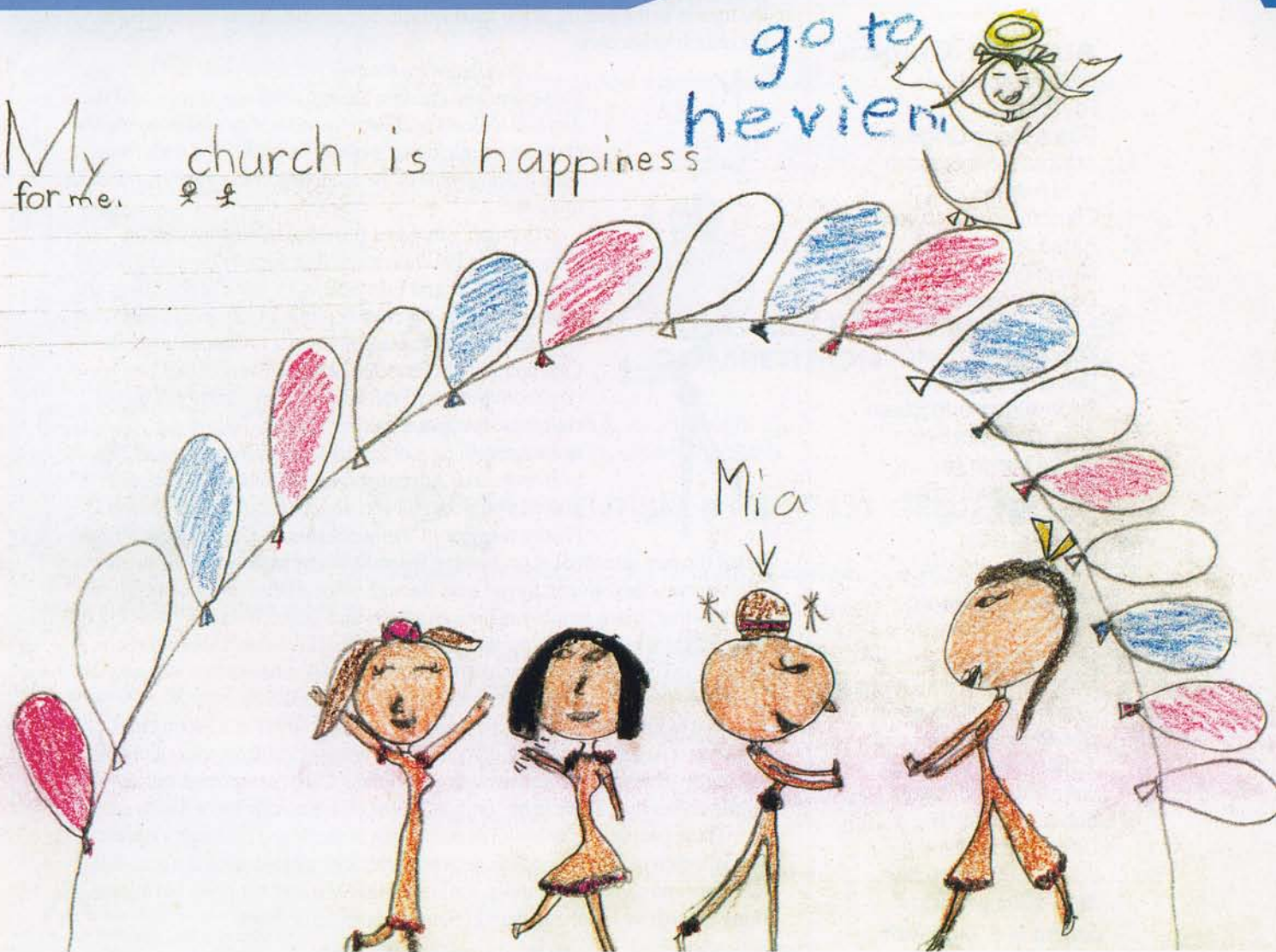


ADVENTIST TODAY

My church is happiness
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Generational Perspectives
on the Church

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FOR AT LEAST A FEW MORE DAYS, ANYWAY, I'M A "TWENTYSOMETHING," WHICH IS to say my conscious experience of the Adventist church is more or less limited to the past 15 years. To my mind, they have been difficult years for the church because they brought fiscal, doctrinal and administrative crises, not to mention more subtle (and therefore more pernicious) crises of meaning. Certainly, my view of the church is affected by all of this.

Yet when I gaze at the church through the eyes of David Bieber—eyes that have watched it for seventy-some years—I feel myself getting caught up in Bieber's confidence about its future. And apparently, seniors like him are not alone in feeling optimistic about the church.

At the other end of the age spectrum is Mia Roberts, a second grader at Mesa Grande Academy in Calimesa, California. Mia drew the joyous picture on our cover when her teacher asked her class, "What does your church mean to you?" I especially like how the word "Mia" and an arrow clearly identify one of the figures in the picture as the artist herself. Someone young is eager to claim the church as her own!



I wish that were the case with everyone. But between the seniors and children are five other age groups, and they don't all look at the church the same way. Just as seeing the church through Bieber's eyes is helpful to me, I also benefit from hearing some of the more disturbing views featured in this issue.

Deborah Vance first provides an overview of the intergenerational church and then focuses on young adults. Teens Kelly Orr and Erin Reid voice some of their fears and frustrations with the church, while Donna Evans tells what she sees from her vantage point as a teacher of teens. Steve Case and Delwin Finch are both members of that rare species Youth Ministry Professional. They rightly call on the church to *show* that it values its youth. Fellow twentysomething Joel Sandefur cogitates on a possibly over-moralized Adventist universe, while Gary Russell puts in a plug for still-socially-conscious baby boomers. Finally, member-of-the-establishment Gary Patterson takes a shot (no pun intended) at uncovering the roots of our present church structure.

At least one common thread runs through other articles in this issue. In his "Perspective" piece, Smuts van Rooyen asserts that a church stands glistening in the sunlight when it proclaims the kingdom of God. Likewise, in his new book *A Remnant in Crisis*, Jack Provonsa holds that we live in a time when we can clearly see the true natures of both the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. As if to illustrate Provonsa's point, Ray Cottrell writes of a recent child abuse case. And finally, Adrian Zytoskee, Adventist Health System administrator, urges Adventist medical institutions to follow Christ's teachings and example, rather than strive to be "unique" in the changing climate of health care.

These people see the health of our church as somehow contingent upon our proclamation of God's kingdom. So when I think of what Jesus said about that kingdom and children, I wonder, could it be that Mia and her peers have something to teach us about our church? Something to think about.

Twentysomething and holding,

Gayle Saxby,
Assistant Editor

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Young Adults Probe for Meaning in an Uncertain World

by Deborah Vance

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THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN NORTH America is peering down the barrel of a crisis that could destroy it: the church's young adults are missing.

The numbers are telling—an estimated 1 to 2 million former and inactive Adventists live in North America, writes Monte Sahlin in a 1989 church ministries report. The report conservatively estimates that about half the dropouts fall in the 20-35 age range. Compare North America's 400,000 to 450,000 active members, people who attend church at least once a month, with the estimated 1/2 million to 1 million missing young adults.

Baby boomers have found themselves the primary object of the church's too-little, too-late efforts to boost its holding power. But the problem's center of gravity is rapidly shifting to an adjacent generation so distinct from boomers that the two age-groups often clash in the conflict and competition of their own brand of generation gap. The long-nameless 18-29ers, born in the early '60s to mid '70s, are emerging on the horizon as a force with which both the church and society at large must reckon. And with their increased impact and definition, they have shed anonymity to become a generation with a name—several, in fact. Call them twentysomethings, Generation X, or by the derogatory title baby-busters, only recognize that this generation, now pouring into the mainstream of society, is destined to profoundly affect its future. But how twentysomethings will shape the church—and how the church will influence them—may be a moot point if the church fails to somehow capture their hearts and imaginations.

The attrition of twentysomethings from the church cannot be quantified by numbers alone. The church is losing a core of talented, educated young adults. Sahlin writes that

The surveys paint a portrait of a dropout who grew up in the Adventist faith, a younger adult who has gone through a divorce or never married, has few friends in his or her local church, holds a professional position or white collar job that is very demanding, and does not find that the program of the local church meets his or her needs.

Deborah Vance teaches English at Walla Walla College. Also she is completing a creative book-length manuscript about a visit to Maui.



The reasons have little to do with theology and much to do with human factors such as relationships, respect and common concerns. This is clear from the Valuegenesis study, commissioned in 1991 by the North American Division's Board of Education to study the values of Adventist young people and to determine factors in Adventist homes, churches and schools that nurture desired values and faith. The report identifies four central effectiveness factors related to strong faith and loyalty in Adventist young people. Local churches received low marks in 2 areas—"thinking climate" and "caring, supportive leaders and teachers." For example, only 12 percent of 12th graders in the Pacific Union rated their congregation's thinking climate highly, and only 30 percent rated its warmth highly.

Active young adult members also indicate dissatisfaction. A recent Adventist university graduate, active in student leadership and publications on her campus, identifies negative perceptions of the church repeatedly expressed by peers:

- Experiences that have caused bitterness toward the church, such as cold treatment by members.
- Cover-ups of ethical misconduct of church employees and faculty in Adventist educational institutions.
- Dictating of standards instead of teaching of moral principles.
- Inconsistencies between church teaching and practice.
- Closed-mindedness on the part of the church institution and its members. Students indicated great frustration regarding this point: "Questions our education taught us to ask are dismissed as heresy."
- Perception of mediocrity and lack of professionalism in church institutions and workers.
- Discouragement at slowness of change.

With regard to this final point, the Valuegenesis study recognizes "an emerging consensus" that institutional structures, particularly Adventist congregations, need "a great deal of change."

From Programs to People

If one thing more than another characterizes the twentysomething generation, it's that it can't be characterized. "The idea of a generational culture is itself largely a byproduct of the considerable leisure and prosperity that young people enjoyed in the '50s and '60s, together with the existence of overarching causes like Vietnam," writes Alexander Star in "The Twentysomething Myth" (*The New Republic*, January 4 and 11, 1993). Star continues,

How can one generalize about a group that is said to be politically disengaged and politically correct, . . . technologically savvy and unconditionally ignorant, busy saving the planet and craving electricity and noise, prematurely careerist and proud to be lazy, unwilling to grow up and too grown up already? As young people acquire adult responsibilities and adult vices at an earlier age, their distinctness as a group diminishes. They do not stamp a unique sensibility on society so much as mirror its disarray.

Furthermore, twentysomethings seem "more comfortable with diversity than any previous generation" ("Move Over Boomers," *Business Week*, December 14, 1992). And having grown up on media and advertising, they are cynical of approaches that attempt to mass-manipulate them.

The implication here is that as an initial reach toward twentysomethings, the church must concern itself with individuals and individual differences, rather than stereotyping groups. It might even need to take a long, hard, reconciling look at that dirty word "pluralism," not only to tolerate it, but even to help it along. Church members and leaders must understand that any effective overture toward twentysomethings will fail to reach all or most of them, but only small groups or individuals at a time. There is no quick fix, no single solution. The age of the program has passed. The time is here for being individual, genuine and human.

The age of the program has passed. The time is here for being individual, genuine and human.

Growing Faith

Esquire magazine's recent poll of 1,000 college students on 27 campuses indicates widespread openness of twentysomethings toward higher purpose. Seventy-three percent of those polled believe in God, and more than three-quarters think "we are placed on this planet to serve some greater purpose." These general-population statistics nudge the church in the direction of one of its primary functions—to nurture faith maturity.

Valuegenesis defines faith maturity as "a process, not a product. . . . Much more than a set of right beliefs, it is a way of life . . . reflected in the priorities, dispositions, and behaviors of people." The study identifies the following core dimensions of faith:

- Trust in God's saving grace; belief in Christ's humanity and divinity.
- Sense of personal well-being, security and peace.
- Integrated faith and life.
- Spiritual growth through study, reflection, prayer, discussion.
- Fellowship with a community of believers who support and nourish one another.
- Life-affirming values, including affirmation of cultural and religious diversity and commitment to racial and gender equality, as well as to healthful living.
- Commitment to social and global change to bring about greater social justice.
- Consistent, passionate service of humanity through acts of love and justice.

Many Adventist members have grown into middle-age and seniority with a child-level faith maturity, an experience characterized by rigidity, sentimentality, inability to make independent moral judgments, and the need for an authoritarian structure to plot personal belief, ethics and spiritual experience.

This immaturity not only diminishes the richness of these members' experiences, but renders them incapable of offering spiritual nurture to other members. And adults with immature faith may perceive those who probe, question, and press the boundaries as a threat to Adventism.

"The research seems to indicate that the majority of those who drop out of church do not think they have lost their faith," writes Lutheran researcher Robert Stuenkel. "They often state they do not need to be church members to

be believers." Concerned Adventists need to seriously consider the possibility that many young adults are leaving the church because they are unable to find in it the kind of faith development and spiritual nurture they need.

How should the church meet this need? By providing social opportunities? Entertainment? Babysitting? Job counseling? Fun trips?

Maybe. But in order to nurture faith development, church leaders and members need to understand the developmental processes young adults face—uprooting and resettling, developing intimacy, making vocational and relational decisions that will reverberate throughout life, establishing patterns that will affect the future, and—most critical of all—discovering meaning, pattern and integrity in one's own life. And, of course, a byproduct of nurturing faith maturity in young adults is that their senior mentors may also grow and mature in their own faith journeys.

Listening Leaders

Church members and leaders who hope to influence the variegated generation we call "twentysomethings" must learn to listen to them, to what they say about their lives and experience, who they are, who they want to be and what they say about the church.

Listening is a risky form of caring because it implies a commitment to respond with actions as well as words. "We are committed to change," says one union conference administrator. "We want young adults to see that something really does happen when the church listens." But if nothing happens, these people will feel again that the church isn't really hearing them. It is just pretending.

Many already feel this way. They point to the church's slow progress in areas such as human equality, effective management and academic freedom, plus its perceived obsession with minutiae. "Many people have recognized these problems for years," writes one young professional, "but we don't see that anything is being done about them."

"Within each human person," writes David Augsburger, "there is a deep need to be heard as a real person, a person of importance who merits attention and respect" (*Caring Enough to Hear and Be Heard*). Failing or pre-

tending to listen to others dehumanizes them and conveys the message that they are invisible, unimportant.

Many young adults say their congregations lack warmth. Are they talking about hugs, handshakes, and broad smiles? Or would they feel more closeness if church leaders and members opened their minds to them and listened? Many seasoned members and church workers have grown accustomed to finding the issue in "Who's right?" and "Who's wrong?" when the real questions begging answers are "Does anyone care about me?" and "Do you want a relationship?"

Victim of Success

For most of its history, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has placed a high premium on education. Insofar as it has done this, it now may find itself victimized by its own success.

"Adventists our age are more educated than ever," writes a recent Adventist university graduate. "We get discouraged when the questions our education taught us to ask are dismissed as heresy." What kinds of questions? She gives five examples:

"How do we know that God exists?"

"Why is the Bible considered a message from God?"

"How can the earth have been created 6,000 years ago when all dating evidence shows differently?"

"How can Adventists as creationists support their beliefs and defend them to evolutionists?"

"How much of the Bible should be read literally and how much of it is legend?"

"We aren't so much searching for answers from the church as we are searching for the right to look for these answers and still remain Adventists."

Educated young adults—and others—do not ask these questions to tear down faith. Rather, they hear them in the world around them. They ask because they take their faith seriously enough to explore it, to make it strong, intelligent and their own. Before internalizing one's faith, the most difficult questions must be discussed. These questions may be more complex than those of previous generations. Young adults ask the rest of the church to be honest enough to thoughtfully face their questions with them, to join them in a faith for today. To them, faith is not an object but a process, not a fortress but a journey.

Ellen G. White wrote:

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. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation (Counsels to Writers and Editors).

Young adults ask the...church to be honest enough to thoughtfully face their questions with them, to join them in a faith for today.

The process of faith maturity is an intelligent process engaging the whole person. It manifests itself uniquely in each individual and generation. "Being sure enough in your heart of what is worth living and dying for is, indeed, a very different matter for the generations of students who dwell on the other side of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Vietnam, and Watergate," writes Sharon Parks in *The Critical Years*. "Young adults must now search for meaning under a frayed and unraveling canopy. Bereft of a mentoring culture, these generations of young adults have, nevertheless, manifested intense, if tentative, probes toward meaning."

Seventh-day Adventist beliefs hold a richness of meaning for this generation and the culture at large. But the meaning, largely obscured by conventional, unventuresome thinking on the part of church membership and leadership, is only dimly comprehended. Seventh-day Adventists are accustomed to supporting their beliefs on the basis of authority—the Bible and Ellen White. No coalescent philosophical framework for Adventism has been seriously attempted. Yet that seems to be what is needed if the church intends to communicate itself to coming generations and have any hope of relevance to society.

Adventism not only has no complete, thoroughly forged philosophical structure; most members don't see the need for one. Rather, they think of philosophy as dangerous and destructive to faith. There's no doubt that putting the big searchlights to the most fundamental issues of faith—the authority of Scripture, the divinity of Christ, the existence of God, the nature of reality—would change the church, perhaps a great deal. But doubt and seeking are essential elements of the faith journey.

It is within the power of the institutional church to validate and facilitate questioning as an important part of the development of a mature, resilient faith. Both historic Adventism and the Bible portray the Christian life as expansive and growing, not limiting, narrow, and exclusive. Adventist pioneers were open to "progressive revelation." God's intention at the Creation was for human beings to grow, prosper and live creatively and generously upon the earth.

Jesus, in his parables of the kingdom about growing seeds and rising bread and multiplying talents, reveals the expansive nature of the gospel. Jesus takes a little bread and a few fishes and feeds a multitude of people; he works with 12 flawed people to begin a worldwide movement.

The extravagant gift of salvation calls human beings to live fully, expansively, generously, always reaching to grow. In the words of the Old Testament prophet:

Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; hold not back, lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your descendants will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities (Isaiah 54:2, 3).

As Seventh-day Adventists examine their relationship with the twentysomething generation, they would do well to consider this ancient challenge and promise. 🙏

Teens Disillusioned with Church

by Kelly Orr

EACH GENERATION VIEWS SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM differently. Teens today have many, varied opinions on the church.

I have personally struggled over different church issues: Is Ellen G. White really a true prophetess and should we follow everything she has written? Does it really matter what day we worship on? Why aren't we supposed to wear jewelry?

Each church has its unique set of problems, but I fear for the future of our church, because my generation has become disillusioned with it.

I asked my fellow students their opinions on our church and was a little surprised by their comments. One high school senior noted that Adventists put too much emphasis on what a person can't do, and as a result the positive aspects of God and religion aren't realized. Another said that in general Adventists are too quick to judge other people and they don't accept others' differences. One student went so far as to say that his local church seemed like a place where people gathered to show off their wealth. A sophomore commented that many of the rules in the church are just too strict and unrealistic. Another believes that Adventism is the closest to biblical truth, but the people in the church have ruined its good qualities.

Not all of the comments were negative. One student said that Adventism is the best religion because we worship on Saturday. Another student enjoys the local church because of its unique emphasis on music.

Although only a few views are represented in this essay, the contrast of beliefs is clear. Unfortunately, our church seems to be ignorant of the attitudes of today's youth. We are the future generation and if something isn't done to change our views, I fear for the future of our church. 🐣

Kelly Orr was a senior at Loma Linda Academy when she wrote this. She now attends Westmont College, Santa Barbara, California.



Erin Reid was a senior at Loma Linda Academy when she wrote this. She now attends Atlantic Union College.



Life in the Adventist Eggshell

by Erin Reid

I LIVE IN AN EGG SHELL. IT HAS NO SEAMS AND COVERS me thoroughly. People tell me that this white shell is protective and even comforting. But I can only see it as a barrier, preventing my yolk from being free or being used to make a cake for someone to eat.

"Born free, as free as the wind blows, as free as the grass grows..." What happened to my freedom? It got placed in a cradle-roll-sized shell and then a *My-Little-Friend*-sized shell and then a *Primary-Treasure*-sized shell and then a *Guide*-sized shell and then an *Insight*-sized shell. Soon I will be in the *Adventist Review* size and still won't know what the shell means.

Why am I in this shell anyway? The truth is I was born into a family that believes in this particular shell which happens to be white. But I could have just as easily ended up in one that is brown or speckled or painted green and orange with purple polka dots. There must be some greater relevance to my shell than just being born into it. Doesn't it involve a choice? Up until now, I've never made that choice. One day, I will have to, and I won't know what I'm choosing between or whether the choice is even important.

Is this shell what is really important anyway? Or is it something else? This white shell has become such a barrier to me that I can't see beyond it. My empty soul searches for something more, but I can find nothing within, and I can't look out. I find myself focusing on the shell rather than my Creator (the Hen?). Isn't that backward? Shouldn't I be focused on the One who made me?

I don't know how to move past this misplaced gaze. I do know how to sing "Onward Christian Soldiers" and put dollar bills in the offering plate and put on a "Sabbath dress" and wash my brother's feet and sit for an hour on a pew and kneel on a hard floor and drone the responsive reading at the correct time and, and, and— . I don't know how to talk to God, or express what I can't find within myself, or develop faith, or feel full when I am empty, or comfort a spirit in need of uplifting, or rejoice without hesitation or embarrassment, or love something I can't see or, or, or— .

My whole being screams out that there has to be something more to the spiritual experience than what I see in church. Church seems to be a focus on the outside, not the inside—my pure exterior rather than my confused interior. And I ask myself, what is more important—the shell or the yolk? What is more important—my religion or my spirituality? What is more important—my action or my heart?

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The Unbearable Weight of Being Adventist

by Joel Sandefur

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THERE ARE SOME WHO BELIEVE IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE too morally reflective, to give ethical consideration to issues that are relatively trivial. This tends to unsettle the Adventist in me — How can one possibly be too moral? If some ethical reflection is good, should not more be even better? The Seventh-day Adventism in which I was brought up did not take into account any facet of life in which morality did not play a part. It is a slight exaggeration to say that every moment in an Adventist's life is morally momentous. What is true, though, is that to societal duties we have added layer upon layer of other moral concerns. In addition to duties to act morally towards others we are to act morally towards our own bodies, our possessions and our God. As I see it, these extra concerns can be best understood as owing their existence to two fundamental characteristics of the Adventist world view. True, this is a very simplified version of an extremely complex reality. But it is one, I fear, that is not far from the ethical system under which many Adventists operate.

1. The Conflict of the Ages: Our belief in a second coming and a final judgment, set against a back-drop of struggle between good and evil, leads to a very directed, goal-oriented kind of ethics, a system with salvation as its final aim. The Adventist end is not merely a balance of good over evil, or of God's love, but a promotion of the more encompassing will of God. Nearly every moment and every decision in an Adventist's life has a moral component. We are constantly either performing actions that are in keeping with God's plan for our lives or performing actions that distance us from God. No choice, except perhaps the most petty, can ever be truly called non-moral.


Much good can be said about such a cosmic frame of ethical reference. It allows an Adventist to believe that his or her decisions are truly important and have consequences beyond just the immediate surroundings. The accompany-

ing danger is moral fanaticism. Ethical concern can quickly descend into moralizing if it loses sight of its objective.

2. The Cult of the Body: Adventists share with most other protestant groups a basic, mostly negative preoccupation with sexuality. In Adventism, though, there exists a much broader corporeal concern that takes into account the whole of the human body—not just because it is capable of relating to other persons sexually, but because it is seen as having moral value in and of itself. This serves to add a consciously self-regarding dimension to Adventist ethics that is not present in many other systems. The simple mantra "the body is the temple of God" speaks volumes. God, and all the moral weight that word carries, is related to the self.

From there, Adventists have developed a very physical morality, one that takes for granted one's ethical duties to oneself.

The way an Adventist looks at an issue like illegal drug use is fundamentally different from the way someone else does who does not believe the human body is an ethical end. That person might oppose drug use on ethical grounds because it destroys families, wastes human potential and leads to violence. An Adventist, in addition to those concerns, would add that drug use is unethical simply because it is harmful to one's health.

Is it ever possible to be too moral? We Adventists definitely push the envelope. We are constantly asking ourselves not only whether a particular action is adding to the total amount of good in the world or if it is based upon a universalizable rule, but whether a particular course of action is facilitating or hindering God's ends. We recognize a larger relevant ethical whole, one that includes the self as discretely important, and also place these moral considerations in a larger context than do most other systems. I am not willing to say that Adventists always engage in moral overkill. But it does seem that we as a subculture, for the two reasons I outlined among others, are prone to ethical overseriousness. 



Joel Sandefur is a senior at La Sierra University and an editorial consultant to *Adventist Today*.



Boomers Call for a Socially Conscious Church

by Gary Russell

WHAT DO BABY BOOMERS WANT FROM THE SEVENTH-day Adventist church and what will they contribute to it?

Baby boomers are the nearly 77 million Americans born between 1946 and 1964. They crowded the schools and hospitals in the '50s and '60s. They were teenagers who wanted longer hair, livelier music, shorter skirts and more liberal social policies.

Boomers are educated. Most graduated from high school and 25 percent graduated from college. Another 25 percent have some college experience. Most have white-collar professional careers. Seventy percent of boomer women work outside the home. Boomers have re-defined most societal institutions they have touched, including the family and the workplace. Their divorce rate is high, resulting in more single-parent families, and a great demand for convenience and quality in child care, services and goods.

This has influenced the boomers' agenda, and they have at least four major expectations for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

First, boomers want a congruent church—one that practices what it preaches. A major focus is standards. Adventist boomers are more interested in the principles behind the standards than in the standards themselves. Boomers consider standards to be applications of principles and thus open to modification as time and culture require.

Second, boomers believe in equality. They can appreciate Adventism's theological basis for the equality of all human beings. Yet many have a problem with the church's slowness to express that equality in church life. Some steps have been taken, but boomers will not rest until the Adventist church affirms not only the equality of all races but the equality of both genders. A major item here is the inclusion of women at all levels of church polity, including the ordained ministry.

Third, boomers are still idealists, believing that those with much have a responsibility toward those with little. They first filled the ranks of the Peace Corps and the student missionary program in the '60s. Many still have a strong social consciousness and expect their church to be

involved in fighting hunger, homelessness, prejudice and discrimination.

Finally, boomers are doers—participants—and this includes their worship experience. Boomers appreciate worship that is lively and participative. They attend church to worship God. They do not want to sit passively in a pew watching others participate for them. In a world consumed by difficulties, they want to celebrate a God who stands by their sides in the midst of problems and encompasses them with divine arms.

What will they give in return for the above? They will give their idealism, their energy, their time and their money. Some say boomers will not commit. Not true. They commit money to their mortgages and car payments. They commit time to family and friends. They commit energy and idealism to causes they believe in.

When the church offers them a place to participate in a cause they can embrace, they will come and bring their resources with them. And all—the church, the boomer generation and our world—will be blessed. ☺

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for Christmas.**

Gary Russell pastors in Alhambra, California and edits the *Adventist Baby Boomer Awareness* newsletter.



Surrendering a Military Model of Leadership

by Gary Patterson

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SUMMER CAMP, FOR MY FIRST TIME AT AGE 10 IN THE summer of 1948, was like mini-boot camp for juniors. It was just after the close of World War II, and the influence of military victory pervaded the structure of life. The heroes of society were military figures, and "the boys" who had come home in triumph from foreign battle fields were not only welcomed, they were accorded education and employment which placed them in leadership positions for a generation.

Though I did not realize it at the time, our camp program was patterned after the military. Of course, camps were separated for boys and girls. And the procedures were both named and performed in military style. The dining room was the "mess hall." Washing dishes was "KP duty." We had line call and reports every hour or so for improper behavior. The residuals of the military generation were being played out in camp life. But camp life was only one of the more visible manifestations of this top-down militaristic structure. Society in general and the church specifically took up this mode of operation which had worked so well in the military.

Not only in theory was this accomplished, but the educational provisions of the GI Bill flooded our college religion departments with returned soldiers eager to enter the ministry. And of course they brought with them the system of leadership they had learned in the military. The result was that for many years, the ministerial force of the church was filled with largely those of military background to the exclusion of the normal age group who would have been expected to flow through the educational process year by year. This created an age gap between the military generation and the baby boomers who would follow them as the next dominant generation.

During the first half of the 1950s these GI Bill graduates were absorbed into the work force of the church in large numbers. Those who were not able to find a position in the pastoral ranks entered the teaching and literature ministries and whatever other positions might be available while they waited for openings in pastoral posts.

Then in the mid-1950s, just as this group began to be absorbed, the Social Security Service moved to include pastors in the system. Those about to retire were required to work 5 years before becoming eligible, thus blocking from the pastoral ranks that age group who normally would have been entering the work force in the last half of the 1950's.

The church is now in the era of transition when this gap in staffing is becoming evident in leadership. The military generation is retiring and the boomers are moving into leadership. And the clash of generations is evident. In fact, this is what the '60s were all about. The leadership of the church for the past 30 to 40 years has been happy with the model which has been comfortable for them. But the coming generation not only does not appreciate the top-down military model, they actually devoted themselves to its destruction during their youth.

And the scant group between these generations is left with the task of trying to bridge between them so that on the one hand they do not alienate their parents, and on the other, they do not lose their younger brothers and sisters.

It is reality that many things important to the military generation are of no moment to the boomers. Cherished institutional structures, procedures and standards are no longer relevant to a new generation. The risk is that the former generation will attempt, in the name of righteousness, to preserve its "irrelevant" standards, while the new generation may jettison true values in pursuit of its own processes and perceptions.

The natural sociology of the church is that it tends to become captured by a dominant generational group that then carries its form and activities along with its own aging process. At first, a new perspective appears to be a fresh cutting edge of growth in the church. But in time, it manifests itself as the perpetuation of the tastes and likes of one generation imposed on the following generation in the name of preserving righteousness. Thus the church is not allowed to grow and develop in a smooth and intentional progression but rather in fits and jerks of institutional revolution.

We are now at such a break point. It would be good if we could find a way for shifting plates to move without seismic calamities. Knowing what we are up against can help us. Whether we will heed this knowledge remains to be seen. ☪

Gary Patterson is a GI generation administrator in the North American Division, a former college church pastor and a former conference president.



Seniors Confident Because of the Past

by David Bieber

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THE GENERATIONAL SPECTRUM IN OUR CHURCH CREATES understandable but not always recognizable differences. For a perspective from the senior group, I will relate my personal story.

I was born at the end of the first decade of the 20th century. My parents emigrated from Germany via southern Russia. They settled in the Dakotas. The pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church saw an open field in these newcomers and quickly moved in to make converts.

My mother was one of many who accepted the "truth," as we spoke of it then. My father, who died during the 1919 influenza epidemic when I was seven, also believed, but like many others of that time regarded religion as something for mothers and children.

Churches developed, the Dakota Conference was organized, and Plainview Academy was established. My mother decided early on that two of the youngest boys must go to Plainview Academy to become preachers. I was one of the two.

The authoritarian model manifested by my mother, also prevailed at the academy. As students, we believed what we were told and did not question it, so religion and Adventist principles became deeply embedded in our young lives.

Life was simple and hard, particularly during the depression years of the early 30s. This, combined with earlier family experiences on the farm, made me, with hundreds of other Seventh-day Adventist young people, totally committed to the church and all it stood for.

During the early part of my life, the church grew at a rapid pace. Numerous church schools and academies sprang up throughout the country. Adventist colleges were being established. Loma Linda University, at the urging of Ellen White, had a near-miraculous beginning. The overseas work of the church spread rapidly. All of this confirmed within me and my peers a strong belief in the church and its teaching.

My generation holds very dear the words of Ellen White:

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

We have seen the church throughout the world grow from thousands of members to the present 7 million members. Our schools, colleges and universities have not only grown numerically but in sophistication and world renown—witness Loma Linda University. The organization of the church since its inception has become a model in effectiveness. It is therefore no wonder that many of us at the end of the generation spectrum regard the church with tremendous awe and respect.

The younger generation, however, reminds us that things have changed. My generation would be totally blind and insensitive if we did not recognize this truth. We also think of the present and the future. In the recent national election, 50 percent of Americans 55 years and older voted for a baby boomer as president of the United States. They recognized that a new generation, a younger generation, a future-orientated generation must now give leadership to our country and the world.

At the same time we must continue to be mindful of the past and of God's leading, recognizing that the great principles Jesus enunciated must guide the church today. Our methods must change with changing times, but we must always differentiate between principles and methods.

Since I have been connected with Adventist schools all my working years, I feel I have developed at least some understanding of the feelings and perspectives of younger generations. I feel that this is a time when we must all take a careful look at what the other generations think. The Value-generation study is a good beginning in helping us know what teenagers feel about the church.

The hard and challenging task of finding answers is now before us. It is time to talk frankly, candidly and honestly with each other and to follow up with solutions that, without compromising scriptural principles and fundamental beliefs of the church, bring all together in a better understanding of each other and the direction we want the church to go.

I am optimistic for the future of the church if all generations press together. God has led the church in the past, is still in control and will guide us to the finish. 🙏

David Bieber is a former president of Loma Linda University. He is now retired in southern California.



The Church Must Model a Search for God

by Donna Evans

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THE ADVENTIST CHURCH IS INCREASINGLY CONCERNED about its youths' lack of involvement: their reduced Sabbath School and church attendance, their reduced participation in youth activities, and perhaps most of all, their growing apathy and antagonism toward church doctrine. The church recently demonstrated its concern in its Valuegenesis project, a study of church youths' attitudes toward church institutions, personnel and teachings. The study found, among other things, that standards are best taught by the family rather than the institution and that Adventist youth are not doing well at making value-based judgments. Many of us in the teaching profession are pleased to see our own assessments backed by this research.

The Valuegenesis study, however, measured only the tip of a huge iceberg. The issue of youth involvement is extremely complex and foundational. Facing it may require us to adjust some concepts at the core of the church's identity. Strangely enough, many of these uninvolved "youth" are found at all age levels within the church. I found that many of the teachers I interviewed quickly diverted the discussion from youth to their own relationship to the church and their personal search—often very painful—for a way to remain Adventist while retaining their integrity of belief and finding the spiritual food for which they hunger.

In speaking to the young people themselves, I found a variety of reasons for their own lack of involvement with the church.

Relevance

A need for relevance is high on the list. Society is changing so rapidly that often the issues the church focuses on are not the issues that young people are dealing with in their own minds. A recent Adventist seminar on current issues in education concerned itself only with government funding for private schools and whether or not that is biblical. The challenges that we teachers deal with in the classroom, however, include child abuse, AIDS, teen pregnancy, a great sense of personal guilt, low self-esteem, violence in the neighborhood and cultural integration. We find, sadly, that Adventism does not keep our youth from sharing in the

ills of society as a whole. The youth feel that because the church places such a high value on "wholeness," anyone who is not whole is not acceptable. We give that impression by refusing to recognize and minister to very real needs and problems *within ourselves*, whatever they may be.

The flip side of the coin is that many young people do not perceive adults as benefiting from their own professed religion. They see the quarrels between liberals and conservatives, the struggles for power, misuse of money and lack of justice and equality, and they question Adventism's relevance. Adventist adults and youth alike must acknowledge the needs within ourselves and must confess that our consecration still leaves us vulnerably human, with warped human natures, even as we strive to be better than we are.

Reality

Reality is vital! Pastors and teachers must speak about real life—not rote theory or tradition. Very few of us speak from conviction—from our own struggles and humanity, our doubts and fears, our own experienced reality, our own encounter with divinity.

Few students experience what we teach, either. Their experience of church and school is social, though that is not all bad. Human relations probably have far more to do with our concept of divinity than we begin to realize. But if we teach that God is near, gives power and answers prayer, this should be the experience of our students, and they should be free to discuss it. I don't hear much of that kind of talk, and I can only assume that current Adventist religion does not provide our students with access to spiritual power or a sense of the transcendent.

Hunger

Dissatisfaction with religion or with an institution does not mean a lack of spirituality. In fact, I often find the very opposite. It is because deep spiritual hunger often goes unsatisfied that many youth seek elsewhere. They speak of emptiness, blankness, walls and meaninglessness when they speak of religion. They talk about the soul-need they have, and confess that they wonder if somewhere down deep there is not a meaning that they have missed in their efforts to abide by the church mores first learned in childhood. Other students from liberal families have escaped obligatory mores, but they have had neither spiritual experiences nor meaningful rituals.

This is not totally the fault of the church, of course. Individual experience of spiritual life depends mostly upon the individual's search process and involvement; however, in prescribing only *one* accepted way of being spiritual, in

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passing on a package deal of truth and spirituality, we kill the spirit of individual search which is the only way in which persons can come to experience God for themselves.

Study

We have somewhere lost the idea of serious religious study and inquiry. Bible classes are mostly a means of passing on digested information, not a place where tools and materials are provided and skills are developed for the personal search. Because of this, few young people are equipped to carry out their own spiritual research. Recently a student who had finished reading one of Chaim Potok's books sighed and asked me why we didn't have the kind of experience available to his characters, the experience of struggling through text with the aid of commentaries, trans-

lations, arguments and dictionaries. That, the student said, would make her feel competent in scripture and would give her a sense of what she had to build on before interpreting her own life experiences.

I don't think there is any program, institution or plan that the church can develop to resolve these issues. We must, however, quit prescribing the means and end for every Adventist youth. We must, rather, concentrate on providing for them the skills and tools through which they can carry out *their own search*. We must model the process of seeking God—a process filled with pain and error, joy and humor, moments of deep peace and awe, a process always marred by the human limitations to which we must continually confess. Then we will have truly begun to nurture the spiritual journeys of the next generation. ☛

JUST A COINCIDENCE...



Humberto Valenzuela or "**Berto**" is an Adventist cartoonist whose drawings appear regularly in the *South Pacific Division Record*.

Valuegenesis: Is Anyone Listening?

by Steve Case

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VALUEGENESIS HAS MORE NOTORIETY THAN THE ENTITY which gave birth to it. Project Affirmation came from the educational department of the North American Division, with a goal to renew Adventist education for the 90s. One of its four taskforces dealt with faith, values and commitment ("How can we be assured that by sending our children to Adventist schools they will come out Adventists?").

An impasse developed when the representative taskforce held diverse understandings of what Adventists should believe and, especially, how they should behave. The age-old problem of standards quickly surfaced. If a committee could not come to agreement on this issue, what hope would there be for agreement among all North American Adventists?

The seeds for Valuegenesis had been planted. Steps were taken to develop and fund an extensive questionnaire regarding Adventist young people in North America. Data from the 465-item survey have yielded numerous reports, doctoral dissertations and focus groups. Valuegenesis has become a buzz-word to reveal that one is "in the know." The Hancock Center for Youth Ministry at La Sierra University has made Valuegenesis a foundation for its services, including the Valuegenesis Short Form survey, several books and family worship materials.

One of the significant contributions of Valuegenesis from the outset was a focus beyond simple denominational loyalty that included faith maturity. A moderate score in the 70-75 percent range for denominational loyalty brought more joy than the embarrassingly low scores of faith maturity—22 percent have high faith maturity with no significant faith development throughout the adolescent period from grades 6-12.

What can be done to improve these scores? Valuegenesis identifies 41 "effectiveness factors" that correlate with denominational loyalty and faith maturity; 20 relate to the home environment, 12 to the local church, and 9 to the school environment.

While scores for the home environment show more good news than bad, one key area for improvement is family worship, an experience many families have not been able

to coordinate with their current lifestyle. Materials currently are being developed at La Sierra's Hancock Center so that families can obtain creative resources for short, significant, spiritual sharing on a regular basis.

While less than 25 percent of the effectiveness factors occur in the school setting, the educational branch of the church has been the most aggressive in responding to Valuegenesis. Virtually every conference education superintendent, or an appointee, has been trained in a grass-roots "visioning" and "vision-to-action" process in which local schools, churches and/or communities can implement planned changes over a 3-to-5 year period.

The area needing the most improvement in the educational branch is the quality of religious education programs. School personnel are expected to provide worships and other religious programs, despite their limited preparation time and inadequate religious education training. Gil Plubell, of the North American Division's Office of Education, has approved the development of the *Worship Ideas Newsletter*, sent bimonthly to all academy principals, deans and Bible teachers.

Without question the weakest link is the local congregation. Of the 12 effectiveness factors in this arena, the 2 most important are a warm, caring environment and a thinking environment.

Who is responding at the church level? Hardly anybody. Few pastors have made young people a high enough priority. At most, half of the Adventist churches in North America have volunteer youth leaders; less than 1 percent have youth pastors. The majority of conferences lack full-time youth directors, and only one union, Southern, has a youth director.

These data on the church are alarming, but few youth leaders exist to respond. Everybody's business has become nobody's business. We can rant and rave about the terrible data and the obvious decline in youth ministry, but it's somewhat like ordering an absent tenant to pay his rent. What good is it to serve notice when nobody's home?

Valuegenesis won't make change happen. It is only an evaluation tool that we will either respond to or ignore. Those who take initiative for a long-term planned change, whether they be a family, local congregation, school, or conference, will be the ones who truly hear today and change the status quo. Those who listen but don't act will be the foolish ones who hear the warning today but their young people, and their entire church, will be gone tomorrow (Matt. 7:24-27).

Steve Case, co-investigator of Valuegenesis, is an independent youth pastor and president of Piece of the Pie Ministries.



—A subscription to the *Worship Ideas Newsletter* is available for \$9.95/year by writing to Piece of the Pie Ministries, 1017 Andy Circle, Sacramento, CA 95838. ☎

We Can No Longer Play Church

GUEST EDITORIAL

by Delwin Finch

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I WAS ORDAINED LAST NOVEMBER. AFTER SEVEN YEARS and four pastorates spanning two conferences it finally happened. A number of friends and family were in attendance. The conference secretary spoke. The elders gathered around. Nothing unusual so far. What is unusual is that I was ordained as a youth pastor. I have never pastored a church on my own. Youth ministry is all that I have known. I just want to be a youth pastor.

Not that some haven't tried to dissuade me. Conference administrators, well-meaning church members, other pastors. The discussion usually goes something like this:

Delwin, what do you see yourself doing 5 years from now? *Being a youth pastor.*

What about 10 years from now? What are your goals for the future? *I would like to be a youth pastor or perhaps teach Bible in an academy.*

Do you ever see yourself being a real pastor? Pastoring a regular church? *No.*

You preach good sermons. You really should pastor a real congregation of your own and forget this youth ministry thing....

According to Steve Case, I represent less than 1 percent of all pastors in North America. Elsewhere, I have read that this figure amounts to perhaps 50 or 75 youth pastors. I feel like an endangered species. As Gary Patterson has pointed out, there is a particular generation that now occupies the majority of leadership positions in North America. These people, many of whom worked long and hard to get where they are, can now decide if they want another generation to follow in their footsteps.

I was born in 1960, between the boomers and Generation X. I grew up in an Adventist home, went to Adventist schools. It's all I've known. The last of the large theology classes was graduating when I entered college. My freshman theology class shrank from 30 to 5 by the time I graduated. Only 2 of us were hired that year. I can't exactly say why, but I wanted to be a youth pastor. I've had my share of responsibility—led evangelism campaigns, board meetings and worship services. Preached for weeks on end. Visited,

buried and married. I'm no stranger to the challenges of solo pastoring.

I'm not interested in moving "up" the corporate ladder. I feel that I can go no higher than where I am right now. Despite all the messages to the contrary, I believe there is no higher calling than youth ministry. As far as I'm concerned, it's all downhill from here. To work with adults is to insure that you have a job now. To work with young people is to insure that there will be a future.

But I work with a younger generation that isn't sure that they're wanted by the church. The evidence is not overwhelming. An extra challenge is the fact that worship styles are now the raging debate, with the so-called "celebration" style being cast as the "new" or "liberal" approach. Unlike many of the critics, I have actually attended the famous, to some infamous, church in Colton and conversed with the pastor on numerous occasions. Celebration worship is nothing more than Youth Sabbath School during the main-service time slot. Ironically, the very creativity in worship that appeals to younger generations has been cast into the villain's role. Suddenly contemporary musical instruments, praise music, needs-oriented preaching and energetic worship are the enemies of the church. But as a young person growing up in the church and now as a youth pastor, I realize these are the very things I have always seen and done.

I am not without hope. Youth ministry can only improve. There is a generation of young people in our churches and schools that care deeply about the environment and the decay of this planet. They want to volunteer for service projects and social justice organizations. Those left in our churches from the X and boomer generations care deeply about their church. Even many of those who have gone would return if they could find a congregation that is relevant and caring. They want to worship, to "do" church, in a way that is meaningful. They want to find a community of believers who have not found all the answers, who do not have all the "truth," but are open-minded and seeking. I know all these people exist because I work with them.

I'm not sure how long this corporate structure that many confuse with the "church" will last, but there is a generation out there that is waiting to be a part of a church. And when those currently in leadership decide that they are willing to pay the price of taking young people seriously, there will be a revival. I'm praying for that day. Until then, many will continue to play church instead of doing it. I'm hoping they quit playing soon while there are still some willing participants left. ☺

Delwin Finch is the youth pastor at the Yucaipa, California, Seventh-day Adventist Church.



Change Ahead for Adventist Health Care

An Interview with Adrian Zytkoskee

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JIM WALTERS FOR ADVENTIST TODAY: THE WHOLE NATION IS NOW talking about the coming of managed competition in health care. But I understand that the future is already present in the western U.S.

Adrian Zytkoskee: That's true because managed competition will almost inevitably push people into HMOs. And San Francisco, Los Angeles and Portland, along with Minneapolis, are among the leading areas for HMOs and other forms of managed competition.

What does the new medical economics mean for hospitals?

The most significant factor in this whole discussion is capitated care. That is defined as care that's paid for ahead of time. The care provider is paid a certain amount for each person enrolled regardless of the services he or she receives. It's in the provider's interest to keep people out of the hospital, not to put them in it, to minimize some of the tests done, not to maximize them. It's totally different from receiving fees for services.

This incentive, to give less rather than more treatment, seems to contradict the Adventist ideal of wholistic care.

No, it's not a contradiction. In fact, this is one of the places where the Adventist mission fits very nicely with what's happening. What you say might have some truth if it weren't for universal coverage, because then the health plan could just skim the cream; it could merely enroll the healthy people. But when everyone's got to be covered, the health plan can't pick and choose. Therefore, the providers are motivated to keep people well. Right now, they're more motivated to let people get sick and then perform more costly treatments on them.

Adrian Zytkoskee, vice-president of Adventist Health Systems/West, is responsible for strategic planning and managed care.



So, do you think Adventist hospitals are in a unique position to thrive?

Adventist hospitals will thrive if they have become part of delivery systems and networks involving primary care physicians, out-patient activities, home-care and continuum care. Adventist hospitals will survive, but not as stand-alone hospitals. Hospitals will truly become cost centers, not places where anyone expects to make money. The Kaiser system, for example, doesn't make any money on hospitals, but on the premiums they charge. The more they're able to keep people out of the hospital, the more they're able to make.

But Adventist health systems across the country are affiliated hospital entities, are they not? Doesn't this mean a radical restructuring of our whole approach to health care delivery?

Yes, it means a radical restructuring. Adventists have been very institution-centered. Here at Adventist Health Systems/West, we've been in St. Helena for 120 years, Portland, Glendale and Paradise Valley for 90 years, and Los Angeles for 80 years. We've built up ownership in these institutions and built schools and communities around them. The new environment is not institution-centered, and that is going to be the radical change for Adventists. Our idea of health and wellness will help us in that regard. That's the way in which we can fit into the environment. But the tremendous emotional, financial and other investments we have in our institutions will be a challenge.

We've been able to control these institutions totally for many decades. Will we be able to continue that control while surviving in managed competition?

The question is not whether we will control our institutions because I think we will be able to. But we won't be able to control the delivery systems that we're a part of, because we're not dominant in any single region.

Won't those large delivery systems dictate to a great extent what is or isn't done in their component parts, including the Adventist hospitals?

I really don't think they will dictate on issues of mission. In fact, I think our particular approach will be very welcome.

Yes, we'll be dictated to in regard to efficiency, but we are right now. I honestly don't see the time coming when our institutions will be out of our control. I see the time coming when, if we don't make the right moves, the institutions will close up because we won't be able to operate them financially. The only way we're going to avoid that is to truly move into this new environment. But I see tremendous opportunities for Adventists. Wellness and health promotion will be front and center more than it ever has, and we have a head start on that.

Do you think the emphasis on wholeness and wellness will need to be more strongly emphasized by us, as opposed to merely the fact that we have vegetarian cafeterias and Sabbath slow-downs in our hospitals?

Oh, yes. There's no question about that.

How would you articulate the mission of Adventist hospitals today? A lot of Adventists wonder about our hospitals becoming more secularized. When many church members don't see a vegetarian menu at least in the cafeteria, they're going to say, "Our hospitals have become worldly."

Well, I don't buy into the idea that Adventist hospitals ought to be unique. I think that that word has gotten us into trouble.

What do you mean?

I think you really have to go to Matthew 25 to get our credo, not just for our hospitals, but in general. That's the only place in the New Testament where Jesus specifically talks about the Judgment, and there he describes those who are going to be saved as those who give a cup of cold water, clothe the naked and feed the hungry. And they did these deeds without even knowing they were doing them. I think it was disinterested service.

Consider the logic of "uniqueness." If we concentrate on the things that make us unique, and if somebody else copies us and does the same thing, then presumably we must find something that's even more different. Eventually the word "unique" and the word "irrelevant" become the same thing. That, in my view, is not the mission of Adventist hospitals. We need to take seriously what Jesus said in Matthew 25. We need to help people, and it doesn't make any difference if there are other people out there doing it or not.

So you see us needing to get beyond our concern with Adventist uniqueness and get back to the fundamentals that Jesus articulated in the Gospels?

That's right.

Are you optimistic that you will be able to sell this new concept to the membership of the church?

Yes, I'm very optimistic. I really think that when our Adventist constituency, as a whole, understands what's happening in health care, it will see there's an opportunity for greater mission. ☺

Adventist Medicine Faces National Health Care Reform

A One-Day Conference for the Adventist Public
Sabbath, February 19, 1994
Loma Linda University Church

- What is the mission of Adventist health care today?
- Can that mission survive managed competition?
- Are Sabbath slow-downs and vegetarian cafeterias non-negotiables?
- Should we join that which we can't control?

A partial list of speakers and participants:

Leland Kaiser, health care futurist, Colorado (keynote speaker)
Bill Loveless, senior pastor, University Church
Jim Boyle, CEO, Shawnee Mission Medical Center
Adrian Zytkoskee, managed competition strategist, AHS/West
Robert Willett, CEO, Kettering Medical Center

Sponsored by *Adventist Today*, Loma Linda University, and the University Church

• Watch for more details in the next issue of *Adventist Today* •

Remnant an Apologetic for Historic Adventism

A Remnant in Crisis, by Jack Provonsha (Review and Herald, 1993)

Reviewed by Ervin Taylor

IN *A REMNANT IN CRISIS*, JACK PROVONSHA DESCRIBES a major crisis among Adventists in the first world—the United States, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand—where Adventism began and where it now has second-generation members and beyond and mature educational systems. The crisis involves a significant number of church members, especially younger members, who are well-educated and upwardly mobile. The problem, sometimes described as a “mid-life” identity crisis, proceeds from a growing feeling of apprehension regarding traditional formulations of the church’s message. Many members are increasingly uncomfortable with traditional Adventist views of the denomination as “the remnant church,” “God’s true church,” and “the people of God.”

In Provonsha’s view, the historical roots of the crisis can be found, in part, in the church’s development of an accredited educational system, which was needed to support a fully accredited medical school. Within two generations in the first-world church, higher education has produced an increasingly well-educated class of professionals and academics who represent a sociological and cultural pluralism. The realities of the contemporary world have, for cultural Adventists, slowly eroded their expectations of an imminent second coming and caused them to question the authority of Ellen White and the significance of 1844.

According to Provonsha, the disease is a loss of the sense of uniqueness and thus the loss of a key traditional reason for the existence of the Adventist Church. The treatment he prescribes is to re-examine what Adventists traditionally call the Third Angel’s Message and find the essen-

tial truth beneath the “ant language,” the figures of speech and symbolic expressions with which we have traditionally tried to communicate God’s message at the human level. We need to capture a sense of being a “movement” rather than an institution. In so doing, we must acknowledge the essential truth of Adventist doctrine and give it new, contemporary language.

I believe Provonsha would admit that scholars over the last 25 years have produced documentary evidence which broadly reconstructs what really occurred in the development of Adventist theology and polity, and what role Ellen White played in that process. As one might expect, this documented history differs from the traditional mythologies, but while Provonsha agrees that the founders of the Adventist church were theologically naive, he backs away from these scholarly findings.

Provonsha quotes Ellen White extensively, with a strategy of using her later, better-known statements while ignoring some of her earlier, less mature passages on the same topics. He suggests that she habitually neglected quotation marks when using the words of others because she had an unusual sensitivity to “intuitions or promptings of the Spirit.” I find this an example of Provonsha’s heroic argumentation, a desperate but weak effort to rescue Ellen White’s image where threatened by one of her puzzling habits.

Provonsha notes that our founders believed that events associated with the Great Disappointment of 1844 have great eschatological or prophetic significance. He agrees that the Great Disappointment has cosmic and theological significance along with such events as Sinai, the Incarnation, and the Second Advent, and he asserts that to abandon this position is to diminish an essential rationale for the Adventist church. He states, however, that regarding prophetic interpretation, “it is more important what they [church founders] believed and what they did than what Daniel had in mind. The issue is resolved by history rather than by exegesis.” This argument demonstrates one of Provonsha’s highest priorities—to maintain a supernatural sanction for the Adventist church even if one must then admit to a problematical exegesis of a biblical text.

A Remnant in Crisis is fundamentally an apologetic for historic Adventism. It does seek to moderate some cultic aspects of traditional Adventism, and it addresses a major problem confronting the contemporary church in the first world. As an apologetic, it has the virtues of being literate and, generally speaking, intellectually honest. It needs to be widely read. ☛

Jack W. Provonsha, in active retirement in Washington, is an emeritus professor of the philosophy of religion and Christian ethics at Loma Linda University.

Ervin Taylor is a professor of anthropology at the University of California, Riverside, and a member of the Foundation Board of *Adventist Today*.

Freedom Needed for Revitalization

An Interview with Jack Provonsha

ERVIN TAYLOR: WHAT CONVINCED YOU THAT YOUR LATEST book, *A Remnant in Crisis*, was needed?

Jack Provonsha: My sense of the crisis, my identification with my church. This is my church—in trouble. Something needed to be done, something needed to be said, and I was willing to give it a try. Since I was in some position of theological responsibility in the church, I felt called to do what I could.

No other organized Christian body has been able to renew itself without a major organizational split. Why do you think the Adventist church will be able to renew itself in the manner you describe in your book?

Although the probabilities are very much against renewal, I am optimistic. As soon as you introduce free will

into a church's situation, you have allowed the possibility. The Roman Catholic Church has revitalized itself on several occasions.

We are not stuck with an inexorable process to which everyone has to succumb. I think there is in Adventist theology the possibility of revitalization. Revitalization usually wells up from beneath rather than being something superimposed. There must exist a mechanism by which that which rises up from underneath provides the possibility of change, that provides a potential for revitalization.

In the Catholic church, it was the freedom of Vatican II—freedom of thought, freedom of action, freedom of behavior, even freedom of worship—that provided this kind of welling up.

(Continued on page 20)

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Movement Unclear About Message

Remnant in Crisis, reviewed by Herbert Douglass

IN JACK PROVONSHA'S RETIREMENT FROM TEACHING, he has written his most important book so far, *A Remnant in Crisis*. In this volume, Provonsha functions as a theological physician, diagnosing the fundamental cause of the patient's—the church's—illness: The Adventist church has lost its sense of specialness. The most significant contribution of *Remnant* is Provonsha's tender but probing analysis of this identity crisis. During the past 30 years, the virus of theological pluralism has infected the Adventist body as it has most other denominations. Provonsha speaks to many of his peers who are uneasy with the unique Adventist assignment, a special people with a special message for a special time. Losing this sense of specialness is what "the Adventist identity crisis is really all about."

More precisely, the present crisis, according to Provonsha, is primarily a matter of what the "message" is—because "a prophetic movement derives its mission and reason for being from its message." The Adventist

message is philosophically a "principle of synthesis" and theologically the "great controversy" theme. These two interwoven principles determine the uniqueness of the Adventist message in such areas as the importance of the Sabbath, body/mind, grace/works, concept of time, and the Second Advent.

The basis of the crisis concerning the message is a confusion about the theological stature of Ellen White, as Provonsha explains:

The presence and guidance of...Ellen White has helped mightily to provide the special communications for the Adventist prophetic movement....The prophets' entire reason for being...has to do with what they have to say. Without a message prophets are just like everybody else. No message, no prophet....The crisis facing the Adventist prophetic movement can be met only by a rediscovery of and dedication to what God has commissioned this people to say in the world.

Herbert Douglass graduated from Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California. He is president emeritus of Weimar College.

In other words, no message, no movement. Without objective revelation, only the subjectiveness of reason or feeling as the source of truth remains. ☛

How would you go about protecting the positive social outreach of the church, while trying to deal with the pressing theological problems?

First of all, we need to recognize what the positive elements are. Sometimes these are not as positive as we think. For example, what has happened to much of the Adventist health work? Unfortunately, it has become largely entrepreneurial rather than manifesting its initial intentions—service orientation and missionary outreach. Now we are a big business. We need to accentuate those things that are in fact true to our message and find ways of playing down those that are destructive to our sense of purpose.

You believe crises are confronting the first-world Adventist church. Do you think this perception is widely shared among other well-informed, thoughtful members of the church?

From the responses I have had, I think this is the case. I know some people are not going to be very happy with the

book, and some sparks may fly when the Adventist Theological Society gets hold of it, but apparently it has benefitted a number of people who have talked to me, and this indicates it was worth doing.

Would it be therapeutic for the Adventist church to admit that some of its traditional doctrines are totally flawed and that we need to completely rethink them?

I don't accept the "totally flawed" characterization. Sometimes our perceptions have been limited. But "totally flawed," in the sense of being totally inaccurate, is too strong a statement. Certainly, it would be therapeutic for us to re-examine and try to discover, if we can, the essence of things that were obscure. We need to rethink, but to "totally rethink" is too strong an expression. Most of the time, our inadequacies are partial. True, we have to take a second look. Growth and openness to new light is an essential aspect of Adventism. We might need to recapture our early sense of discovery and try to develop formulas that are more consonant with the world views that are now a part of our contemporary community. 🕊

CAMPUS NEWS

Andrews University Offers Ph.D. in Adventist Studies

Andrews University holds a unique place in the development of Adventism. As Battle Creek College it was the denomination's first institution of higher learning; a century later it pioneered again as the first Adventist institution to offer doctoral degrees in religion and education.

One of the latest developments in its doctoral curricula has been the opening of a Ph.D. program in Adventist studies, the only program of its kind in the world. Housed in the church history department, the program helps students prepare for examinations in general Adventist history, the development of Adventist theology, and the development of Adventist lifestyle. In addition, students prepare for examinations in one major field of church history and in one additional cognate field in religion.

The Adventist studies program provides opportunities to expand the frontiers of knowledge regarding Adventism through the preparation of doctoral dissertations.

Dissertation studies currently sponsored by the program involve topics as "ancient" as the role of the three angels' messages and the sanctuary in the structuring of early sabbatarian theology, and topics as modern as an analysis of

the current controversy in Adventism over celebration worship. Other studies currently underway examine the relationship of W. C. White to the work and writing of Ellen White, analyze the lifestyle and theological contributions of Joseph Bates, and study the development of Adventism in Scandinavia.

The past 20 years have witnessed the development of massive archival holdings on Adventism that make a program in Adventist studies a practical possibility. Before the early 1970's the only major source collection open to students was housed in the White Estate, but during the last two decades valuable and extensive collections have developed in several locations; foremost are the heritage centers of Andrews and Loma Linda Universities, and the General Conference Archive in Silver Spring, Maryland. 🕊

George R. Knight, professor of church history

On September 22, the Crisis Anticipation and Management Committee of the GC considered Albert Long's summary of the 11th Hour document. Cautioning not to "overreact to the situation," it nevertheless decided to alert church leaders of the threat. Shirley Burton, GC communications director, was authorized to alert the FBI regarding the threat, but, as of October 7, the FBI had not acknowledged receipt of her memo.

Against a background of recent terrorist attacks such as the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City, the Crisis Anticipation and Management Committee of the GC alerted the church but advised caution. The committee left each administrative unit of the church free to notify its subsidiary entities as it might see fit.

The Southeastern California Conference, for instance, did notify a number of churches in areas where Davidians were known to reside. Lynn Mallery, conference president, canceled a speaking appointment at the Garden Grove church in Orange County. Some local churches took special precautions such as locking unguarded entrances, and placing elders and deacons on alert.

As with a warning of a bomb secreted aboard an airliner, the church took this dubious threat seriously despite the inconvenience, but everyone relaxed once the threat proved to be a hoax. ☺

The Church Faces Up to Sexual Child Abuse

by Raymond Cottrell

Like the warning crescendo of an air raid siren, the news media disclose petrifying instances of sexual child abuse. Nor is a Christian community a safe place, as the disciplining of literally hundreds of priests for molesting altar boys demonstrates. But surely the Seventh-day Adventist church is a safe haven for *our* precious boys and girls. With shame and sadness we have to answer NO! And, to make matters worse, pastors, teachers and other trusted leaders in our churches are making themselves role models of child abuse.

It happened a few months ago with one of our widely known and most highly respected radio broadcasters in Southern California. It happened to the child of a pastor in Oregon, who eventually found it necessary to go to court in order to protect the child from a relative—with devastating results for all involved.

And most recently the news media across the land have displayed the pictures and horror story of Ronald Ruskjer. Ruskjer, a Master of Divinity graduate from Andrews University and a recent teacher at Loma Linda University, along with his girlfriend, allegedly molested a three-year-old girl whom the girlfriend was babysitting. Both are in jail awaiting trial, under \$2 million bond each. He was in the process of transferring to Andrews University in Michigan, as an associate professor in the School of Business. The public relations officer at Andrews informs

Adventist Today that Ruskjer resigned October 10, saving the university the trouble of firing him.

For too long we have pretended that "it could not happen here." But there is every reason to suspect that this unsurpassed evil is more widespread than any of us really know—in our own Adventist families and in our family of faith. All too often in the past we have protected the perpetrators and forced the innocent victims to pay the price of lifelong emotional wounds that never heal. Is it not time to remedy this gross injustice? We are not proposing a vindictive attitude toward the perpetrators. Far from it. They need the tender, loving ministry of the church, too, but let it be tough love.

Fortunately some are already leading out in the endeavor to do just that. The entire September 2, 1993, issue of the *Adventist Review* is commendably devoted to the problem and is must reading for every caring church member. The Oregon Conference has a taskforce actively at work on the problem. At its annual conference in Seattle in mid-October the Association of Adventist Women addressed the issue in a major way and made an extensive set of recommendations to the church.

But we would err to leave other people to do what needs to be done. In order to eradicate this social, moral and spiritual cancer from our families and our church, we need the active involvement of every church member. To encourage this involvement, *Adventist Today* will address the issue in a major way in future issues. We invite every reader to become involved in a personal way in doing and supporting what needs to be done. Concerted effort eradicated such plagues as polio and smallpox; it can eradicate the plague of child molestation, too. ☺

Letters to the Editor

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The Case of the Tithes Versus the Offerings

Regarding the article dealing with the lawsuit between the Arizona Conference and the Adventist Health System/West, I was wondering as a lifetime supporter of SDA activities with my tithes and my offerings, whether perhaps my tithe is suing my offerings or vice versa.

Nic Samojluk
Loma Linda, CA

Response to Mould's Troubles

In your latest issue [Vol. 1, No. 3] you note the personal problems of David Mould. With this I have no question, but I do question the source you use to document Mould's problem. Why use a "septic tank" tabloid for your documentation?....Your very source is now open to investigation, and in all honesty you should verify the allegations since you have quoted him [Vance Ferrell] on another independent ministry....No doubt there are shades of fact that will vary with this report that is circulating. It needs to be completely verified instead of being left in a rumor format.

William H. Grotheer
Ozone, AR

Can Anything Good Come Out of Nazareth?

Your flyer states that you are publishing an "open-minded" paper for SDAs who are "open-minded." Since your publication comes from California, and Loma Linda specifically, I am extremely leery of any doctrine presented there.

Wanda Andrako
Midlothian, VA

Ms. Andrako was sent a complimentary copy of issue #1 and we are awaiting her reply. —eds.

General Appreciation

Please find my check for a sub of A.T. My daughter-in-law's brother was in the Waco cult so we have been watching the results for years. I appreciate how it was handled in your magazine. It is such a tragic situation for the families.

Patricia Johnson
Appleton, WI

Enclosed you will find my response, entitled "Questions," to the articles regarding the Seventh-day Adventist abortion guidelines as published in your first issue of *Adventist Today*. I would appreciate your consideration of my response.

I appreciated receiving a copy of *Adventist Today* and encourage you in your mission to provide a forum for dialogue and thoughtful discussion. Please continue the good work.

Sheila Smith
Benton Harbor, MI

I wish *Adventist Today* were a monthly, not a bimonthly publication. I have truly appreciated the broad perspectives that you have provided, and the issues you have attempted to tackle in your first two issues. I realize the challenges that the Adventist church faces today are monumental. As a layperson in the everyday business world, I appreciate the opportunity for a source that will provide points of view from both sides of the fence.

It was approximately 12 years ago that I chose to step out of the SDA church. Having been a pastor and Bible teacher for 10 years, I was still young and perhaps too naive when I experienced some of the challenges within Adventism in the late 70s and early 80s....Just two short years ago I began to wander back in the back door of the church. Fortunately, I found a very warm, open and Christ-centered congregation in the greater Orlando area to call home. I wish to be open and willing to learn as I grapple with the challenges of what being an Adventist today means.

Danny Howell
Orlando, FL

Some Candor about Candor

Your article about Tom Mostert in the Sept./Oct. issue of *Adventist Today* is included in a cluster of articles about candor in the church.

As far as Mostert is concerned, his problems go far and away beyond candor.

What we have with Mostert are the sins of demagogery, libel and character defamation against a dedicated brother in the church.

Why is this local event important to the world church? It is important for several reasons.

The Pacific Union Conference is the largest conference in North America. It is also the wealthiest [union] conference in the world. The president of the Pacific Union, for this reason, is a commanding presence in church affairs, no matter who he or she is. Mostert was on the nominating committee at the last General Conference Session, where he played a key role in replacing Neal Wilson as GC president.

I believe that Mostert's behavior, which seemed to have the stamp of approval of Al McClure [North American Division president] at the Constituency meeting of the South-eastern California Conference, is no isolated incident, and hence the value of your factual account.

Donald Shasky
Redlands, CA

Letters to the Editor

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A Cathedral Awash in Glorious Sunlight

PERSPECTIVE

by Smuts van Rooyen

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DEBUSSY'S MASTERPIECE, *The Submerged Cathedral*, must surely rank as one of the most creative and powerful statements about the church ever made. By means of music, Debussy sinks a gothic cathedral into the depths of the sea. At first, the church sits triumphantly upon the surface of the water as confidently as Peter walking toward Jesus on the Sea of Galilee. But then the fragile membrane of faith holding it afloat is broken and it begins to go under. At this point, the music is terrifyingly beautiful as vast quantities of ocean flood the basements, the hidden chambers, and the massive sanctuary itself. Like a parachuting jelly fish, the overwhelmed cathedral drifts slowly down between shafts of light, through endless fathoms of heavy space, until it finally settles on the twilight sands of the deep. As surely as the city of Atlantis, the church of God is lost.

But a miracle of grace occurs. Somehow, a new beginning is granted it and it starts to rise. As Debussy's music lifts powerfully and beautifully higher, the chastened church floats upward through the weight of its own grave until at last it breaks the foaming surface. There, with gargoyles gurgling and spires sparkling, it towers above the sea gleaming in glorious sunlight. Its ordeal is over; it is restored.

The questions I wish to address are these: How does the church go under? How does the church stand resplendent in the sun? I believe the

The church loses its way when it ceases to promote the kingdom of God and declares itself to be that kingdom.

answer to both of these questions has to do with the kingdom of God.

The church loses its way when it ceases to promote the kingdom of God and declares *itself* to be the kingdom of God. One cynic has said that Jesus came to establish a kingdom but ended up getting a church instead. I hope he's wrong. The intention of Jesus is clear: he came to set up a kingdom (Mark 1:15). But he did not see this kingdom as an empire, a theme park, or an organization. For him, the kingdom was the rule of God in the lives and hearts of people, a relationship with the Father, a special saving magic that changes people and their world. But when the church says the kingdom is a concrete thing and claims to be that concrete thing, and thus usurps the kingdom, drastic consequences follow. The chief of these is that the maintenance and promotion of itself becomes its great objective. The church sinks into a sea of narcissism.

The church stands resplendent in the sun when it is obsessed with promoting and facilitating the kingdom of God. In practical terms, this means that the church exists to help people have their own relationships with God. And this is done by telling the parables of the kingdom as Jesus told them. These stories show that our fate depends on God's mercy, not our own accomplishments, that when we are lost, God will find us, that God provides everything we need for salvation, that God is unbelievably generous, that our good works are in response to his kindness. The kingdom is proclaimed *par excellence* when we tell of a dying thief who asked Jesus to take him into his kingdom and was not refused. Now the sun shines on the church, and the gargoyles gurgle. ☸

Smuts van Rooyen is the pastor of the Riverside church in Riverside, California.



As We Go To Press

General Conference Watch

—**RETHINKING THE GENERAL CONFERENCE'S ROLE.** As we go to press, the GC's Annual Council is convening in Bangalore, India. One of the most far-reaching discussions will likely focus on the role of the GC in world church operations. GC president Robert Folkenberg is raising the issue of whether the general church leadership should restrict itself to evangelizing unentered areas of the world or should continue to financially support diverse operations worldwide. No decision is expected this fall, but the debate should get well underway.

The implications are far-reaching. A wholesale restructuring could result in the redistribution of denominational finances, allowing wealthy divisions of the church to have their donations focused on world evangelism. Regions of the church that are now subsidized would necessarily become more self-reliant.

—**Why Utrecht for the 1995 General Conference Session?** Although the great majority of the 7.7 million Adventists worldwide are people of color, the General Conference sessions are always held in "white" cities of the world. Although reconsideration is being given to Utrecht, Holland, as the 1995 site, it is not because it is a Caucasian city. When chosen, Utrecht was perceived as a sufficiently neutral location that Eastern Block church representatives could easily attend. World politics have undergone numerous democratic breakthroughs, and now Utrecht has lost its particular draw. Why not, then, an under-developed country's convention city? According to the GC, they don't exist. In 1988, Nairobi's facilities were stretched to accommodate the Annual Council—a meeting dwarfed by GC sessions. Bangalore, in the relatively under-developed India, can hardly accommodate the relatively small Annual Council this year. 🐼

of Investigation. For Adventists across North America, however, the Sabbath came and went without incident.

On October 7, Gary Patterson, assistant to the president of the North American Division, informed *Adventist Today* that the FBI had never been in contact with the church regarding the threat and that there was evidently no substance to the warning. But if not the FBI, then what?

On September 22, Albert Long, secretary of the Georgia-Cumberland Conference, faxed a two-page summary of a lengthy, scarcely legible document to Philip Follet, a GC vice president. That document identified itself as coming from the "Pre-11th Hour Continued Study" in Antioch, Tennessee, a suburb of Nashville, and purported to speak for Davidians in general.

The General Conference, the document explained, had rejected repeated Shepherd's Rod/Davidian warnings, and predicted that the Day of Atonement, September 25, would mark the close of probation for Seventh-day Adventists. On that day there would be a "showdown" in which Davidians would destroy Seventh-day Adventist leaders and pastors as (presumably) foretold in Ezekiel 9, and Davidians would be "sealed" as the 144,000 of Revelation 7. The threat included the destruction of offices and headquarters buildings. The document also predicted Christ's return at the close of the year 2000.

In a letter dated September 20, however, the "General Association of Davidian Seventh-day Adventists" in Waco, Texas, emphatically disowned any responsibility for the document or its prediction:

It has been brought to our attention that a single individual with a ministry, so-called "Pre-11th Hour Continued Study," has been promoting that the slaughter of Ezekiel chapter nine, the cleansing of the church, will commence on the 25th of September, 1993....Be it known that the aforementioned ministry does not represent the GENERAL ASSOCIATION OF DAVIDIAN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS. (Emphasis theirs).

(Continued on page 21)

Terrorist Alert Proves to be a Hoax

THE NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION SENT A FAX TRANSMISSION TO THE unions, conferences, and healthcare system administrators of North America on Friday afternoon, September 24, warning of possible Davidian attacks on Adventist leaders and property the following day, Sabbath, September 25. The fax began with the warning "URGENT! DATED INFORMATION!" When the warning reached pastors and local congregations it was reported to be based on an eight-page document sent to the General Conference by the Federal Bureau

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