The ivory tower has toppled and spilled the carefully hidden information out onto streets full of ordinary lay people. Many have reacted in mindless outrage, but others are keeping their blood pressures down and simply asking, How do they know?

HOW DO THEY KNOW?

The Seminar scholars use only evidence—such as archaeological—that is scientifically reliable. Upon this evidence they apply the scientific method, termed historical-critical (as in "judging," not "disparaging").

The SV devotes some 18 pages, for instance, to explaining 37 rules of oral and written evidence. A typical one: "Sayings or parables that are attested in two or more independent sources are older than the sources in which they are embedded."

Other research conclusions:

- Because Matthew, Mark and Luke—unlike John—share a common viewpoint, they are called the synoptic gospels. John is so different that it and they "cannot both be historically accurate."
- Matthew and Luke both use the earlier-written Mark as a source document.
- "Striking verbal agreements" (some 200 verses' worth) common to both Matthew and Luke—but not found in Mark—come from yet another earlier source known as Q (from the German Quelle, meaning "source"). Q is a sayings gospel, a collection of aphorisms and parables only. It omits the miraculous stories of the conception, birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension.

• Scholars once challenged this elusive Q document on the ground that a sayings gospel was not really a gospel at all and therefore couldn't exist. But their opposi-

tion lasted only until the discovery of Thomas—an undisputed sayings gospel that proved otherwise.

• Even after extracting all Q material and all Mark material from Matthew, distinctive material remains from still another source that scholars have labeled Special Matthew.

• The same is true for Luke. Its peculiar source is called Special Luke.

• John also depends on an earlier source, one called the Signs.

Over time scientific biblical scholarship has settled on the following approximate dates:

• After the crucifixion (27 CE) an oral period (30-50 CE) began in which there were few if any written sources.

• Thomas, Q, and Signs—along with

The ivory tower has toppled and spilled the carefully hidden information out onto streets full of ordinary lay people.

Paul's letters—were written 50-70 CE.

• Mark was penned shortly after the fall of Jerusalem (70 CE).

• Matthew was compiled some time between 70 and 90 CE.

• Luke was composed around 90 CE.

• And John was put on paper not long before 100 CE.

Finally, by vote, the JS fellows determined which sayings of Jesus would be printed in which color. And the SV is the result.

BLACK is the color of the sayings—more than 50 percent—the JS fellows judged were borrowed from common lore or simply created.

GRAY—printed sayings that they found did not originate with Jesus at all, though they do contain his ideas.

PINK. The sayings in pink are judged from Jesus, but not certainly so.

RED. Only the words thought actually

to have been said by Jesus are printed in red. "Jesus undoubtedly said this or something very like it," the JS fellows say. Matthew totals six red passages, Mark one verse, Luke seven red passages, John none. Thomas alone boasts a large amount of red printer's ink.

WHITHER THE CHRIST OF CREED?

The JS fellows contend that their work is scientific. They compare it to that of Copernicus, Galileo, and Kepler. These are early scientists who battled the superstition and prejudice that kept the sun and the entire universe revolving around our tiny planet. By proving scientifically that the earth orbited the sun they set off the Copernican scientific revolution that continues to this day.

Dr. Funk argues, "The contemporary religious controversy . . . turns on whether the world view reflected in the Bible can be carried forward into this scientific age and retained as an article of faith. . . . The Christ of creed and dogma, who had been firmly in place in the Middle Ages, can no longer command the assent of those who have seen the heavens through Galileo's remarkable glass. Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo have dismantled the mythological abodes of the gods and Satan, and bequeathed to us secular heavens."

I argue no. I don't see the "abodes of the gods and Satan" as having been dismantled, because these abodes remain the spiritual realities of the people who believe in them—including the overwhelming majority of scientists.

Fortunately or unfortunately, science simply cannot determine whether God does or does not exist. The instant it attempts to do so it ceases to be science and becomes metaphysics or just speculation. For better or for worse, all we humans can agree on scientifically is that there is mystery.

This mystery may be the Christian God for scientists of Christian persuasion, the Old Testament Yahweh for Jewish scientists, Allah for Moslem scientists, something else for scientists holding to Hinduism, Buddhism or some other belief system, an unknowable for agnostic scientists, and nothing for the minority of atheist scientists.

SECULARITY A LANGUAGE

The so-called “secularity” of the physical universe is nothing more than a practical way for all of these scientists with their various perceived spiritual realities to be able to work together. It functions as a language enabling them to communicate with each other in the common effort to push forward the frontiers of human knowledge.

But the ultimate nature of the mystery remains forever beyond the ability of science to resolve. For the mystery is radically different from something that can be demonstrated scientifically, such as earth’s yearly flight around the sun.

How revealing it is that the Roman Catholic church, after recently rescinding Galileo’s heresy conviction, remains intellectually quite capable of defending its faith and its place in the physical, as well as the spiritual, universe.

And another observation is even more revealing: Most scientists around the world hold to roughly the same patterns of religious convictions that their religio-cultural heritages, nationalities and racial backgrounds would predict.

SCIENCE LIMITED

No, the Copernican revolution is not without its limits. Modern science constrains—and protects—itsself with falsifiability and repeatability as well as secularity. You simply cannot demonstrate scientifically, for instance, that God did or did not descend from heaven and become a baby in Mary’s womb. Neither can you show scientifically that Jesus did or did not rise from the dead.

And even if you could, you could not thereby create faith. For, if everyone who reportedly witnessed the resurrected Jesus in 27 CE became a believer, then where was the room for faith?

And if faith requires more than empirical, scientific evidence today, then why not in 27 CE?

At this point it should go without saying that the traditionalist lines of evidence are hardly scientific that establish the historicity of Jesus in today’s fundamentalist mind—such as the rigidly defined fulfillment of rigidly defined prophetic foreknowledge.

WHERE IS MY FAITH?

And what about me? Where is my

faith? Where do I stand?

I found some of the JS findings surprising, but not unsettling. I simply realized that my personal spiritual reality was already determined by the Christ of faith and not by the Jesus of history as defined solely by empirically compelling evidence.

Scientific scholarship doesn’t frighten me. I can accept the JS fellows’ conclusion that the early church’s faith produced the gospels and that they contain mistakes, contradictions and historical and scientific inaccuracies. But that doesn’t mean that “the Christ of creed and dogma” isn’t a spiritual reality.

I recognize my spirituality. My spirituality is as real and as much a part of me as is my left leg or my liver. To be human is to be spiritual.

Fortunately or unfortunately, science simply cannot determine whether God does or does not exist.

There is no such creature as a secular human. Secularity can refer to things or acts or methods or governments, but never to people. People are not “human doings.” For good or for evil, people—even atheist scientists—are spiritual beings.

I accept and value diversity. Secure in the knowledge that I am spiritual, I need not feel threatened by what others may or may not believe. I accept Christians who differ as equally spiritual in Christ. I respect their beliefs and anticipate for myself the same respect from them. But my faith is fully my own.

MURAL PARABLE

I have found a “mural parable” to be helpful: After Matthew, Mark, Luke and John have all passed away, many believers gather in each of four secret caves located in different parts of the Roman Empire. There they paint four colorful murals

depicting Jesus’ life, each one dedicated to honor the memory of a different evangelist.

- Of course no two murals are identical.
- Of course some artists are more skilled than others.
- Of course they copy earlier sketches made “on the fly” and even one another in places.
- Of course there is inaccurate, amateurish and unscientific artwork.
- Of course the artwork reflects the artists’ limited world view.

But so what? In a spiritual sense, the murals are absolutely real, faithful and reliable. They brought the haughty Roman Empire to its knees.

I have chosen Jesus as depicted by these murals, the Jesus of faith, the Christ of creed.

Why? Because Jesus brings purpose and victory in my life, just as he does in yours. He can enable you to survive and overcome being fired from your lifework with no foreseeable future, the death of your child or spouse, divorce, catastrophic illness, the savagery of insecure people threatened by ideas alone, the “sting” of approaching death and “victory” of the grave.


LITMUS TEST

In the arena where perceived spiritual realities conflict (Faith X vs. Faith Y), the litmus test of truth is not a rigidly defined proposition hammered home by some purportedly scientific fulfillment of prophetic foreknowledge. It is something miraculously simpler and infinitely more profound:

It is the way we spiritual human beings treat one another.

Jesus said, “Don’t react violently against the one who is evil: when someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other as well. When someone wants to sue you for your shirt, let that person have your coat along with it. Further, when anyone conscripts you for one mile, go an extra mile.”—Matthew 5:39-41, SV, in printer’s ink so red it glistens like fresh blood, so red it flames up off the page, so red it breaks your heart.

Jesus is the spiritual reality that brought the savage, seemingly invincible Roman Empire to its knees so long ago. He is the same spiritual reality that brings me to my knees today.

Now is Christ risen from the dead. 

Where are the **REAL** Conservatives?

A Montana Farm Kid Still Wonders

by Glen Greenwalt

A Young Man and Fire

I grew up as a conservative, and still cling to the notion that I am conservative, although the world has changed so much that “conservative” is a title that troubles me. One of my earliest memories of transcendence is that of going with my mother and father and sister to the Missoula, Montana airport, home of the smoke-jumpers immortalized in Norman Maclean’s *Young Men and Fire*, to watch Dwight Eisenhower land in a three-tailed Lockheed *Constellation* (still to my mind the most beautiful plane ever built and flown) and make a campaign speech. For me on that day in the 1950s, conservatism meant standing up against the forces of evil and winning. It meant that by the strength of our family, and those people around us, we could fashion a world as powerful, as gleaming, as wondrous, as beautiful as the three-tailed *Constellation* that sat on the runway behind the man we had come to see, but whom I was never sure I could identify, even sitting atop my father’s shoulders. There was awakened in me something that has never really gone back to sleep.

A Warm Miracle in Cold Missoula

I don’t remember much else about Missoula from those days. I’ve tried hard, but I don’t remember anything about getting ready to go see Eisenhower, nor do I remember what happened

when we got home. Only two, or perhaps three things stand out in my memory about that winter and early spring we lived in Missoula. The first is that my father had left the colporteur work, which turned out to be a short aside from farming, to become a Ford tractor salesman. His goal was to recover enough of the money he had lost after selling everything to take up the colporteur work, to go back to farming. Selling tractors was a return, however demoralizing, to the farm itself.

My father wanted to come to Walla Walla College and take the ministry after he was baptized at age 21, but the good brethren at the conference office dissuaded him. They told him he was too old, so he kept on farming—all the time hearing the call to ministry. That is how he ended up as a colporteur, and it is why I never became a colporteur, and why I did become a minister.

The other two things I remember about living in Missoula are that we were dirt poor, living in a small shack that my parents could hardly keep warm, and that God performed a real honest-to-goodness miracle in response to my faith as a child. These two events are related. The good thing about that winter from a child’s perspective is that it snowed a lot, and our shack was perched on the side of a hill, near a street closed off for sledding. The bad thing about that winter from an adult viewpoint is that my parents were



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struggling at the end of a dream they believed God had given them. The snow that fell that winter was always black with soot. The conference brethren never came to check on their progeny. We were pretty much on our own. That is when the miracle happened.

We came home from church about evening. I don't know where we had been all day. Perhaps visiting, perhaps passing out literature, as our family often did in those days. I remember my father brushing the snow from his shoulders and complaining it had soiled his coat. The shack was dark and freezing cold when we entered. The stove had gone out. My parents were worried about the water pipes and sure enough, they were frozen. I remember not being worried at all, however. Partly because I was ignorant of what such things meant. Partly because my parents were there to fix everything. But mostly because I believed in God. My immediate response was, "Well, let's pray about it. Jesus can help us."

What do you say to a kid about answered prayers when all of your own prayers have gone apparently unanswered? I don't remember what they said. I just remember sensing, for the first time, grown-up things about faith, and God, and human religion. I remember two people struggling not to take faith away from their child as they sought to protect their child from the real hurts and pains of religious faith. And now, unlike then, after all of these years, tears run down my cheeks. On that night I argued with my parents and got them down on their knees, and before we were done praying, water was running in the faucet. I now know all the possible explanations for those thawed pipes, but to this day they remain the miracle that keeps me going when all else seems to fail.

Today, I find myself in the same place as my parents back in that fateful winter of 1956, wondering how to talk about grown-up things to my kids, and the kids of many other parents, without taking their childhood faith away. I struggle every day, wondering what I should say, how much to tell them. I pray every day that they might see just one real honest-to-God miracle that might sustain them, but I possess the innocence of neither my childhood nor that of my parents.

Preferring Death

My parents went back with the coming of spring to farming and never dreamed again of living the life of a pastor and pastor's wife, perhaps saving their souls, and certainly their love for the church. My whole life at home encompassed two spheres: work on the farm during the day, and work for the church late into the evening and on

Sabbaths. I am thankful for their legacy, but I possess at the same time feelings of disappointment, hurt, loss, renewed determination, and longing for my church.

I am deeply disappointed that a growing number of my personal friends and acquaintances are leaving the church because they see the church in retreat from its roots—the Radical Reformation and its call for a continuing pursuit of truth and justice for all. When did words like “nurture” and “justice” and “unfolding truth” become profane for us? Where is the church that recognizes with Ellen White that a God-given conscience “suffices to inspire and regulate motives and conduct?”

From Servant to CEO

When did we stop admiring people who are “true to moral character, unmoved by human praise or censure or rewards, preferring death rather than a violated conscience?”

Where are the leaders who “possess breadth of mind and true moral courage...to lead the flock of God instead of being led by them?” (see Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vols. 2,3,5)

I am deeply pained when I see the paradigm of church leadership shifting from biblical models of servanthood, to those of the secular CEO and corporate board room. Today, in the church, to be political means neither that one stimulates dialogue nor that one calls the church to prophetic leadership in the world, but it means not speaking in ways that disturb the *status quo*. What happened to the word of Ellen White that “it is only those who are world servers at heart that act from policy rather than principle?” Where are the true conservatives “who choose the right because it is right and leave the consequences to God?” How did we come to forget that the world is indebted for its great reforms “to men and women of principle, faith, and daring,” and that “by such men and women the work of reform for this time must be carried forward?” (see Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*)

Before We Wake Up

The winds of conservatism that are blowing through the church today are ill winds, I fear, rising from the direction of the religious right, rather than

What do you say to a kid about answered prayers when all of your own prayers have gone apparently unanswered?

a moving of God's Spirit. I am dumbfounded when I hear Adventists support the politics and the leadership of the religious right, when political activists like Ralph Reed of the Christian Coalition and radio preachers like James Dobson (however much one may approve of his focus on the family) who are fulfilling, step by step, the assault upon conscience predicted in *The Great Controversy* I read as a child.

Are we not paying attention to what is happening in the Supreme Court with its "conservative" appointees?

Does anyone listen to what Dobson and the Christian Coalition are saying? Perhaps not. Perhaps we've missed their claims that a raped woman has rights, but only the right to bear her child. Perhaps we've missed their statements that it is time for Christians (meaning the conservative right) to take control of the government so

that it can be reestablished on Christian values. Must our personal freedoms be challenged before we wake up?

Using God-Given Minds to Think

I simply cannot believe how far we have strayed from the vision Ellen White set for the church as a community ever advancing in the pursuit of righteousness and truth. When did we lose sight of our high calling and become satisfied with the *status quo*? I am shocked when I hear about teachers at our colleges being charged with eroding the faith of students simply because they demand that students use their God-given minds to think.

Where do we get ideas that students are not old enough to grapple with the deep questions of life or faith, but that they should be trained in proper belief and deportment? Certainly not from our prophet. Ellen White opposed educating children under set rules of training. Such children, she writes, are "easily led by others' judgment in the wrong direction... They have not been thrown upon their own judgment as fast and as far as practicable, and therefore their minds have not been properly developed and strengthened." (see Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 3)

Ellen White was a radical reformer when it came to matters of education and evangelism. She

declares, "There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error... Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair." (*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 35) Consistently she opposed those who employed "arguments that are not wholly sound."

Those who seek to present truth must make earnest effort "to present subjects in such a manner as to awaken conviction in the opponent's mind, instead of seeking merely to give confidence to the believers." When did we lose sight of the fact that "higher than the highest thought can reach is God's ideal for his children"? These remarks of Ellen White describe the Adventism for which I am willing to sacrifice and die.

Like the Beast We Once Lampooned

On the other hand, I am willing to sacrifice and die in opposition to the caricature of Adventism which is based on the blind right-wing ideology that has gripped our country and is making inroads into the church. I long for a church where no one goes away feeling belittled because of their ignorance, foolishness, or feeble attempts at righteousness. I simply cannot understand the words I have heard personally from some pastors and church administrators to people dear to me, that if they are not satisfied with what is happening in the church, they can go elsewhere, because many are waiting to take their place.

When did we take to ourselves the "right to censure and exclude those who hold some other creed," as was espoused in a written statement at Utrecht? When did we start looking like the beast we once lampooned? Is there no longer a word of solace to the least of these my hurting, temper-prone children? When did we start turning God's children away?

Reprimanded by My Daughter

I am deeply troubled by what is happening in my church. But mostly, I am disheartened by how I have let these things affect me so that they are having a negative effect upon my children. On a recent Sabbath I had to be reprimanded by my daughter with the words, "Just because your Sabbath has been spoiled, you don't have to spoil mine." And so the world turns and is forever still.

I want to tell my daughter that I am speaking out for her and her future world; but that sounds far too self-righteous, as both she and I know. I wish I had the courage and fortitude that my parents had when they went back to farming after


There is no excuse for anyone taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed...

their short stint in “church work,” and kept separate the idea of “the church” and what the church does. As a consequence, my parents are still volunteering time to the church, although their names are never read out from the front. And they still give sacrificially to the church, although they often feel their money is misspent.

And at least one of their two children is not only in the church, but in “church work.” (The other still believes, but finds church too painful, after she went through a divorce and was never asked why she was crying when she left the church on that final day.) I stay though. I stay in the church, and I stay in “church work” because of the lesson I learned from my parents that in all our efforts we serve God and not people. And I stay because perhaps I can be the hand that never reached out to my parents on that cold winter in Missoula, or the shoulder my sister needed to cry on when she left the church on that final day. I stay. But I worry for my children.

The fact is that “church work” is now as much a part of my life and that of my wife, as farming was of our parents. So we possess no other retreat in which to save ourselves or our children. But we are seeking space away from the “politics” of church work, lest our love for the church, for God, and those around us be destroyed. We are thus limiting the hectic pace of our lives to that of being the best teachers and parents we can be, and we are setting aside time for what my wife has called “conspiratorial kindness.” Thank you, Tascha, for speaking out to your father. Children will still lead.

Conspiratorial Kindness Already Afoot

I have a postscript. The promise is true that before we call, God will answer. Even before I first published a version of this article in the Walla Walla College *Collegian*, a conference president in the North Pacific Union wrote and gave the date when the conference committee was remembering me and my family in prayer, as a part of their goal to pray for each teacher at Walla Walla College. Conspiratorial kindness was already afoot in the land. And since I first wrote this article, the national and gubernatorial elections have taken place, in which a signal was sent that the nation seeks a more centrist stand on issues. Seeing that the politics of the church usually mirror those of the times, perhaps we who are members of the church can put away our own partisan ways and come and covenant ourselves to walk together along paths of righteousness and truth to a better future. 

This article was originally published in the Walla Walla College *Collegian*, Feb. 29, 1996. Reprinted by permission of the author.

A Response to Glen Greenwalt:

Here, Neighbor, Have Some Hope and a Hanky

by Woodrow W. Whidden
Professor of Religion, Andrews University



Adventist Today has asked me to respond as a “conservative” to the jeremiad of Glen Greenwalt. I would plead guilty to the epithet of “conservative,” including being a “conservative Adventist.”

However, let it be known that my conservatism retains the basic doctrines and essential personal ethics and lifestyle of Adventism; but such conservatism includes a social ethic that is very similar to that which stirs the painful lamentations of Greenwalt over the wayward conservatism of his church.

My first response is to say to him and his ken, I hear you folks and I lament with you. But I would hope that my brand of Adventist conservatism is a bit more buoyed by hope in the providential oversight of the Lord for his church. I am convinced that the childhood version of Greenwalt’s faith, and that of his parents and his daughter, are more on the right track than the current lamenting, hopeless, almost despairing Greenwalt.

I offer no excuses for the conference or church people who neglected his parents’ need in the days of dashed dreams, or who ignored the cry of his church elder over the plight of women, and tolerated a stupid philosophy of education or the present perversion of conservatism by the Republicans. True conservatives know that the “feeble and defective” you have with you always. I just simply cannot allow such to dampen my optimism borne of the knowledge that the Lord Jesus is in control and that the future is brighter than the present or the best of the past.

No church is perfect, including our beloved, but beleaguered “remnant” church. But God has not given up and neither should “real conservatives.” *Adventist Review* editor William G. Johnsson is right on when he reminds the faithful of the strides that we have made in race relations in our church. Where would we be today in North America if our black brothers and sisters, and their “real conservative” allies, the true “liberals,” would simply have sought space away from the “officialness” of the church, motivated by some wimpy “conspiratorial kindness”? I hate to think of where I would personally be today if such “true conservatives” had not struggled with many of us caught up in the “conspiracy” of racism.

I offer this to “Jeremiah” Greenwalt: This is no time to wimp out, but a time for a renewed and vigorous counterattack. Regarding the values of “real Adventist conservatives,” let me suggest that we have only just begun to prosecute the battle with a righteous zeal demanded by the hour.

The church is never all that it should be—either doctrinally or ethically. Especially is this true of social ethics. But how is the church ever to make advances if the “real conservatives” simply float away on a wave of their own tears? I do share the deep laments of Greenwalt, but is there not a place for optimism?

Is the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination a

BUSINESS

by Michael Scofield

“**T**his is a church! Not a business.” Is it really? The Adventist church is many things simultaneously. It is a culture, a religion, an economic system, a political system—all at the same time. To fully explain Adventism one must employ a variety of conceptual models. No single model alone is adequate to describe all of what goes on. Over the years I have identified 16 models and/or meanings of “church.”

The Adventist church is the end product of a wide variety of people sharing a common faith (but not entirely), motivated by a variety of goals (personal and corporate, compatible and conflicting), through a variety of processes (personal and institutional). These faithful people collaborate through a variety of mechanisms, and bond in a variety of ways (personal, political, sociological, etc.).

Adventism is a community, an economy, a culture, a set of doctrines, a heritage.

And, Adventism is a business. It is a big and complex business. But it is not just a business. I think it would be helpful to discuss the ways in which the institutional Adventist church is like a commercial enterprise, and the ways in which it is not like other businesses. It is important to understand them both.



Michael Scofield is a data administrator in Southern California. He holds an MBA from UCLA. His church service includes: 1984 Pacific Union Conference Church Structure Committee, 1984 Audit Review Committee for the PUC, and Forum Task Force on Church Structure.

ADVENTISM AS A BUSINESS

Adventism can be thought of as a business in a variety of ways. The institutional Adventist church comprises a complex network of legal entities with charters, balance sheets, bank accounts, employees, retirement funds, legal problems, contingent liabilities, and receivables. Its legal entities enter into contracts, and occasionally sue people (even church members).

Besides having a spiritual side, institutional Adventism engages in direct, head-to-head competition with both government and the private sector in a variety of industries and markets: education, day-care, acute care hospitals, home health care, retirement homes, food manufacturing, printing and publishing, Christian book retailing, and recreation. And many of its institutions engage in support activities which are mini-businesses, and could be contracted out. Ever since the early church incorporated to hold title to property, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in its various corporate forms, has had to act like a business in many areas. Two are particularly critical—the management of assets, and the management of employees.

It is in both of these areas that the collective management acumen of church leadership (both ordained administrators and lay committee mem-

bers) has not kept up with the demands of a changing society and economy. Scandals on the misappropriation and squandering of assets are far too common, and some of them get some visibility.

In the personnel area, there are a host of individual incidents where denominational employees feel aggrieved in some way or another. Some of these result in lawsuits. Others cause lingering bitterness and loss of personal faith. I will propose some solutions below.

This institutional church, as a legal corporate entity, is being required to act with social and moral responsibility in ways most members never realize. It is not entirely exempt from government regulation. And numerous civil lawsuits have forced it to shore up its policies and procedures in the area of investments and employee relations.

SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES

Yet I strongly maintain that a corporate model is not adequate to explain or prescribe what happens in the institutional Adventist church. The most significant differences are often overlooked.

Diversified and distributed. The hierarchical, top-down corporate model (which describes the flow of power in most corporations) doesn't adequately describe all the flows of power, influence, information, and control occurring in Adventism, because the church is so very diversified. There are, in North America, over 300 conferences, colleges, hospitals, academies, and other institutions, each with its own board, leadership, balance sheet, bylaws, and constituency. While there are a few policies which are imposed from the General Conference upon lower institutions, there are many decisions made locally, some of which are difficult and have unknown financial consequences.

Goals. The ultimate goals of most commercial establishments are few in number, easily defined, easy to measure, and widely understood. The Adventist church, on the other hand, has a wide variety of goals (I have identified over 30) which are shared or not shared, compatible or mutually exclusive of each other, and applicable in an inconsistent manner. The difficulty of defining goals, gaining agreement upon them and adequately measuring them is a major challenge in Adventist decision-making. Many disputes about resource allocation can be boiled down to different goals being sought by the disagreeing parties.

Labor relations. The church employs members (and some nonmembers) to accomplish its mission where volunteer effort is not enough.

The pool of potential employees (those with the necessary personal attributes yet loyal enough to the mission of the church to accept below-mar-

The church expects them to invest more of themselves, behave with greater personal decorum, sacrifice more, and be more submissive and compliant.

ket wages) is far more limited for the denomination. This often yields less than ideal candidates for those positions which are open. Because this potential pool of labor is small, we see many more instances of members of the same family working in the same institution, with the resultant problems of nepotism and conflict of interest.

The denomination treats these "workers" quite differently than most employers do. The church expects them to invest more of themselves, behave with greater personal decorum, sacrifice more, and be more submissive and compliant; thus the denomination has frequently exploited employees beyond what would be considered reasonable by modern American standards. My studied observation has been that most employees of corporate America are guaranteed more personal rights by law and/or documented policy than any Adventist "worker" enjoys. It should be the other way around.

Incidentally, this lower cost of labor skews slightly the common "make-or-buy" decision which is regularly confronted by any business. So in many ways, the church relates to its employees in a far different manner than most businesses.

MANAGEMENT DECISION-MAKING

The most striking difference between the denomination and a commercial enterprise is the management culture and cognitive techniques brought to decision-making.

The language of Adventism includes a kind of "god talk" which permeates even governing and deliberative committees and boards. Vocabulary and reason are inter-related. If the collective vocabulary does not support discussion of complex business and ethical issues, let alone technical questions, the quality of decision-making suffers.

The paradigm of deliberation includes triumphalism (no matter what we do, God will bless it, and justify it), a reverence (often unwarranted) for the office and judgment of ordained administrators and an aversion to substantive conflict. The Adventist view in this paradigm is so vastly different from the rest of the world that it excludes many options and questions which are naturally a part of commercial decision-making.

Perhaps most troubling to me personally is the shortage of critical thinking skills in nearly all Adventist deliberative bodies. This results, in part, from the inability of participants (clergy and representative laity alike) to perceive which decisions are business decisions, and bring to those decisions the necessary business acumen.

So when I assert that the church is, in part, a business, I expect that many readers will react

negatively. They would rather view the church with paradigms which invoke warmer feelings within them—images of family, fellowship, and triumphalism. And to the extent that decision-makers cling to these models of church to the exclusion of the business model, they will fail to exercise the critical business thinking necessary to (a) manage the vast monetary, tangible, and intangible resources wisely, and (b) manage the personnel of the church with dignity, respect, and consistency befitting an organization with Adventism's high ideals.

THE SOLUTION

The Adventist institutional church must raise the average critical thinking skills of its managers and representative decision-makers. This must be done both through the existing educational system, and through the continuing education of clergy and laity who have completed their basic education. Further, the church must acknowledge its many facets or realities. It must legitimize the understanding that it is, in part, a business. It must seek to strengthen its collective managerial acumen in fundamental business skills—econom-

*The Adventist
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ics, accounting, asset management, personnel administration, planning, budgeting and law.

The Adventist institutional church must attract and retain within its pool of lay leaders (on all levels of the organization) those men and women who think beyond the superficial models, and who are willing to think critically, ask questions even if they are embarrassing to the clergy, and spot potential problems before they cause damage. It must attract and retain these people even if they make others somewhat uncomfortable. It must not discount learned warnings as simply "lack of faith."

Had it had these kind of thinkers (not mere "reflectors" or "yes men") in the past, it might have been spared the financial debacles mounting into the millions of dollars, and personal (and "personnel") tragedies whose cost cannot be measured.

The complexities of the technological, cultural, legal, business, and ideological environments in which the church must operate in the future will only increase the need for these kinds of critical thinking skills in its management. The time to start finding these people is now.

WANTED

New articles and authors for *Adventist Today*.

We want our pages to present a whole spectrum of up-to-date news and creative ideas that will benefit thoughtful people whether they are current or former Adventists or even friends or observers of Adventists.

We would like letters and manuscripts from authors who represent the diversity of our church as we enter a new century—diversity of geography, theology, culture, ethnicity, gender, and experience.

We also want to address the needs of '90's Adventists as they deal with changes in the church and changes in themselves. Spiritual growth changes perceptions and understanding; we want to address the insights and questions raised by a spiritual walk in a demanding world and a changing church.

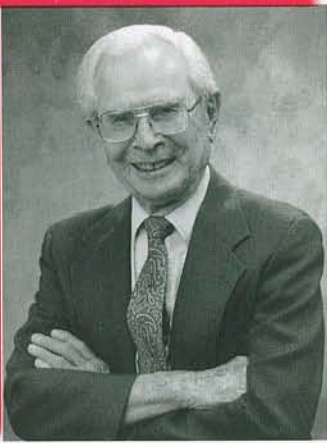
Send a brief summary of your idea for an article to Jim Walters, executive editor. After reviewing your summary, we will contact you for the complete article. At that time frame your piece in 750 words, 1500 words, or 2300 words, and send it to us along with a brief biographical sketch plus a photo of yourself.

Make a New Year's resolution to take time during January to share your best ideas with fellow pilgrims through the pages of *Adventist Today*. Write us at

P.O. Box 1224
Loma Linda, CA 92354-1220
E-mail: AToday@aol.com

Season's Greetings

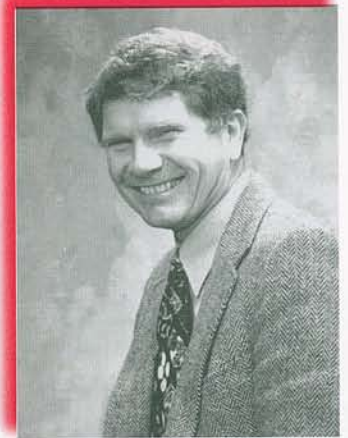
From the Staff of Adventist Today



Raymond Cottrell is editor of *Adventist Today*, where he shares his wisdom gleaned during more than 60 years of service to the Adventist Church. Ray's hobbies include astronomy and the study of geology.

Our magazine staff wishes you the best in the new year. For many of us, *Adventist Today* is a second or third job, and we often work late into the night, lovingly preparing this magazine for you on our kitchen tables. Keep in touch with us during this new year. And God bless!

Cherie Rouse is managing editor. She organizes the contents for each issue. Cherie holds B.A. and M.A. degrees in English from La Sierra University. For fun, she reads poetry to church groups, school groups, and friends.



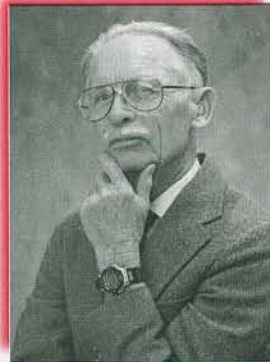
Jim Walters is executive editor. With the rest of the staff, he plans future issues, solicits manuscripts, and talks with authors.

Susan Walters is assistant editor. She proof reads articles and helps organize the letters department. Susan is a musician and an avid reader.

James Stirling, assistant editor, brings a wealth of experience in editing and publishing as well as scholarship and teaching anthropology. He teaches at both La Sierra and Loma Linda Universities.



Hanan Sadek is office manager of *Adventist Today*. A graduate of Southern College, Hanan came to the U.S. from Egypt. She and her husband have two young daughters.



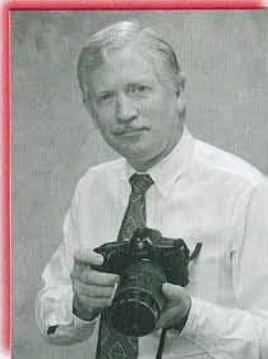
Steve Daily is an editorial advisor. He has worked with Adventist young people for the last 19 years and is campus chaplain and assistant professor at La Sierra University.



Colleen Moore Tinker is assistant editor. She helps to write and edit news and feature stories and helps plan covers and cartoons. She is a former academy teacher.



Ellis Jones has been drawing cartoons since his days as a shy grammar school kid. Ellis was a charter member of a local running club, the Loma Linda Lopers. A musician as well, he often sings special music for church and vespers services.



Richard Cross has loved photography since his high school days, when he was the school "shutterbug." His other interests include his children, electronics, dental materials research, cooking, and music.



Richard Tinker has been art director of *Adventist Today* for two years. A public relations graduate of Pacific Union College, he has been active in design and publishing for 18 years.

BRISCO 1996

CONTINUED FROM BACK

Idaho. The ash bed, which covered the area to a depth of about a foot, eventually filled in the low-lying marshy pond at the fossil site to a depth of more than eight feet. Many fossils remain to be excavated at this rich fossil site in a state that is an incredibly rich source of fossil remains.

Presentations

Two papers were particularly significant in setting the tone for the meetings. Leonard Brand, Ph.D., from the Loma Linda University Graduate School, presented a paper entitled "The Interface Between Science and Religion." He presented a model for a productive approach for science and religion to relate to each other. His key ideas are summarized in this portion of the abstract for his talk:

Religion and science each have their domain and their own unique ways of testing new ideas. The key to their interaction is a mental interface in which science and religion, in areas of disagreement, challenge us to more careful study of the other, without directly interfering. Each can suggest new hypotheses to be tested, or new ways of interpreting data, which we might not have thought of if we were not allowing science and religion to "interface" in this way. This approach is not just a hypothetical idea. Some of us have been using it for years, and find it to be very practical and productive."

My impression was that the majority of those present found this approach to be a viable working hypothesis.

A second paper that I found particularly significant was by Ron Carter, Ph.D., Loma Linda University Graduate School: "Adventist Creationism in the 21st Century: What Shall It Be?" In this paper, Carter reminded the attendees of the wide spectrum of attitudes regarding origins that are held by Adventist young people and scientists.

Carter next reviewed the many accomplishments of GRI and BRISCO over the years. Then he challenged those present to help think of ways to (1) create a spiritual revival among Adventist scientists, (2) get a representative (from liberal to conservative) group of individuals together regularly to discuss issues of science and religion, and (3) propose a way to structure BRISCO or some

other endeavor to best facilitate these goals.

For a recent overview and history of Adventist creationism, see the *Spectrum* article by J. L. Hayward, of Andrews University (Vol. 25, No. 3, 1995).

Discussions

Two extended discussions represented a good-natured but serious effort to grapple with the issues relating to the interface between science and religion. Carter's paper, presented on Friday morning, sparked such a large interest that the group decided to meet for a special Sabbath School on Sabbath morning at 10:00 to carry on the discussion. Most of the attendees came, and they had a vigorous and productive discussion that lasted for more than two hours. I particularly appreciated comments by George Reid (Director of BRI) in which he stated that he felt these meetings were just what the church needed—to wrestle with the issues in an open and honest manner within a framework of belief in the significance of the Scriptures.

Another major discussion was scheduled Sunday evening to give the group a chance to try to integrate into a meaningful whole the technical issues that had been discussed throughout the previous sessions. This is a very difficult task, and there was a general acknowledgment of the many significant challenges to a model of origins that requires a relatively short chronology for life on the earth. However the attendees generally seemed optimistic that, with a correct understanding, science and revelation will ultimately agree.

Observations and Reflections

In general, I noted the following: (1) There is serious, publishable research being done by Adventist scientists, particularly in geology and biology. (2) The presenters did their best to give critical evaluations of the data they observed, and they were forthright in acknowledging their successes and failures when it came to interpreting their results in terms of their understandings of the relationship between science and theology. (3) The meetings provide an opportunity for individuals interested in origins to get acquainted with others having similar interests; these scholars can carry on future collaborations and discussions. (4) Most of those present seemed to agree on the interpretation of the Genesis account of origins: seven literal days

for the creation event, which was limited to this earth or life on this earth (not the whole universe).

Although many positive things happened at these meetings, I left with two significant concerns. First, many of the topics that came up in the presentations and discussions had significant theological implications, and it would have been very helpful to have had more participation in the presentations and discussions from the theological scholars of the church. Clearly, Adventist scholars hold a variety of models of origins. These models have theological implications. But I wonder if the church is ready for serious and creative discussions of these implications.

Second, although I appreciated the discussions and presentations that took place at these meetings, those present generally represented the traditional church views on origins and interpretation of Scripture. I have also had the privilege of attending a similar meeting of committed Adventist Christians with significantly more liberal views on these same issues, and there, as at BRISCO 1996, I felt there was a real desire to find the proper balance between science and Scripture. My concern is that these two portions of the philosophical spectrum in the church rarely get together for joint discussion. I feel strongly that for the church to grow and mature in its understanding of these difficult areas, we must create an appropriate forum which includes a wider spectrum of individuals and which engenders input from those on both the liberal and conservative ends.

Future Direction

In his presentation, Ron Carter called for a more inclusive sort of discussion. As a result, embryonic plans were made for a larger BRISCO meeting in 1998 that will involve a wider spectrum of viewpoints. This sort of dialog is certainly needed, and I believe it can be very productive for the church, if it can be done in the spirit of a serious search by all for a better understanding of the books of Scripture and nature and how they can complement each other. I would certainly agree with Hayward's desire (*Spectrum*, Vol. 25, No. 3, 1995) that leadership in the Adventist church should "encourage open and honest discussion of evidence from as many sources and perspectives as possible in the traditional Adventist belief that truth will endure the scrutiny."

Thirsty

by Eileen Greenwalt

The screen door slammed behind me, and marked my presence in a cool, well-ordered kitchen. Cool linoleum floor. Cool white appliances lining the walls. And cool metal table and chairs. Aunt Clara offered refreshments as soon as we walked in the door. "Would you like something to drink?" she would ask. "There's pop in the refrigerator. Just go help yourself."

I was hot. Straight out of the back seat of the old green Hudson and a dry and suffocating summer. Sweaty and sticky and wind-blown. And thirsty.

I was thirsty. I knew how that bottle would feel right out of the refrigerator—the coldness against the palm of my hand, the sweat beading off the bottle and raining down. I would hold it, just looking at it for a bit, feeling the thirst and the heat burning my face. And then take just one swallow. I knew how that swallow would taste. The tingle of the Orange Crush as it fizzed in my mouth and burned in my throat and bubbled up into my nose. I knew the satisfaction of thirst that only an Orange Crush could bring to a five-year-old.

"Help yourself," my aunt would say. "Take anything you want. There's Root Beer and Grape and Squirt and Orange Crush."

I was thirsty. But I stood rigidly in my place. I wanted that pop, but my daddy said we weren't supposed to take handouts from anyone. "Don't make yourself beholden to anybody! . . . There isn't anything in life that's free. . . . There'll always be something they'll be expecting back from you."

"Aren't you thirsty?" Aunt Clara asked. And I was thirsty, but I couldn't make my feet move.

"Don't you ever go into someone's house like Dorothy and Johnny do and open up someone's refrigerator, like you just belonged there," Daddy said. "That isn't your home. If you want something, you come on home and get it."

Trouble was, there wasn't any pop at home. Never was. But as certain as my thirst was my loyalty to my father's ways.

Yesterday, at about 4:30 in the afternoon, my Aunt Clara died. And suddenly I sense how much I don't remember. I don't remember what my Aunt

...And I was thirsty, but I couldn't make my feet move.



Eileen Greenwalt is a speech therapist in Washington State. She works in the public school district teaching communicatively challenged children.

Clara looked like when she stood waiting for me to decide. What was in her eyes? Did she even wonder why I didn't accept her gifts?

I don't remember how my desire to accept her gift became an inability to trust in gifts. I don't remember when I lost the sense of my own needs and desires under the burden of trying to live up to so many contradictory expectations—just because they were labeled "loyalty." And I don't remember when my simple thirst was replaced by an unidentified longing, when the screen door slammed one day and I was an adult, standing out on the porch facing the heat alone. Alone and still paralyzed—unable to accept and unable to ask for that Orange Crush.

I don't remember my aunt's face any more. I don't remember what color her eyes were or whether she wore glasses. I don't remember if she had a favorite color. I don't remember if she enjoyed reading. I don't remember if she really liked to cook or not. Did she collect things or wish to travel? I don't remember where she met her husband, or when, or how. Did she dream great dreams? I don't remember if she ever told me anything she felt or thought about.

I don't remember a time she didn't wear the same apron, the same haircut, live in the same house with the same furniture and dishes, or ask the same question, "Do you want something to drink? Help yourself."

Aunt Clara is dead, and I am still my father's daughter. But I sense the necessity of confronting a multitude of so-called "loyalties" if ever I am to be free to live a life in redemptive grace. Can I still be an American if I speak Spanish or German or Japanese? Can I still be Adventist or even Christian and speak honestly if it doesn't match church policies and traditions? Can I still belong to my family if I don't follow their rules? Conflicting and demanding and terrifying questions—but within their midst I remember a small flicker of the thirst I once experienced as a small child.

And suddenly I would just like to say, "Yes, Ma'am! Nothing would taste better than an Orange Crush right now. Thank you, Aunt Clara. But can you just sit down here with me a piece? I don't think we've ever really gotten acquainted!"

BRISCO 1996: Selected Church Scientists Meet

by Ivan E. Rouse, Ph.D., Chair,
Physics Department, La Sierra University

History of BRISCO

The Biblical Research Institute (BRI) was established over 40 years ago by the General Conference when it "recognized the need to have available specialists in the Scriptures and theologians to provide immediate insights as troubling questions arose." I quote George Reid (*Adventist Review*, July 13, 1995).

As time passed, BRI felt the need to provide for a regular meeting of theologians and scientists to discuss current issues at the interface between science and theology. Accordingly, they created the Biblical Research Institute Science Council (BRISCO) to fulfill this role 21 years ago. BRI has delegated the task of setting up and running these meetings to Geoscience Research Institute (GRI), a General Conference institute located in Loma Linda. GRI delegates the primary responsibilities for organizing and running the yearly BRISCO meetings to a member of their staff. For the past several years the coordinator has been Ben Clausen, Ph.D., whose specialty is nuclear physics.

BRISCO Dialogue 1996

The 1996 BRISCO meetings were held October 10-14 on the campus of Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska. The meeting announcement stated that "Papers on nature/revelation topics from either the scientific or theological viewpoint are welcome, with talks on the Cenozoic being emphasized this year." The Cenozoic Era, simply put, is typically in the top of the geologic column. Textbooks commonly call it the "Age of Mammals" and state that it started about 63 million years ago. Often, for a BRISCO meeting, a portion of the geologic column is selected as the topic of study. Papers are solicited on this portion of

the column, and the meeting is held where relevant geologic formations and specimens can be viewed. Lincoln was chosen as the meeting site because of the nearby field trip possibilities related to the Cenozoic emphasis of the meetings.

NEWS ANALYSIS

The schedule included two and a half days of papers and one and a half days of field trips. All presenters were asked to provide abstracts for distribution and to limit their talks to 15 or 30 minutes. In addition, there were times available for attendees to get acquainted and discuss mutual interests.

Participants

Those attending BRISCO meetings are a diverse and varying group of scholars and administrators. Some of the attendees were regular members who represent educational institutions or General Conference entities. Others were scholars invited to participate this year by presenting a paper or because their scholarly interests are relevant to this year's topic. This year I was pleased to be able to attend for the third time. I served as the invited representative of La Sierra University. Previously I have given invited presentations on radiometric dating and on paleomagnetism.

All together, 45 persons attended, 27 members and 18 invitees. Scientists numbered 39: 19 biologists and 10 geologists and paleontologists, plus representatives from physics, chemistry, biochemistry, and medicine. Archeology and geography also were represented by appropriate specialists. Theologians numbered 6, with 2 representing our colleges. The other 4 were: editor of *Ministry Magazine*, director of the Biblical Research Institute, General Conference (a general vice president), and president, Adventist Theological Society.

Our institutions of higher learning provided more than half of the participants: 23

were professors from 11 educational institutions, and 5 were graduate students; 7 represented Geoscience Research Institute.

In short, the attendees represented a diverse spectrum of professional backgrounds which certainly enriched the presentations and discussions.

A total of 28 papers were presented by 24 authors (more than half the attendees). Of these papers, 5 were theologically or philosophically oriented; the other 23 were primarily technical, on aspects of biology, anthropology, ecology, geology or radiometric dating. Many of these papers were reports on scientific research projects being completed by the presenters. In addition, one paper gave an overview of a major new book, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (Michael J. Behe, 1996), and another gave an overview of a recent paleobotany conference. David Merling, Ph.D. (Andrews University) presented a fascinating paper that gave a critical archeologist's overview of efforts to find Noah's Ark and gave an evaluation of the "facts" that have been reported.

Field Trip

The BRISCO meetings always include field trips to local areas that are relevant to the issues which are the focus of the current meeting, and this meeting was no exception. About a fourth of the attendees spent the first day on a field trip to Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park. This park in northeastern Nebraska contains a rich deposit of rhinos, three-toed horses, camels, and other animals that were buried by volcanic ash. The animals were apparently buried suddenly as they drank around the margins of a water hole, as evidenced by some of the rhino skeletons that left impressions of their last foot prints in the mud nearby. The cloud of volcanic ash that buried the well-articulated skeletons probably came from a volcano in southwestern

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