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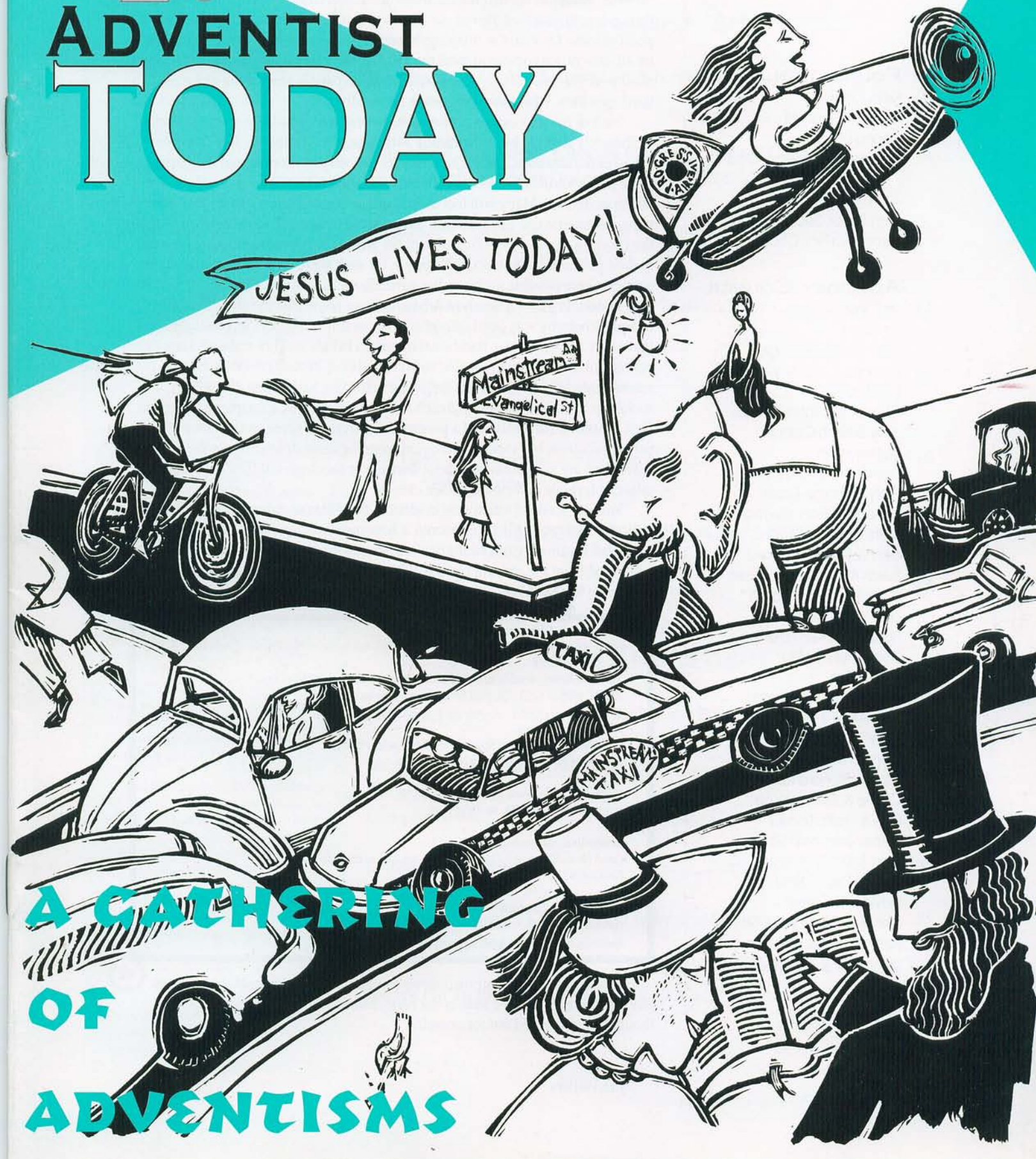

A GATHERING OF ADVENTISMS

THIS ISSUE OF *ADVENTIST TODAY* PRESENTS FOUR DIFFERENT "ADVENTISMS" OR schools of thinking within the North American Division. We should accept as normal the existence of various church-views within our maturing denomination. Whether our diversity is to be lamented depends on one's point of view. Diversity in thinking, however, should not come as a surprise. After all, the church commemorates the 150th anniversary of the Great Disappointment next year, and at this time nearly 8 million people around the globe are baptized members. With time and growth comes diversity.

Each of the four camps (*mainstream, historic, evangelical* and *progressive*) can legitimately claim to be authentically Adventist, for Adventism, like all established denominations, has various aspects that may be emphasized. Perhaps some readers will only feel comfortable with one "Adventism" and will see the others as deviant. Many will feel their loyalties divided among more than one view, because no one camp catches the personal dynamism of Adventism that is the church's genius. Likewise, some of the writers of the four pieces are broader in their personal views than they appear, for each writer was invited to make the strongest case possible for his or her particular school of Adventism.

In deciding how to analyze Adventism, we knew that the old conservative/liberal dichotomy was overly simplistic. For example, surveys increasingly show that many Adventists are traditional in certain beliefs and life styles and not in others, but these members would resist the label of liberal. We categorized Adventists into four camps in this magazine according to doctrine, theology and sociology. The value of this approach can be illustrated by a couple of examples: First, a historic Adventist and a progressive Adventist agree on the value of the Sabbath *doctrine*, but view its *theological* meaning quite differently. Second, many Adventists are not passionate about doctrine or theology, but they are *sociologically* comfortable in the mainstream church.

Varying levels of vitality are evident in the different Adventist camps. One indicator that can easily be measured is how members vote with their dollars. We contacted leading organizations that are essentially Adventist in their approach, and asked them the amount of their 1992 annual budgets and the number of subscribers to their publications.

Mainstream Adventism
North American Division of SDAs, $704,596,141, funds contributed to the denomination at all levels
Adventist Review, weekly to 40,000 subscribers; monthly to 280,000, free
Insight, weekly to 21,000, paid for by congregations

Historic Adventism
Hope International, Ron Spear, refused to disclose budget
Our Firm Foundation, monthly to 15,000, free

Prophecy Countdown, John Osborne, $3,500,000 budget
Ministry letter, monthly to 10,000, free

Evangelical Adventism
Good News Unlimited, Desmond Ford, refused to disclose budget
Good News Unlimited, monthly to 4,500, free

Progressive Adventism
Association of Adventist Forums, $160,000 budget
Spectrum, 5 per year to 4,500 subscribers

Reader, challenge your own views as you pursue the "ideal" Adventisms put forth here. A genuine faith is not easily inherited from forebearers; it is thoughtfully wrestled out for oneself.

Jim Walters

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The Mother of Us All: Mainstream Adventism

by Kenneth H. Wood

WHAT IS "MAINSTREAM ADVENTISM"? WHEN THE EDITOR asked that I write a short piece on this subject, almost immediately I reached for the dictionary. He and I developed this habit during the years when F. D. Nichol was editor of the *Adventist Review* (at that time the *Review and Herald)*, and we were associate editors. If in our frequent discussions in the office any one of the three of us suspected that a word was inappropriate or mispronounced, ceremoniously and without delay we reached for the dictionary and looked up the word. On rare occasions we caught Elder Nichol in a mistake. This was cause for great mirth and satisfaction on our part, and an opportunity for good humor on his. On one such occasion he burst out, "Isn't it terrible that a person can spend his whole life trying to master his mother tongue, and he still makes mistakes!"

As I looked up *mainstream*, I obtained considerable help. Three definitions were given: (1) the middle of the stream, where the current is strongest, (2) the part of something considered to be the most active, productive, lively, busy, etc., (3) a major or prevailing trend or line of thought, action, etc.

On a statistical basis, clearly the "most active, productive, lively, busy" part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the organized body that has its world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. With a global membership of 7,724,633 at the end of June, 1993, this is the body "where the current is strongest;" this is the body with the "prevailing trend or line of thought."

Historically, also, this is the mainstream, for this is the organization that was founded by Joseph Bates and James and Ellen White. Not without significance is the fact that in her will Mrs. White entrusted her writings to a board made up of leaders in this mainstream body. She could have chosen representatives from splinter groups, who claimed to possess a special level of sanctification and who declared that the main body had gone into apostasy. But she did not. She chose a group of leaders who belonged to the body with which she had been identified throughout her ministry. Clearly, she believed that the mainstream Adventist Church would be true to its divine commission as long as time should last.

How does mainstream Adventism perceive itself? It sees itself as raised up supernaturally to give to a rebellious world God's final loving appeal to repent. Against the background of the cosmic controversy between Christ and Satan, it sees itself as the remnant church, which keeps "the commandments of God," and has "the testimony of Jesus Christ"—defined by the Revelator as "the spirit of prophecy." Its mission is to take the three angels' messages to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." The basis for this self-perception and mission is found in Revelation 14:6-12; 12:17; 19:10.

Mainstream Adventism holds that the "Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His [God's] will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 9). The church seeks to understand the teachings of Scripture by using the historical-linguistic-grammatical method of Bible study and exegesis. Though it has adopted a statement of beliefs, it does not have a creed. It believes that the biblical mine of truth is inexhaustible, and that continued study will yield clearer understandings and added facets. It embraces fully Ellen White's view, written in 1887: "The Bible is yet but dimly understood. A lifelong, prayerful study of its sacred revealings will leave still much unexplained" (*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 82). This attitude of mainstream Adventism is set forth clearly in a portion of the preamble to the 1980 Statement of Beliefs:

> *Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God's Holy Word.*

But while mainstream Adventism is open to new truth and to better understandings of old truths, it holds adamantly that "new light" will neither undermine nor contradict the truths that have made the church what it is. "No line of truth that has made the Seventh-day Adventist people what they are, is to be weakened" (1980 Statement of Beliefs, p. 52). Critics tend to consider mainstream Adventism as overly cautious about accepting new teachings, especially new interpretations of prophecy. But this caution is well justified. Too often in the past what has been heralded as new light has in time proved to be old error. Mainstream Adventism believes deeply that the truths held by the church have "point by point . . . been sought out by prayerful study, and testified to by the miracle-working power of the Lord" (Statement of Beliefs). When God says, "This is

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truth," why discard it? Why not be cautious about replacing it?

Mainstream Adventism identifies strongly with the desire of Christ, expressed in his final prayer, that his followers may be one, even as he and his Father are one (John 17:21). True "mainstreamers" are troubled by polarization within the church, whether it be caused by issues rooted in race, gender or doctrine. To achieve unity, they seek to minimize differences. Except where principle or landmark doctrines are involved, they try to find common ground on which to stand with fellow church members. In their numerous publications they emphasize matters on which they agree, not those on which they disagree. This is strong evidence of true Christianity, evidence that self has been crucified, that pride of opinion has been sacrificed. It reveals that the divine counsel is being followed that has to do with making differences public (See *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, pp. 74-82).

True "mainstreamers" are troubled by polarization within the church, whether it be caused by issues rooted in race, gender, or doctrine. To achieve unity, they seek to minimize differences. Except where principle or landmark doctrines are involved, they try to find common ground.

Mainstream Adventism views the Holy Scriptures as the infallible and authoritative word of God, through which the Holy Spirit reveals God's will and offers salvation to the human race. At the same time, it believes that the Spirit inspires extra-biblical prophets, giving them enlarged concepts of Bible truth to share with the people of their generation. The gift of prophecy is among the spiritual gifts provided by Christ for "the edifying" of his church. (See Eph. 4:1-15.) Thus mainstream Adventism, having thoroughly tested the life and ministry of Ellen G. White, believes wholeheartedly that God called this remarkable young woman to the prophetic office. Her writings are not ordinary Christian literature but carry the authority of their Author. They are a "lesser light," as she herself described them, but they are a light that points to the greater light, the Holy Scriptures, and to Christ, the light of the world.

Critics sometimes accuse mainstream Adventism of failing to follow the "lesser light" faithfully. They declare that perceived departures from divine counsel indicate apostasy. This is inaccurate and unfair. Ellen White wrote in the context of a different time and simpler culture. As a consequence, believers living today in various countries and cultures must seek out the underlying principles of her counsel, and apply these principles as best they can, guided by the Holy Spirit. Not surprisingly, mainstream Adventism feels constant tension between the principles and ideals set forth in the inspired writings and their practical application in today's various cultures. What may seem to critics or the uninformed as disregard or rejection of divine counsel is not; it is the unavoidable consequence of the freedom God has given equally conscientious people to use sanctified reason in understanding and applying inspired counsel.

A practical illustration of this involves the matter of responsible stewardship, particularly in regard to the payment of tithe. Having examined carefully the total corpus of the inspired counsel found in the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White, mainstream Adventism has concluded that God calls for his people in modern times to return their tithes to him through the channel of the organized church. Critics tend to feel that the church holds this view merely to protect income. They see this as arrogance on the part of what they term "the hierarchy." The truth is, however, that mainstream Adventism believes as it does because it follows principles of true scholarship—it establishes its beliefs on the basis of the total teaching of documents (in this instance, the Bible and Ellen G. White's writings), not on a few statements that seem to support a pet theory, and not on one or two instances where special circumstances existed. Thus it believes, logically, that diverting tithe from the divinely-appointed channel can only retard the effort of the church to reach the entire world with the "everlasting gospel." And, because Jesus taught that "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," mainstream Adventism feels a deep concern for people who use their tithe to support splinter movements and offshoots. It fears that these people may gradually espouse teachings that are far from "sound doctrine," and that ultimately they will be led astray by Satan, making shipwreck of their faith.

Mainstream Adventism knows that it is "enfeebled and defective, needing constantly to be warned and counseled," but it believes that "the church is nevertheless the object of Christ's supreme regard" (*Testimonies*, 7, p. 16). It identifies with Ellen G. White's message to the 1913 General Conference session, entitled "Courage in the Lord." That message included statements such as the following:

> *I am encouraged and blessed as I realize that the God of Israel is still guiding His people, and that He will continue to be with them, even to the end. . . . We are to cherish as very sacred the faith that has been substantiated by the instruction and approval of the Spirit of God from our earliest experience until the present time. . . . The work that lies before us is one that will put to the stretch every power of the human being. It will call for the exercise of strong faith and constant vigilance. At times the difficulties that we shall meet will be most disheartening. The very greatness of the task will appall us. And yet, with God's help, His servants will finally triumph.* (Life Sketches, pp. 438, 439) ❧

Evangelical Adventism: Clinging to the Old Rugged Cross

by Michelle Rader, David VanDenburgh, and Larry Christoffel

Evangelical Adventism is authentic Adventism, Adventism as God meant it to be. The evangelical emphasis is most consistent with the original purpose of Seventh-day Adventists as a people called to prepare the world for the second coming of Christ by the proclamation of the biblical gospel. Theologically, evangelical Adventists identify the gospel's meaning and practical implications as their chief concern. Their understanding of the gospel is rooted in their conviction that the Bible is the only basic rule of faith and practice for the Christian.

Scripturally, the "gospel" is the "good news" that God reconciles (justifies, "counts righteous," redeems, forgives, saves) the lost sinner on the basis of the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ when received through faith apart from the works of the law (2 Cor. 5:19; Rmns. 3:21-28; 4:23-25; Eph. 2:8-10; Col. 1:13-14,19,20). The inevitable experiential result of this belief is a personal relationship with God, a dedication to an ever-deepening understanding of God's will and character, and a transformation of the heart that produces genuine love and concern for others as well as a passion for personal holiness.

Evangelical Adventists believe that God raised up the Seventh-day Adventist church to help prepare the world for Christ's return by preaching this gospel clearly with power. While finding much affinity with non-Adventist evangelicals, they remain Seventh-day Adventists, believing that many of this denomination's unique insights, when clearly grounded in the cross, enhance our presentation of the gospel. However, our distinctive Adventist beliefs must never be allowed to eclipse the gospel or become the focus of our evangelism.

Seventh-day Adventism initially found its identity as a movement commissioned to proclaim the three angels' messages of Revelation 14. The pioneers of the movement understood the "everlasting gospel" (verse 6) to be the good news of Christ's soon return, the "commandments of God" (verse 12) as the ten commandments, especially the fourth, and the "faith of Jesus" (verse 12) as New Testament Christianity. When the first state conference, (Michigan), was organized in 1861, delegates covenanted to "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus," taking the name "Seventh-day Adventists" which was believed to express the two most prominent and distinguishing doctrinal features of the movement.

While early Adventists were clearly committed to scripture, they did not understand how to interpret it. They often used a proof-text method of biblical interpretation to defend their distinctive beliefs and consequently missed the overall, uniting purpose of scripture as a revelation of God's salvation as accomplished in Jesus Christ. They understood that God had called them to proclaim the gospel in order to prepare the world for Christ's return, yet they did not understand the meaning of the gospel. Consequently, early Adventism focused mostly on distinctive Adventist beliefs while neglecting some of the more common, core truths of Christianity, including a clear proclamation of the death of Christ as the only basis for salvation, apart from works.

The 1872 statement"Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists" reveals a religious group totally committed to Scripture, and opposed to any creed other than the Bible, though they did not at that time understand the Trinity, the eternal deity of Christ, or the atonement completed at the cross.

During the 1870s and 80s, a number of individuals within Adventism began to develop a clearer understanding of the gospel and the necessity of making it central in Adventist doctrine and evangelism. Woodrow Whidden, in his article, "The Way of Life Engravings: Harbingers of Minneapolis," (*Ministry*, October, 1992) documents a major shift in James and Ellen White's understanding of Seventh-day Adventism. In 1874 James White published the "Way of Life From Paradise Lost to Paradise Restored" lithograph depicting the Law-Tree as its central, most prominent feature, revealing the basic law orientation of the church during its first decades.

James White, just prior to his death in 1881, planned to revise the older law-centered lithograph, making Christ and the cross larger and central, and renaming it "Christ, the Way of Life. From Paradise Lost to Paradise Restored." Though James died before he could complete the project, Ellen White and her sons published the revised picture in 1883, as Mrs. White herself moved towards a new emphasis

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on a more Lutheran, by faith alone, understanding of justification.

Whidden attributes this new perspective in part to the influence of James White, Ellen White's own study of the Reformation in preparation for publication of "The Spirit of Prophecy," volume 4 (1884), and a personal concern that "there was unwitting legalism creeping into the ranks of Seventh-day Adventism." Whidden writes, "For Ellen White the uplifting of the cross and a renewed emphasis on justification by faith were not matters of mere side interest or theological curiosity, but were the very heart of the great Adventist proclamation."

Ellen White, therefore, became the major contributor towards a new emphasis and direction in Seventh-day Adventist theology. Her new insights led her to endorse the emphasis on the death of Christ and the relation of the righteousness of Christ to the law during the controversial 1888 Minneapolis General Conference (Manuscript 15, Nov. 1, 1888). Two years later, she wrote that the message of justification by faith was the third angel's message in verity (*Selected Messages*, volume 1, p. 372). Her writings after 1888 reflect her new commitment to Christ and the cross as central to every other truth, the new direction of her thinking having begun in the early 1880's. See *Steps to Christ* (1892), *Desire of Ages* (1898) and Appendix C in *Questions on Doctrine* (1957). Evangelical Adventists believe that Mrs. White, especially from the year 1883 on, was the most important influence in the direction of an evangelical kind of Adventism.

Evangelical Adventism denies that the Christian is accepted before God on the basis of his or her own good works, including those done through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

While the 1888 General Conference session did not end with any kind of consensus within Adventism regarding righteousness by faith versus righteousness by law, the newly proposed emphasis on righteousness by faith in the cross of Christ, supported by Ellen White was accepted by a number of other prominent leaders. Others, who did not accept the initial presentation on Christ's righteousness, came to endorse and proclaim it in subsequent years. However, the lack of official denominational clarification allowed for both the law-centered approach and the gospel-centered approach to co-exist within Adventism. Examples of the gospel-centered stream include A. G. Daniells' emphasis on righteousness by faith in the 1920's. See *Christ Our Righteousness*, commissioned in 1924 and published in 1941, and the 1952 Bible Conference. (*Our Firm Foundation*, 1 and 2, 1953).

In 1957, with the publication of *Questions on Doctrine*, denominational leaders clarified which theological stream represented official Seventh-day Adventism. Among the theological positions taken in *Questions on Doctrine* are the following: Scripture, not the writings of Ellen G. White, is the basis of Christian faith and practice; Jesus Christ is eternally God and sinless in his human nature; the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ for the salvation of sinners was finished at the cross, though he continues a mediatorial work in heaven; justification is through faith on account of Christ's accomplishments and is not in any way based on our obedience to the law; Jesus Christ and him crucified is to be the center of Seventh-day Adventist belief and practice; and there are genuine, spiritually mature Christians outside of Seventh-day Adventism. Evangelical Adventists consider the positions taken in *Questions on Doctrine* to be an expression of both authentic and evangelical Adventism.

We believe there are four reasons why evangelical Adventism represents authentic Adventism:

1. Evangelical Adventism best fulfills the historic commission and purpose of Adventism. Evangelical Adventists believe God raised up the Seventh-day Adventist church to help fulfill the great commission by proclaiming the gospel and building a community of devoted followers of Christ who would eagerly anticipate his imminent second coming. However, the church has not always understood the full meaning of the gospel though it has always been committed to Scripture where the meaning may be found. At first, Seventh-day Adventists understood the "everlasting gospel" of Revelation 14:6 as the message of Christ's return. In the early 1880's, some Adventists'understanding of the essence of the gospel began to change as they realized that the message of Christ's second coming is terrifying unless the message of his first coming has been clearly proclaimed.

Evangelical Adventists understand the biblical gospel to be an explanation of how God saves lost sinners. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting men's sins against them" (2 Cor. 5:19). This concept is also at the very heart of Jesus' teachings on the kingdom and most clearly explained in Paul's epistles to the Galatians and Romans.

According to Romans 1:16,17, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation and the means by which God's righteousness is revealed. Because "all have sinned and come short of God's glory" (Rom. 3:23), they "are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood" (verses 24,25). This atonement, Christ's death in our place, received by faith, is the essence of the gospel message. See also Romans 4 and 5.

The Biblical doctrine of justification by faith clearly explains the relationship of Christ's substitutionary death, faith and the law. Justification is a legal term indicating that all the claims of the law have been satisfied by Christ's obedience unto death received by faith on the part of the sinner. Though the sinner deserves to die for his or her sins, Jesus Christ, the sinless lamb, has died in the sinner's stead; though the believer has no personal perfect righteousness to claim, God regards that person to be perfectly righteous on account of Christ's obedience unto death. This marvelous exchange is explained in 2 Corinthians 5:21: "For God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Evangelical Adventists believe that those who accept this sacrifice can have assurance that they stand accepted before God today. They deny that the Christian is accepted

before God on the basis of his or her own good works, including those done through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. They also believe that Christ's death was more than a mere display of God's love but was in fact a necessary satisfaction of the penalty of sin.

This understanding of the gospel is necessary in order to fulfill the church's commission of preaching Christ and preparing Christians who are secure in their standing before God, rather than insecure and fearful of his second coming. When other doctrines begin to crowd out the gospel and take center stage in Adventist belief and evangelism, the church is unable to offer either assurance of salvation or power to live the Christian life, and it is unable to fulfill its mission.

2. Evangelical Adventism maintains the balance and relevance of the gospel. Many people today believe that in-depth discussions of the meaning of justification and the biblical gospel amount to theological hair splitting. Others hold that the gospel was present truth for New Testament times but the newer, distinctive understandings of the Seventh-day Adventist church are present truth for today and therefore deserve greater attention. Yet Scripture holds the gospel to be the central issue of Christianity. Paul said "I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). By insisting on maintaining the cross as the central truth of Adventist doctrine and evangelism, evangelical Adventism guards against the temptation to make distinctive Adventist doctrine into the gospel. As precious as truths like the Sabbath and the state of the dead may be, belief in these doctrines does not bring salvation.

Evangelical Adventism guards against the temptation to make distinctive Adventist doctrine into the gospel. Belief in doctrine does not bring salvation.

Evangelical Adventism would elevate the gospel and its expression, justification by faith on account of Jesus, not in an attempt to deny or minimize other aspects of the great plan of salvation (sanctification, glorification, God's vindication before the universe), but in order to give them relevance. It is only those who continue trusting in Christ's finished work on their behalf who experience assurance of salvation (Rom. 5) as well as progressive Christ-like character development accompanied simultaneously with a deepening humility (Rom. 6-8). Furthermore, it is only on the basis of Christ's substitutionary death that Satan's charges against God are answered (Rom. 3:23-26; Rev. 12:10,11).

3. Evangelical Adventism is a continuation of the historically "always reforming" church. Historically, a renewed understanding of justification by faith has accompanied all the great revivals and reformations of the church. Paul's explanation of the gospel as justification through faith on account of Christ clarified for New Testament Christians the important law-gospel relationship so necessary for spiritual renewal. The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century resulted from renewed emphasis on salvation as the free gift of God apart from works, according to Paul's gospel. The Great Awakening of the 18th century led by Whitfield and the Wesleys came from a similar renewed emphasis on gospel and discipleship. John Wesley himself (from whose Methodist movement Adventism descended) traces his spiritual awakening to Aldersgate Chapel where he felt his heart strangely warmed by a reading of Luther's commentary on Romans and, for the first time, found assurance of salvation. The whole thrust of the book *Great Controversy* is that Adventism is heir to this continually reforming and growing tradition. As already noted, the reform-inspiring emphasis on the gospel took root in Adventism over 100 years ago and continues in evangelical Adventism today.

4. Evangelical Adventism bases its understanding of the gospel on Scripture alone. Evangelical Adventists, again in the same tradition as the 16th century reformers, insist upon letting Scripture interpret itself (*sola scriptura*) as the only basic rule of faith and practice for the Christian and the church. They have arrived at their understanding of the gospel and its implications through consistent application of this principle.

While respecting human reason and logic, evangelical Adventists do not make these the final criteria and test of truth. Though they respect Mrs. White as an inspired co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist church, they do not recognize her authority in interpreting Scripture, an authority reserved for Scripture itself, even as Mrs. White insisted (*Selected Messages*, volume 1, p. 416). Neither do evangelical Adventists give their ultimate allegiance to church tradition or fundamental belief statements, which are merely the current thinking of the majority of the members at the time a particular statement is composed. All of these, church creeds, the inspired counsels of Ellen White, human reason and logic, must bow to the authority of Scripture.

Evangelical Adventists insist that, when interpreting Scripture full weight be given to human and divine factors in the process of inspiration/revelation. They also require that the word of God be understood in terms of the meanings of words and phrases of the original language in their original historical, cultural and literary setting. When these interpretive principles are applied, the meaning of the gospel and its implications emerge with overwhelming clarity and power.

Evangelical Adventism is committed to making the gospel of Jesus Christ and the authority of Scripture central in Seventh-day Adventist doctrine and evangelism. It does not see itself as a "new theology" but rather as the continuation of a gospel-centered emphasis that began in Adventism over 100 years ago, and can be traced as a stream flowing throughout Christian history back to the early church. Evangelical Adventists believe that this emphasis does not reject the importance of distinctive Adventist doctrine, but rather gives it a firm foundation and enables the church to truly fulfill the great commission of Jesus to prepare a people ready for his return. ❧

Progressive Adventism: Dragging the Church Forward

by Madelynn Jones-Haldeman

THE WORD PROGRESSIVE EVOKES A FEELING OF SUCCESS and prosperity in our social world. However, in the Adventist domain, progressiveness elicits a sense of foreboding despite the fact that one of our popular slogans states that "the church should be the head, not the tail." Many hold that since we possess all the truth, we need simply to get on with the business of practicing and inculcating what has already been discovered. "To keep up with the times" is not acceptable to many church members simply because the phrase suggests change, change which could adulterate the truth. But the U.S. government has already forced the church to change in several areas. Let me name two: first, the Merikay Silver case forced the church to pay workers without discrimination, and second, the civil rights movement forced certain Adventist schools to accept African American students.

Feeling threatened by the type of social forces that fought age-old racism and sexism, the "traditionalists" feel compelled to guard their interpretation of biblical doctrines. But traditional Adventist positions have long been overhauled and the progressive Adventist is not afraid to say so. The Shut Door theory, espoused by Ellen White, was quietly put on the shelf. The investigation of the sanctuary doctrine has left numerous unanswered questions, and what is left of the doctrine is substantially altered in many Adventists' minds. The interpretation of the 144,000 is another teaching that has come under scrutiny. In the 19th century, when the church barely had that many members, this number was considered literal and referred to those who were to be translated at the second coming of Christ. Yet, in an altered form, that doctrine is still maintained as valid for our 7.7 million members.

In my view, progressive Adventism is characterized by belief in six tenets:

1. Felt need produces doctrine. To be progressive means to put great energy and scholarship into the study of doctrinal and ethical issues that apply to our era, rather than to be content with traditional positions arrived at by earlier theologians with their own cultural and historical biases. It means to realize that theological and ethical considerations deemed pertinent in one era may not be at all relevant in another era. It also means that one recognizes that catastrophes or crises of all kinds—economic, social, and natural—have formed the bedrock for forging "the truth," truth which may have no meaning for the next generation. A major crisis forces a community to find some belief that will empower it to ride out the storm and give meaning to life. In other words, the belief acts as a coping mechanism, facilitating the resurgence of hope. It tries to answer questions such as; Why didn't God rescue the 11 million people from the catastrophe of attempted genocide during World War II? Where was God when the chosen people were taken into Babylonian exile? Where is God while millions of children are suffering physical and sexual abuse at the hands of their parents?

Some beliefs are forged to assuage the guilt a community feels for its behavior toward another group. Racism and sexism get support in this way. Many have misinterpreted the Bible in making a theology to substantiate certain attitudes and actions. In the midst of social upheavals, such as the women's and civil rights' movements, the church might retrench, dig a little deeper into passé traditional beliefs, rejecting new exegetical insights, because the white, male hierarchy is threatened by those in the subordinate position, such as women and African Americans. Thus, the traditional stance of inferior/superior, buttressed by wresting biblical texts out of their context and interpreting them literally, proffers coping for only one group in the church while it removes hope for the others. In other words, the belief oppresses the larger group (the women and the African Americans) and keeps the other, smaller group (the white males) at the top of the vertical power structure. This kind of theology-making occurs in prayerful sessions of those who wish, perhaps even subconsciously, to maintain the status quo. Of course, the other 68 percent of the church population, the women, are not asked to pray with the men and to aid in the forging of an egalitarian doctrine. Thus God-talk is used to buttress oppression and subjugation.

2. Present truth must be recycled. As a church we have always taught that revelation is progressive; however, we appear tentative in applying the principle. For example, in many Sabbath School classes throughout North America, discussion is often quickly stifled by the simple words, "Ellen White said...." Such an answer assumes that Ellen White was the final interpreter of the entire Bible and there is no more to learn, no need to think, no room to question.

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The progressive Adventist cannot accept such a premise but rather insists that there is always something new to learn, that scholarship is not a concerted effort to destroy truth. Surely our constant efforts to challenge members to study would suggest that some students will ask hard questions and demand honest answers. For example, current affairs now challenge our "old" present truth about last-day events and force us to restudy the issues and perhaps reconfigure our conclusions.

A progressive Adventist is one who dares to ask questions about everything and who does not need to have all the answers. Some in every generation find the answers of the older generation not only ineffective but outdated. There are always new questions to ask. And there are always different answers. The progressive Adventist is not afraid of either new questions or new answers, and even entertains doubt at times—that formidable weapon that empowers one to consider all the options.

3. Pluralistic interpretations are all right. A progressive Adventist wants church members to stay in the church. To be "outside" does not mean to be unsaved, but it does mean loss of the gifts and talents of those who leave. To keep members in suggests that the "body" must be willing to accept people and their ideas with equanimity, not hostility. To suggest that the church was and should never be multi-doctrinal suggests that one hasn't read the diverse viewpoints in the early *Review and Herald*s. On doctrines such as justification and the nature of Christ, the pioneers argued, and the present-day church keeps the battle alive. Indeed, some congregations are badly split on these very issues. And listening to preachers from different localities validates the premise that there are multi-interpretations on many beliefs.

A progressive Adventist is one who dares to ask questions about everything and who does not need to have all the answers. Some in every generation find the answers of the older generation not only ineffective but outdated.

Regarding the teaching of perfection, the denomination several years ago published a book containing four distinct views. Which one shall we choose for Adventist belief? A progressive Adventist recognizes that what a person believes depends on various factors, for example, personal and global circumstances, the degree of health and emotional maturity of the individual, and any life-threatening trauma imposed on the person. Our perspectives are related to our environments.

A progressive Adventist believes that no one has the right to dictate the only correct and acceptable belief system. The importance of theological positions is not to identify a church body (although all denominations do this), but to support fellowship, brother/sisterhood, help with living in a mad world, give counsel for the depressed, and express love for the unloved. Theological stances or positions are not to shut out others but to include all. They are to assist us in reaching out in loving, inclusive gestures.

The progressive Adventist recognizes that 19th century Adventism was perceived as exclusive, hypercritical, and elitist, and that many members harbored a persecution complex. To live one's life expecting mortal danger from both friend and foe is not to truly live. To embrace the world in love and acceptance is to live by Christ's standard. It is possible for one who does not believe in the traditional view concerning Revelation 13 to nevertheless sit in the same pew with someone who believes that the pope is represented by that symbolic number in Revelation 13. In fact, there are thousands of Adventists who enjoy this experience every week. We do not have to think alike in order to love one another. We are, first of all, Christians who believe that the acceptance of and the egalitarian treatment of a person is more important that any doctrinal teaching.

4. Trappings don't make the person. A progressive Adventist does not believe that the clothes and/or adornment make the person acceptable to God in worship. God is not a provincial lord who wants everyone to look alike and demands that only certain clothes are appropriate for worship. The matter of relationships among believers is more important than their apparel. One cannot worship God and also shun and resent those who don't dress to code. The image of God is the only manifestation on our earth of God in the present time. The church may insist that this image is marred and well-nigh non-existent. But regardless of how the church may argue, we only see the image, never the substance. Thus the progressive Adventist treats the other person with respect; God whom the church cannot see is honored when we deal gently and respectfully with those made in God's image.

To be a progressive Adventist means that the church building and the organization and its standards are never more important than the people who attend the church. The system operates for the individual church member. The church members do not exist for the church. We are the church, whether we agree doctrinally or not, whether we dress alike or not, or whether we treat each other respectfully or not.

5. The Bible deserves genuine study. A progressive Adventist accepts the belief that one cannot correctly understand Scripture without referring to the historical context, the cultural mores, and the language in which it was written. This, of course, means that one cannot simply read an ancient document as it stands. This progressive approach raises the hair of many traditional Adventists who, despite being taught that the Bible's words themselves are not inerrant, insist that every word is to be taken literally. Such a belief never takes into consideration the genre of the literature, for example, poetry. It also rejects the idea that as literature the Bible has literary devices that must be taken into consideration. The Bible becomes a kind of idol itself; it cannot be touched with human hands. We need only to read it as it is written (in English, of course) and follow what the words say. Accepting such a method results in some rather interesting conclusions.

For example, no one takes literally the words of Jesus in Matt. 5:29, 30, in which one who is lusting after a woman is commanded to remove the right eye or right hand. In a similar passage on divorce and remarriage in Matt. 19: 1-12, however, we take literally the words, "What God has joined together, let no one separate." But then we come to the end of Jesus' comments regarding the issue. In response to the disciples' lament that it's better not to marry, Jesus implied that they should become eunuchs. We skip over this admonition. In other words, we are perfectly happy to throw out Matt. 5:30, make an eternal principle of Matt. 19: 6, and refuse to discuss Matt. 19: 11, 12—all of which discuss divorce and remarriage.

A progressive Adventist believes that no one has the right to dictate the only correct and acceptable belief system.

The belief in progressive revelation makes us aware that our pictures of God keep changing. The notion that there is harmony throughout the Bible, that is, no contradictions, has made us resort to all kinds of strange and nefarious circumlocutions to make God come out looking good or at least worthy of our worship. Regardless of the differences between the Old and the New Testaments' pictures of God, these images are put together in a mosaic that is said to be palatable and understandable, when in reality, the tiles do not fit together. The words of Genesis 6: 6, 7, "I am sorry that I have made them," do not line up with the words in Hosea 11:8, "How can I give you up, O Ephraim?" There is enough internal evidence, as scholars have shown, to suggest that as one reads through the Bible, a loving monotheistic God emerges from a pantheon of warlike gods. The progressive Adventist believes that the picture of God blotting out populations either by the sword of man, or by fires, earthquakes, catastrophic storms, and volcanic eruptions, demonstrates that man has indeed made god in his own image. It is appropriate to think, ask questions, weigh material and not be intimidated by the words; it's inspired. No leap of faith is wide enough to bridge the chasm of these contradictory pictures of God.

6. New questions are not addressed by the Bible. Those who claim to be progressive in their thinking realize that in the 20th century there are many issues that are not even hinted at in the Scriptures, even when undergirding biblical principles do apply. Ethical considerations in medicine, such as a mother bearing a child for her daughter who was born without a uterus, have very little biblical data that applies in resolving the discussion. The fact that the Scriptures do not contain information on all 20th century problems does not mean that the issues should be discarded as evil or unethical. Medical inventions that prolong life are to be blessed, not cursed. Organ transplants, not dreamed of in biblical times, have given new life to thousands of people. As a church we believe that death should be turned aside wherever and whenever it can be.

Progressive Adventism takes the Bible seriously, yet it recognizes that the revelation is progressive. Science is not derived from the Bible, but it does illuminate our perspectives, both spiritual and physical. The progressive Adventist has a healthy respect for science and research.

Why do progressive Adventists stay in the church? Why shouldn't they? Are all the answers in? A hundred years ago we thought they were. Perhaps the 10 million former members, now outside the church, thought of new ideas, but no one would listen. Perhaps many of the 10 million were progressive but no place was made for them. We must not disenfranchise those who think differently. Adventism must have those people who needle, ask embarrassing questions, poke a little fun at the "surety of the truth," and remind us that justice, more often than doctrinal issues, was the subject of the Old Testament prophets. As a church, we shall never be able to exclude our progressive members, simply because we insist that members study and ask questions. Let us not demean them by pronouncing clichés as truth to put a stop to their ruminations; rather let us all seek humbly to respect each other and the differing opinions that arise naturally from having various cultures represented and a constituency made up of both women and men from all socio-economic brackets. ❧

Historic Adventism: Remembering to Trust and Obey

by Ralph Larson

HISTORIC ADVENTISM, AS ITS NAME IMPLIES, IS WHERE Adventism began. It is the benchmark from which other Adventisms measure off their respective degrees of difference. It is more economical of time and effort for other Adventisms to simply state degrees or points of difference between themselves and historic Adventism than to painstakingly set forth an entire belief system of their own, which would require much unnecessary duplication. It is simpler and easier just to say, "We differ from historic Adventism in that..." and offer a few points of explanation.

Historic Adventism, on the other hand, does not define itself by comparison with other belief systems, but rather in objective terms. It is hardly necessary to set forth an objective statement of our historic beliefs, since such statements can be found in many places such as the statements of 1872, 1931, 1980, 1990, and the amplified *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*.

These are by no means the only sources. There are also Bible correspondence courses, Bible class syllabi, magazine articles, and evangelistic sermons without number. Minor differences will, of course, appear, but the general agreement is remarkable, given the number of authors and the variety of times and circumstances in which these theological statements were written.

Historic Adventists, therefore, sees themselves as standing in the direct line of a belief system constructed under divine guidance in the days of our pioneers. This belief system has successfully resisted all assaults from within the church and without. It presently provides a solid foundation for faith that will endure until the end of time, present controversies notwithstanding.

Historic Adventists hail Jude's description of Christian beliefs as "the faith once *delivered* unto the saints" (verse 3). Upon reflection, historic Adventists conclude that all points of Christian faith were "delivered," and none were the product of human minds.

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. 2 Peter 1:21 (KJV)

Thus, no Bible writer just sat down and thought things out. All the points of the Christian faith were "delivered" by revelation. This was as true in the days of our pioneers as in Bible times. Contrary to current mythology, our pioneers did not simply sit down and study out the points of our faith. They were, rather, the recipients of a faith "delivered" by revelation in an experience not significantly different from the experience of the believers referred to by Jude.

Let the reader who is startled by this statement consider the data:

> *Many of our people do not realize how firmly the foundation of our faith has been laid. My husband, Elder Joseph Bates, Father Pierce, Elder (Hiram) Edson, and others who were keen, noble, and true, were among those who, after the passing of the time in 1844, searched for the truth as for hidden treasure. I met with them, and we studied and prayed earnestly. Often we remained together until late at night, and sometimes through the entire night, praying for light and studying the Word.* ***Again and again these brethren came together to study the Bible, in order that they might know its meaning, and be prepared to teach it with power. When they came to the point in their study where they said, "We can do nothing more," the Spirit of the Lord would come upon me, I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be given me, with instruction as to how we were to labor and teach effectively. Thus light was given that helped us to understand the scriptures in regard to Christ, His mission, and His priesthood. A line of truth extending from that time to the time when we shall enter the city of God, was made plain to me, and I gave to others the instruction that the Lord had given me.*** *During this whole time I could not understand the reasoning of the brethren. My mind was locked, as it were, and I could not comprehend the meaning of the scriptures we were studying. This was one of the greatest sorrows of my life. I was in this condition of mind until all the principal points of our faith were made clear to our minds, in harmony with the Word of God. The brethren knew that when not in vision, I could not understand these matters, and they accepted as light direct from heaven the revelations given.* Ellen White, Selected Messages, 1, pp. 206-207.

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As a contribution to the "current mythology" referred to earlier, Edwin Froom in *Movement of Destiny* quotes the above passage but omits the bold-face lines. He then forcefully argues that the pioneers did, in fact, study out the points of our faith with no contribution from Ellen White other than approval and confirmation of their finished work. Such mythological endeavors do not impress historic Adventists. Instead, they note the similar expressions throughout this chapter in *Selected Messages*, Volume I, 201-208: (emphasis supplied)

The principles of truth God ***has revealed*** *to us....* p. 201

...foundation ***built by the Master Worker....*** p. 204

...a truth that ***admits of no compromise.*** p. 205

...principles...brought out ***in the power of the Holy Spirit.*** p. 206

...the foundation that was laid at the beginning of our work by prayerful study of the Word ***and by revelation.*** p. 207

...fundamental principles that are ***based upon unquestionable authority.*** p. 208

In *Manuscript Releases*, I, 52-59, the historic Adventist finds six applications of the word "given" to the delivering of truth to our pioneers, along with this forceful statement:

The truths given us after the passing of time in 1844 are just as certain and unchangeable as when the Lord gave them to us in answer to our urgent prayers. The visions that the Lord has given me are so remarkable that we know that what we have accepted is the truth. This was demonstrated by the Holy Spirit. Light, precious light from God, established the main points of our faith as we hold them today. (Quoted in *Manuscript Releases* I from *Letter* 50, 1906, pp. 1, 2)

Much more could be added, but perhaps this is enough to establish two points: (1) the historic Adventist believes that ours is a faith *delivered* from the Lord, and (2) this *faith delivered* is, therefore, eternal and unchangeable.

The historic Adventist rejects without hesitation the claim that our doctrines have their origin in the Spirit of Prophecy, the writings of Ellen G. White. To borrow an illustration from Fritz Guy, there was a time in our lives when we knew there were stars in the sky, but we did not know there were constellations called Orion, the Pleiades, the Ursas Major and Minor, etc. Someone showed them to us, and henceforth we knew. That person did not put the constellations there. They had been there all the while, but we had not recognized them.

Likewise, the principles of our faith had been in the Bible all the while, but they had not been recognized. The Lord had to let his messenger point them out to us. She did not originate them, but she did point them out. In this sense our faith was "delivered."

So, historic Adventists start with a powerful presupposition that the essential points of faith are eternal truths that need no correcting. This presupposition is mightily reinforced by analyses of the "evidences" that are being presently advanced to support proposals for changes in our doctrines. This evidence does not bear up well under investigation, but only adds to the ever-increasing mountain of mythology.

This would be depressing, even discouraging, except for the fact that present-day experiences within Seventh-day Adventism were all foretold by the same messenger of the Lord through whom the light concerning God's truth had been given. She has described our present condition with precise accuracy:

The historic Adventist rejects without hesitation the claim that our doctrines have their origin in the writings of Ellen White.

Before the last developments of the work of apostasy, there will be a confusion of faith. . . .One truth after another will be corrupted. Signs of the Times, May 28, 1894.

In the very midst of us will arise false teachers, giving heed to seducing spirits whose doctrines are of Satanic origin. These teachers will draw away disciples after themselves. Review and Herald, January 7, 1904.

God will arouse His people; if other means fail, heresies will come in among them, which will sift them, separating the chaff from the wheat. Testimonies 5, p. 707.

Many will stand in our pulpits with the torch of false prophecy in their hands, kindled from the hellish torch of Satan. Testimonies to Ministers, p. 409.

After the truth has been proclaimed as a witness to all nations. . . there will be a removing of the landmarks and an attempt to tear down the pillars of our faith. SDA BC 8, p. 985.

Grim though these predictions may be, they still bring a thrill of conviction that God's messenger has told us the truth. The events that she describes are unfolding before our eyes. An outstanding example of this prophetic foresight is found in such passages as these:

As trials thicken around us, both separation and unity will be seen in our ranks. . . . Testimonies, 6, p. 400.

Divisions will come in the church. Two parties will be developed. Selected Messages, 2, p. 114.

What reader of this article would challenge these statements? One can walk into virtually any church in North America and find the two parties, struggling to work together as best they can. If you will observe carefully, you will see that in the practical sense, there are only two parties: the historic Adventists on one side and all of the other groups uniting on the other side. Many, if not most of them, have a common attitude which tends to unite them—a

shared dislike for the principles of our historic faith and a corresponding dislike for Ellen White's writings which exalt those principles.

We must concede, however, that presently the majority of Seventh-day Adventist church members have not yet clearly aligned themselves with either party, perhaps because they lack the courage of their convictions, or because they have not yet fully comprehended the significance of what is happening.

In spite of the clear predictions that there would be apostasy among church leaders, many church members have great difficulty facing this reality. It is agonizing for them to be confronted with a choice between loyalty to our historic message and loyalty to a church leader. They hesitate long before making a decision, but decide they must. And they are. An ever-increasing number are studying their Bibles and Ellen White and are turning to independent ministries where they may hope to hear the historic Adventist faith proclaimed and defended, and where they can escape the harassment that often afflicts them in their home churches.

Presently the majority of SDA church members have not yet aligned themselves with either party, perhaps because they lack the courage of their convictions.

Perhaps most puzzling to historic Adventists is the attitude of church leaders who answer their questions about changes in our church's doctrines with stern affirmations of church authority. Church leaders frequently act as if they have the right to change doctrines at will and require church members to accept the changes. Members are charged with violation of church order if they protest. This appears to the historic Adventist to be a close approximation to papal procedures.

Appeal after appeal has been sent to church leaders from historic Adventists calling for recognition of the church's theological problems and urging that opportunity be provided for discussions of the unauthorized doctrinal changes being effected mainly through our educational institutions. These major changes include:

1. The doctrine that we receive weakness from Adam, not guilt, now being replaced by the Calvinistic doctrine of original sin defined as inherited guilt.

2. The doctrine that our Lord came to this earth in the human nature of fallen man, now being replaced by the Calvinistic doctrine that Christ came to earth in the human nature of the unfallen Adam.

3. The doctrine of righteousness by faith, now being replaced by the Calvinistic doctrine of unrighteousness by presumption, salvation in sin.

4. The doctrine of the sanctuary, now being either denied or replaced by vague uncertainties.

5. Belief in the Spirit of Prophecy, now being denied because it supports all of the Adventist doctrines listed above and firmly rejects the Calvinistic doctrines.

Persons in high church office are conceding the reality of change. As the president of the Pacific Union wrote to me on May 1, 1990:

> *I despair with you over the fact that so many of our church members are finding it necessary to turn to independent ministries in order to hear basic Adventist teaching.*

Nevertheless, all of our appeals for discussion or examination of the doctrinal problems have either been ignored or sternly rejected. The charge is steadfastly maintained that the only real problem is rebellion against church authority by historic Adventists.

But this is not the only real problem. Historic Adventists are not obscurantists. They have closely examined the arguments set forth to justify changes in our church's theology, and they have found these arguments to be individually and collectively lacking in intellectual respectability. They are often portrayed with the free use of such improper methodologies as quoting non-existent sources, quoting in total violation of context, internal self-contradiction, employment of the straw-man technique in which historical Adventist views are misstated and then the misstatement attacked, false accusations, and an almost universal employment of *ad hominem* (against the person) arguments.

Historic Adventists compare these invalid methodologies with the solid scriptural and Ellen White's writings support upon which their own faith is based, and see no reason to make a change. When historic Adventists look at the confusion in many of our churches and institutions, they are faced with another conundrum. "You historic Adventists," they are told, "are the cause of all this! You are the divisive, controversial trouble makers who are destroying the church's peace and prosperity! You are the cancer on the body of the church which must be cut out!" (See *Issues*, published by officers of the North American Division, 1993.)

Thus, historic Adventists are being driven toward a sad conclusion. Reformation, it seems, can no longer be considered a viable possibility. The only thing remaining, apparently, is the fulfillment of Ellen White's predictions regarding the final purging of the church:

> *As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position, and join the ranks of the opposition. By uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit, they have come to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the test is brought, they are prepared to choose the easy popular side.* The Great Controversy, p. 608.

Yet, there is light at the end of the tunnel. Beyond the purging, historic Adventists sees the latter rain, the loud cry, and the final glorious victory of the church and of truth over error. ❧

Dialogue or Ballots?

by Bj. Christensen

FOUR ARTICLES, EACH CLAIMING TO TRULY REFLECT THE heart of Adventism. How do we react? Our natural tendency is usually to side with one of these positions. Let's have a thorough discussion of the views, but utimately we want to take a vote and clear up the dilemma. Thus we will determine who is right!

I submit that this kind of reaction is detrimental to the health of the church. Democracy is not helpful in determining identity. It leads to "losers" and further exacerbates the polarities already present. It causes segments of the church to entrench, searching for a better argument that further disproves other views. It plays havoc with unity.

If we truly believe in the notion of progressive revelation (as claimed by the preamble of the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs), we will allow tensions in our belief system as we continue to grow in an understanding of God. If we are on a spiritual journey together, we will create room for diversity of thought and opinion, perhaps even interpretation. Tension is not bad. It can be productive. Growth thrives best in tension.

If we truly believe in the notion of progressive revelation, we will allow tensions in our belief system...

It is time for us to minimize the differences elucidated by these four views. It is high time to focus on what we can learn from each other, carefully listening, prayerfully considering views that differ from our current positions. The synergism of such dialogue allows for diversity and addresses changes of position slowly and thoughtfully. It also avoids the static views which have become the battle cry of some.

The church needs historic Adventism because it provides perspective and balance, keeping our bearings in the swirling sea of change around us. The church needs evangelical Adventism. It keeps alive the thrust of the 1880's discussions. It serves as a reminder of 2 Corinthians 3:6: "He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (NIV) The church needs mainstream Adventism. It reminds us of how the church has remained centrist in the midst of previous tensions created by a diversity of viewpoints. And the church needs progressive Adventism. It disrupts our complacency with realities of a world that is to receive the gospel through us. To exclude any of these views is to be less than whole in the constant quest for growth in our understanding of God and the representation of his character to a dying world.

Plurality in the kingdom of God is nothing new to this time and this generation. The very point of the first letter to the Corinthians was an appeal to unify around central themes of belief in the midst of diversity of thought and practice. Here are the great passages regarding spiritual gifts. The unity of the church is compared to a body of many parts, and the emphasis is on the great remaining three—faith, hope, and love.

While we tend to see the early Adventist church as having one uniform view point, on clearer examination one sees a different picture. There were real differences in theological views, some vehemently argued through church publications. Through the Holy Spirit's guidance, the church grew in its understanding of God. Views such as the Shut Door doctrine and the doctrine of the Trinity changed, not by vote, but by a coalescing of opinions through Bible study, prayer, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It was progressive revelation at its best.

Religious pluralism produces two extremes. One is a relativistic mindset which celebrates choice. Choice is good in itself, no matter what is chosen. But the risk is that tolerance, which is good, becomes indifference to truth and morality, which is a deadly error. The other extreme is the conservative backlash. Clark H. Pinnock is right: "Instead of opening them up to more generous attitudes, pluralism actually has produced a hardening of attitude among traditionalists. It has produced a refusal to rethink almost anything and a resistance to fresh ideas that might help resolve the problem."

There needs to be a greater appreciation of how wide God's mercy is. Walls of separation need to crumble. Self-protective nervousness in the presence of competitors needs to diminish. We need a greater willingness to acknowledge the positive aspects of various views, says Pinnock.

If we are serious about our mission of communicating the gospel to today's world, we will have to talk more together. We must learn to cooperate better. Trusting one another, whatever our inclinations may be, is crucial. To this end, *Adventist Today*, by publishing these four views of Adventism, has served a useful purpose in furthering and fostering the dialogue. Put away the ballots!

Bj. Christensen, president of Southern California Conference, received an M. Div. from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

The Faces of Adventism Across America

by James Walters

DIVERSITY IS NOW FASHIONABLE IN ADVENTIST LEADERship circles. Several large North American conferences have at least one minority officer, and now we have two African-American union conference presidents. In my own religion department at Loma Linda University, it's a forgone conclusion that one of the next two faculty members hired must be a minority person. This ethnic diversity in leadership roles is essential, because whatever an administrator or professor does arises from that person's whole being, and the church owes an ethnically diverse membership the respect of ethnically representative leaders.

Appreciation of diversity, however, needs to go beyond skin-depth. We must also value the diverse ideas that come with the multicolored faces in our executive suites. The significant advance in having a black VP in a conference is not to break up the blandness in officer group photographs. Rather, it is to bring a different perspective that can only come from, for example, an African-American whose cultural roots are in 19th century cotton fields and early- to mid-20th century open discrimination. Adventism must now acknowledge a *diversity of ideas*—not just different ideas from various races of people, but also different ideas from distinct ideological camps.

Part of the genius of the Adventist church is that its founder and prophetess promoted a rich diversity. Ellen White wrote that our school system should educate youth to be original thinkers—not mere reflectors of others' ideas. Our emphasis on a holistic or liberal education has now begun to yield creative, diverse thinkers. Additional reasons for our church's diversity are world evangelism and societal change. The church now has close to 8 million converts in nearly 200 highly diverse countries around the globe. In the developed world, the church has seen rapid social change, from the horse-drawn buggy to the Concorde, pre-Enlightenment ideas to post-modern thought, and more.

The challenge for denominational leaders is not to get everyone back onto the homestead. Mature church leadership will recognize, appreciate, and perhaps even celebrate the helpful diversity that exists within this denomination.

In fact, Adventism holds seeds of diversity at its core. The pioneers laid claim to absolute truth, with Ellen White confidently stating in 1850, "We have the truth. We know it." Yet in their next breath early leaders proclaimed that truth has always been and ever will be progressive, lending an openness to conceptual development that is truly remarkable.

The different personal temperaments and histories of the members themselves result in various ideological blocks within the Adventist Church. Our preachers and teachers have long proclaimed unchanging, eternal truth, so understandably, a significant group of believers rallies around *Historic Adventism*. Equally plausible is *Progressive Adventism*'s dedication to exploring and embracing a more dynamic understanding of truth. And knowing that legalism was deep and widespread in early denominational life (see Froom, *Movement of Destiny*), we don't wonder that *Evangelical Adventism* emerged to emphasize the centrality of salvation by faith alone. Finally, *Mainstream Adventists*, the majority of the membership, are necessarily more eclectic and pragmatic than the other camps. The baptized membership forms the institutionalized church, run by a bureaucracy—and subject to the same criticisms as any long-established order. Yet ideas can only be perpetuated by being institutionalized in some fashion.

Certain elements of these "Adventisms" are judgemental and *ad hominem* in their endeavors—and this is unfortunate and indefensible. However, the great majority of Adventists in the non-mainstream camps are among the most active participants in mainstream congregations.

The challenge for denominational leaders is not to get everyone back onto the homestead in upstate New York. Mature church leadership will recognize, appreciate and perhaps even celebrate much of the helpful diversity that exists in this denomination. Given our variety of doctrinal insights it would be unusual, indeed lamentable, if we sang our common hymns in unison. ❧

Incest and Conservative Family Values

by Ruth Williams-Morris

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IS A TRAGIC REALITY IN SOCIETY and sadly, in our church. It is estimated that one in six children are sexually abused by the time they reach age 18—some 40 million American children (MacFarlane and Waterman, *Sexual Abuse of Young Children*). Child sexual abuse is the fastest growing form of reported child abuse, affecting between 31% and 54% of girls and adolescents and some 2.5% to 5% of boys (Roane, "Male victims of sexual abuse," *Child Welfare*).

Girls are more likely to be abused by fathers, stepfathers or father images such as grandfathers; boys tend to be abused by non-relatives through individuals that are known to them. The effects of child sexual abuse can last for a lifetime, affecting every aspect of the individual—physical, mental, social and spiritual.

Of all cases of child sexual abuse, 75-80% occur in the family system (Glaser, and Frosh, *Child Sexual Abuse*). Although brother-sister incest is said to be the most common form of incest, father-daughter incest is by far the most researched and documented form. Further, growing evidence suggests that the most serious long-term effects of sexual abuse result from the child being victimized by a parent or parent figure (Young, *Child Abuse and Neglect*).

Beyond descriptions and statistics of this societal problem come earnest pleas from professionals and lay persons alike for a comprehensive, multifaceted theory of child abuse that will explain why and how this shattering of innocence and betrayal of trust occurs. Any complete explanation must describe the family dynamics in which incest takes place. Of concern to Seventh-day Adventists is the widely-held view in both lay and professional circles that child sexual abuse is quite prevalent in fundamentalist Christian homes (Glaser and Frosh). However, a careful and systematic bibliographic search of the medical and social science literature found little empirical support for this notion. It would appear that evidence for this conclusion comes from clinical studies and anecdotal reports. At the same time, there is evidence of an association between incest and conservative values, values that many fundamentalist Christians are likely to endorse. The issue is not whether fundamentalist values ***cause*** incest, but rather, what is there about conservative, fundamentalist values that are likely to produce conditions fertile to incest? The following are some aspects of conservative values that may lend themselves to family dysfunction of which incest is a part.

Male dominance. Among many conservative Christians, husbands/fathers are the patriarchs of the family. The man's word is law, the household is dominated by the use of force if necessary, and there is strict control over all the activities of the family. The man is expected to be always in control and solve all family problems without any outside "interference."

Female dependence. In conservative family systems, sex roles are very traditional; women "know their place" and the superiority of the man is unquestioned. The woman/mother has no rights of her own except as handed down by her husband. He ***is*** the ultimate authority, the king of the castle, "the ruler of all he surveys, whose right there is none to dispute."

Children as property. Children are solely the property of parents and exist to serve parents' needs. Children are treated as miniature adults and there is often ignorance on the part of parents regarding child development. This leads to a disregard of a child's nature, development and needs. Independence is not encouraged in children and their wills are forced or broken into subjection.

Importance of secrecy. The family projects an idealized image to the "outside world," and its viability is dependent upon the secrecy that must be maintained at all times by all family members. Secrecy is considered analogous to loyalty to the family and must be maintained at all costs.

Styles of parenting. It is generally accepted that child-rearing practices reflect three basic styles of parenting—authoritative, laissez-faire/permissive and authoritarian (Baumrind, *Developmental Psychology Monographs*). The authoritarian style of parenting is associated with a conservative value system. Parents who are authoritarian are very demanding. They tend to enforce their demands with threats and punishment, and exercise strict control over the behavior of their children. These parents tend to be emotionally inhibited and have difficulty expressing affection and emotion to their children. Children in such homes receive little praise, but much censure, and their parents' laws are never subject to bargaining. These children have no say in what happens in their lives.

Ruth Williams-Morris, associate professor of psychology at Southern College, received her doctorate in educational psychology from the University of Minnesota.

Characteristics of Abusive Families

Families in which abuse occurs seem to have some distinguishing qualities. The parents do not enjoy parenting, do not express affection to their children and make high achievement demands on their children, yet do not encourage the children's initiative. These families do not have healthy mechanisms for coping with the stresses of life, and they develop maladaptive, pathological ways of interacting with each other.

One family systems theory has postulated that when stresses threaten to produce a family breakup, several factors come into play, including the general insecurity that exists among both the husband and wife, and the viewpoint of secrecy and image protecting. These families invariably seem unable to recognize or even admit the existence of a problem. Such families turn inward on themselves, setting the stage for incest and other dysfunction. One expert reports that fathers in such families are "emotionally immature and threatening;" mothers are "emotionally rigid and overmoralistic" (Glaser and Frosh). The practical needs of the children are attended to, but emotional needs are neglected. The results are a blurring of boundaries, a confusion of roles with the child as victim, functioning as both child and partner to the father. Indeed, it is realized by researchers that the scene is set for incest when the parents are unable to deal with the specific confusion between their sexual and emotional problems, and it is taboo to acknowledge the tension and conflict in the family (Furniss, "Conflict-avoiding and conflict-regulating patterns in incest and child sexual abuse," *Acta Paedopsychiat*).

In this environment, in which women and children are not valued, obedience is secured by fear, little love is demonstrated, and the need is overwhelming to appear "perfect to the world" at all costs. It is easy to see how this environment can be conducive to all kinds of abuses—spousal, child and specifically, sexual.

Solutions?

Incest is a crime. Perpetrators must face up to the consequences and legal ramifications of their behavior. Children need to be protected from those who who prey on their innocence. When child sexual abuse occurs, every member of the family is affected. In the church, the body of Christ, every church member should be affected when incest strikes a family in the congregation.

How can the church respond to this crisis? What can be done to address a problem so devastatingly private yet so tragically public in its consequences? We must heed the spirit of Matthew 18: 10: "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones ... for ... their angels always see the face of my Father." It is imperative that we not only describe the enormity of the problem, but also attempt some solutions.

Treatment and Prevention

The approach of society has been treatment and prevention. Treatment involves working with parents and children after the abuse and the danger of abuse has taken place. Pastors and laity should be aware of the procedures involved once a victim discloses abuse, and their legal responsibility to report that abuse to the appropriate authorities. Churches should be aware of opportunities for individual and family counseling that exist in the community. Self-help groups such as Parents Anonymous and groups for children should be started in churches or districts to help hurting families.

Prevention attempts to protect families in the church from factors consistent with sexual abuse. The whole church should specifically address issues of human sexuality, respect and value of women and children, marriage enrichment, parenting skills, and sex education programs for the children and youth of the church. These topics should be incorporated into special family life seminars and youth programs. Parent-teacher associations of church schools can educate parents and enhance their personal and psychological coping skills. Families who are at risk for such dysfunction need support and strengthening. Families in which incest has been discovered need forgiveness, healing and support in dealing with the consequences of that abuse. All church members need to know that child sexual abuse is real, is part of the sin problem in this world and does not disappear by merely wishing it away. Finally, the organized church body needs to give study to the impact of child sexual abuse on the spiritual development of child victims and adult survivors. This group represents a portion of each congregation for whom God the Father was personally misrepresented. ❧

Of concern to Seventh-day Adventists is the widely held view in both lay and professional circles that child sexual abuse is quite prevalent in fundamentalist Christian homes. However, a careful and systematic bibliographic search of the medical and social science literature found little empirical support for this notion.

Adventist Women Discuss Partnership in Ministry

More than 200 women from North America met in Seattle, Washington, October 14 -17 for the 11th annual conference of the Association of Adventist Women, headquartered in Langley Park, Maryland. With the theme "Partners in Ministry," the conference offered general sessions plus 22 different seminars on a wide range of topics, including sexual misconduct in the church, helping people involved in divorce, current issues in the church regarding the role of women, and finding the "abundant life."

During the Sabbath School program, women in church leadership explained the activities of nine different women's ministries. Elizabeth Sterndale, head of North American Women's Ministries, outlined plans for a Women's Day of Prayer on the Sabbath, March 5, 1994 and for 1995 to be the Year of the Adventist Woman. She also discussed successful efforts to involve younger women, including high school students, in Adventist women's activities and concerns.

Peggy Harris, of Beltsville, Maryland, reported on WASH—Women and Men Against Sexual Harassment and Other Abuses. In two seminars on this topic, Harris asserted that as many as 30 percent of Adventist women have been abused. "If you don't feel we should hang our dirty linen out to wash, then WASH is not for you," she suggested.

Nancy Canwell, from the pastoral staff of the Walla College Church, gave the homily for the Sabbath worship service, emphasizing a return to the basics of the Christian life.

Five "women of the year" were honored. Nancy Marter, Silver Spring, Maryland, received the Church Life Award. Marter has served on committees and held offices at all levels of church organization and has been praised for her recent role in merging a congregation of white people with an African American congregation.

Sheree Parris Nudd, philanthropy professional and vice president of Shady Grove Adventist Hospital in Rockville, Maryland, received the Professional Life Award for her work in raising funds for Adventist hospitals.

Cheryl Stowers, of Port Hadlock, Washington, received the Family Life Award. Although physically disabled, Stowers has been honored by her local community for several areas of service as a professional educator.

Lorna Tobler, of Mountain View, California, was honored with the Outstanding Achievement Award. The presenter praised Tobler's pioneering effort to obtain equal payment for equal work of Adventist women and for carrying on this effort "without bitterness or rancor."

Nyla Juhl, faculty member in family and community nursing at the University of North Dakota, received the Community Life Award. The presenter cited her work in statewide organizations on behalf of persons with developmental disabilities and on behalf of rural Americans.

Current president of the Association of Adventist Women is Elisabeth Wear. Founded in 1982, the organization now lists eight chapters and publishes the magazine *Adventist Woman*. AAW's next North American conference is set for September 1-4, 1994, in Washington, D. C.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION BY THE ASSOCIATION OF ADVENTIST WOMEN

It is recommended that the NAD take a strong position against abuse and endeavor to prevent our church in North America from becoming a haven for abusers, thus attracting many former members who have been harmed by physical, mental or sexual abuse; these goals will be accomplished by:

1. Utilizing a network of trained counselors through the Sexual Ethics Commission so that each union will have a list of resources available for their conference.

2. Holding accountable perpetrators of abuse by strongly insisting that a known abuser be disfellowshipped. When a church employee is charged with sexual misconduct, it is imperative that proper testing be done by competent therapists which will help to establish guilt or innocence. An offender could apply for membership again when recommended corrective procedures have been followed, including acknowledging their wrong doing to the victim(s) and long term counseling for the abuser. An offender must continue to be monitored and must never work or be alone with children.

3. A firm statement by the NAD President that a strong stand will be taken against this abuse to be published in the *Adventist Review* and the union papers.

4. Affirming local conferences (such as Georgia, Idaho, Oregon, and Kentucky/Tennessee) who are leading out in abuse prevention through Family Life Ministries and professionally trained counselors, as well as encouraging other conferences to also provide similar education.

5. Counseling pastors and church leaders to report abuse of a minor to state authorities as required by state law.

NPUC Academics and Administrators in Conversation

The North Pacific Union Conference has over the past several years witnessed ongoing dialogue among union officers, conference presidents and Walla Walla College teachers of religion. Annual autumn sessions, first implemented in the early 80s, have become a tradition which, even if somewhat costly, has gone a long way toward building community, reducing misunderstanding, and alleviating tension.

An outgrowth of Consultation II, when scores of college and university religion teachers and church administrators met in Washington, D.C., in 1982, the northwestern retreat seeks to maintain the spirit of the consultation by creating an atmosphere of trust and opening channels of communication. The retreat extends over a long weekend at an isolated resort with sessions beginning on Thursday evening and concluding on Sunday morning.

Although the format varies somewhat from session to session, several fairly predictable elements have developed. Normally 30-40 people including spouses participate. Rarely does the group structure sessions with formal presentations and responses. More often the large circle into which attendees place their chairs dictates casual, albeit vigorous and pointed, participation. That, combined with small group discussions prompted by guiding questions, contributes significantly to openness and lasting friendships. Devotionals and exercises in spirituality and aesthetics help to balance academic and professional discussions. In addition, group recreation and Saturday night raids of a nearby pizza parlor are essential to the success of the program.

Over the past few years the retreats have focused on a particular issue or theme relevant to administrative and academic ministries or, more often, something of current concern—a "hot" topic. Recent burning issues have included worship theory and practice, creation and Genesis 1 and 2, and faith and learning in a collegiate context. Although occasionally sparked by a controversial event or speech still vivid in someone's memory, the discussion themes typically lead to amicable, yet energetic conversation and debate.

Housekeeping items also occupy a good deal of time and often generate lively exchange as well. Because the retreat occurs early in the year, it provides an important opportunity for the conference presidents to become better acquainted with the graduating theology students by means of "The Book" of resumes. Agenda items have also included issues surrounding ministerial training and placement, rumors of theological diversions in classes, and various means of showing solidarity with women whose talents and aspirations point them toward pastoral ministry.

What do administrators have to say about this annual autumn ritual? "We feel it is extremely important in our cooperative efforts to train pastors that we sit down and talk together regularly," says Bruce Johnston, North Pacific Union president. "This annual retreat is the glue that helps hold our administrator/scholar team together in the Northwest," asserts Don Jacobsen, Oregon Conference president. Steve McPherson, Idaho Conference president, states "In an atmosphere of mutuality and friendship, growth is more likely and possible." The experience is, according to Jere Patzer, Upper Columbia Conference president, "a 'phenomenon' of which, quite frankly, we're proud."

Without exception, Northwest administrators and religion teachers celebrate the vision of the union and the college in opening channels of communication by means of the annual retreat. It has resulted in the death of a number of misguided rumors and the defeat of potentially divisive misunderstandings. It has always been difficult to take an injurious swing at someone from within an embrace.

The Northwest is not utopia; disagreements and problems persist—likely they always will. However, in the words of Glen Greenwalt, systematic theologian at the college: "I am encouraged by the kind of leadership which affirms openness and allows us all the freedom to sing different harmonies to the same song."

Douglas R. Clark,
Dean, School of Theology

Christo-centrism at Columbia Union

Charles Scriven, the president of Columbia Union College, is committed to building a Christo-centric community at his school. "Christo-centric" defines a community that circles around Christ, the hub of its life together. Although Christo-centrism is a primary goal of Scriven's, he says it will take a long time for the college community to reach this goal. "And it will always be a goal because the ideas of Christo-centrism go against the ways of human nature," he adds.

Even though it may not have gripped the entire campus, Christo-centrism has become a buzzword among students and faculty alike as the college works to define its role as a Christian college. "Adventist education is up against hard times. We are traveling in white water, and to navigate without any fatal mishaps, we have to be as imaginative as we can be," Scriven says.

He explains that "to be Christo-centric means that the campus is to be self-consciously aware that we are offering an alternative to secularized education. It also means being very open about admitting belief in the Jesus story, but it

does not mean shutting off conversation. Being Christo-centric does not mean being a fundamentalist or being narrow-minded, because the Jesus story expands the mind."

CUC is the only Adventist college in North America that is located in a metropolitan area, and Scriven says he finds this very exciting. In articles he has written and in talks he has given to campus visitors, Scriven has often reminded his audience about the adventures of Paul, a man who conducted his ministry in some of the largest cities of his time.

"I like being in a position to lead a community, and I am deeply committed to the idea that the church should be alive in the city. An honest Christian will not be so insular that the wisdom of the world is shut off," Scriven says. "Adventism has historically had a rural orientation, but early Christianity was oriented around cities."

Scriven likes to remind people that the early church was able to flourish in cities like Washington, D.C., which he describes as an exciting center of culture and opportunity. "There's potential to burn here. Our location is one of our greatest advantages," Scriven says.

As president, Scriven sees his role as being three-fold: (1) shaping the overall ethos of the college, (2) being a key figure in planning for the future and (3) being in charge of managing the college's human, financial and physical resources.

In 1984 Scriven graduated with a Doctor of Philosophy degree from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. He obtained a Master of Divinity degree from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University in 1968. His undergraduate degree in theology and Biblical languages, which he earned in 1966, is from Walla Walla College.

"I realized that Adventism is a version of Christianity that is on the margin culturally. It is not part of the establishment, and that is what Christianity was at the beginning," concludes Scriven. "Authentic Christianity is not the pious arm of the establishment. It is an alternative society that attempts to change the structure of society by developing new ways of thinking."❧

~~*Continued from back cover*~~

dination to the gospel ministry" and endorsed "the ordination of qualified women to the gospel ministry in divisions, unions, and conferences where deemed helpful and appropriate." In response to Southeastern's February request, the Pacific Union voted in May, 1993, to "reaffirm our support for the ordination of women into gospel ministry" and requested the North American Division to place this item on the agenda for consideration at its year-end meeting in October.

In view of the fact that in June 1989 the NAD union presidents had endorsed the ordination of women to the gospel ministry "in those divisions where it would be deemed helpful and appropriate," there was every reason to anticipate that NAD would respond favorably to the Southeastern California and Pacific Union requests. It did so at its spring meeting earlier this year, voting to place the ordination question on the year-end agenda.

Such was the process by which the issue of women's ordination had found a place on the year-end meeting agenda, and when the union and conference executives met in October they expected to find it there. When and by whose authority had it been removed?

An authoritative source that wishes to remain anonymous informs *Adventist Today* that on the day before the year-end meeting, Robert Folkenberg asked Alfred McClure, president of the North American Division, to remove it. Anticipating cultural problems in several world divisions of the church, such as Inter-America, South America and East Africa where the ordination of women is stoutly opposed, Folkenberg's request appears to be primarily in deference to this opposition.

Explaining his request to McClure, Folkenberg was heard to state his emphatic personal approval of ordaining women but said that if the NAD were to vote its approval at this time, those who are opposed would have a year in which to mount an offensive that might derail the proposal at the 1994 Annual Council of the General Conference. Our informant said the president feared "a blood bath."

In some of the world divisions, other questions regarding ordination need to be taken into account, Folkenberg said, such as one division's requirement that a minister serve for 25 years before being ordained. His plan is to introduce the broader subject of all these various questions about ordination at the 1994 Annual Council, with the proposal that ordination and other matters be decided by each division in harmony with what it considers best for the church in its part of the world. Folkenberg foresees that a favorable vote at that time will refer the recommendation to the 1995 session of the General Conference for approval.

The issue was last voted on by the 1990 General Conference session and, in deference to those divisions that oppose ordination, ordination of women was not approved. However, that vote did not forbid such ordination and any action taken by a local conference to ordain women would not be in violation of any action voted by either the North American Division or the General Conference. ❧

Letters to the Editor

Adventist Today Appreciated

We just wanted to express our appreciation for your semi-monthly *Adventist Today.* We enjoyed the first issue, and shared it with our pastor. Perhaps we didn't need to do that—he may have received a first issue also.

George and Nancy Smith
Scottsdale, AZ

This is a gift subscription to my son. I am a subscriber—a very appreciative one. We need this paper with its candor.

A. L. Wennerberg
Chestertown, MD

As to the quality of your publication, expectations are rising; there's a grand new feeling in the air. Our thoughts, our hopes, our prayers are all with you—don't let us down!

P.S. I'll be watching my mailbox every day!

Larry Farley
Livingston, NY

Some years ago I read your article "The Role of Israel in Biblical Prophecy" in the *SDA Bible Commentary.* In my view, an understanding of this subject is sorely needed in the church today. It clears up so many problem texts in the Scriptures.

On the strength of the *Bible Commentary* article I am subscribing to *Adventist Today,* believing that you will have many more good articles in store for us.

Erwin Hodde
Greensville, TN

I want to thank you, and Jim Walters, too, for the excellent magazine, *Adventist Today,* that you have produced this year. It has explained so many unanswered questions for me. I look forward to each issue, and share my copy with a number of friends.

Betty Crawfourd
Loma Linda, CA

I am a subscriber to *Adventist Today,* and I enjoy the stimulating insights. I was especially interested in your editorial, "A Credible Adjudicatory System."

Rolland RuF
Collegedale, TN

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WATCH FUTURE ISSUES OF A.T. FOR THE FOLLOWING

- WOMEN AND THE CHURCH
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- LOTS OF CAMPUS NEWS
- THE STATE OF ADVENTIST HIGHER EDUCATION
- THE COLLEGIATE ISSUE, WRITTEN AND PRODUCED BY COLLEGE STUDENTS
- MORE OF YOUR LETTERS
- A COMPLETE REPORT ON THE UPCOMING HEALTH CARE CONFERENCE
- MORE ON THE TRAGEDY OF SEXUAL CHILD ABUSE

Donna Klein vs. Beef Jerky and Pajamas

by Doug Mace

WHEN MY YOUNGER SISTER BECAME SERIOUS WITH A young farmer who was not a member of the Adventist church, I started receiving weekly reports from my nervous folks on how things were progressing between them. Collectively we began worrying about all the things that could go wrong. We imagined a household with dissension in it. Instead of little grandkids with scrubbed faces all dressed up for church on Sabbath morning, we saw little unbathed brats watching cartoons and chewing beef jerky in their pajamas. A dark cloud of depression enshrouded our family as we held our breath and planned for the worst. Then they split up over personality differences and we knew it was divine intervention. They surely would have been miserable anyway.

This experience, for the first time, underscored the differences between Adventists and nonadventists in my mind. Some of these differences are big and significant, especially in the case of nonchristians, while others are just specific to Seventh-day Adventists. When I stop and think about all the little traditions I grew up with and now share with other Adventists, I am amazed. Sometimes it's uncanny how many childhood experiences I have in common with others who grew up clear across the country. The warm feeling of Friday night soup and corn bread after preparing for sundown, or waking up to the happy music of Donna Klein and The King's Heralds on Sabbath morning, were memories of "family" that gave me security and identity.

While these experiences may vary in detail, there was and still is a theme in many Adventists' homes that share a common subculture. And to expect another person to understand it, much less support it, is sometimes just too much to ask.

I can still hear the words of my father, advising me that I should wait until I met a "nice Adventist girl" to get married. I was 13 years old at the time and wasn't even dating anyone seriously. I remember thinking, "Dad, give me something I can use." But as I grew older I understood what he was trying to say.

Since then the issue of marrying a nonadventist has become very important to me, not for my own sake however. I knew right away that I needed someone who liked Nuteena on toast and Ruskets with lukewarm soy milk as much as I did. It's important because I have friends and loved ones who are now really struggling with this issue. Some of them are married and taking their kids to two different church services on weekends, or in an effort to avoid conflict, none at all. It's also common among disillusioned Adventist youth to discount the influence of the church all together.

I'm not sure if the over-worked cliche "unequally yoked" applies here or not, but the complications of living with someone who hasn't gone through the classical Adventist conditioning can sometimes prove too much, so why ask for the extra burden? I've even wondered if a "backslidden" Adventist would be a safer bet to marry than a nonadventist, because of the shared subculture. (You probably have to be an Adventist to even know what the phrase "back-slider" means.) Have you ever heard a member of the Adventist church qualify their recent divorce by admitting that their spouse wasn't an Adventist? Again, only an Adventist knows what this means. Most folks can't understand why it would matter, and perhaps it doesn't when you look at each little thing, but I will venture to say that in concert they make for a real challenge for any marriage arrangement.

I try to imagine a spouse that has no exposure to my background and subculture:

She likes meat, and I like a bean curd by-product, a meat substitute that she says smells like dog food...which I can't deny.

She's used to going out on Friday night celebrate the end of a week. I like to prepare for sundown and eat soup at home.

She sleeps in till 12:00 and goes shopping on Saturday, I get up early, eat granola and go to church.

She likes cooking out of the Betty Crocker cookbook and I like cooking out of An Apple a Day, *even though I never have enough cheese.*

When she does go to church, she dresses up with heavy make up, expensive clothing and lots of jewelry. Hmm, maybe she doesn't stand out that much here.

I embrace the history and doctrines of the Adventist church. She belittles it as a harmless, but time consuming exercise in group think.

I believe in the Spirit of Prophesy and she can't believe I'm so gullible.

I say, IF YOU'RE AN ADVENTIST...MARRY ONE!

Doug Mace recently completed a bachelor's degree in communication at California State University, San Bernardino. He is a lay youth minister at the University Church in Loma Linda.

As We Go To Press

NAD Removes Women's Ordination From Year-End Agenda

UNION AND CONFERENCE EXECUTIVES ATTENDING THE OCTOBER 1993 year-end meeting of the North American Division in Silver Spring, Maryland, were surprised to find that the subject of women's ordination had been removed from the agenda. At their spring meeting they had voted to place it on the agenda, and now they asked by whose authority they were denied the opportunity to discuss the issue. A source tells *Adventist Today* that Robert Folkenberg, church president, asked that it be taken off this agenda because a favorable action on it at this time would assist opponents in marshalling resistance at the 1994 Annual Council.

The whole story began on September 20, 1992, when delegates to the regular Constituency Session of the Southeastern California Conference authorized its Executive Committee to "devise a plan by which qualified women ministers whom we employ be ordained for ministry within our jurisdiction of the world church" and to "eliminate further discrimination in our conference by uniformly conducting all future ordinations of qualified men and women ministers."

Of the 17 women currently serving in Southeastern as ministers, several are fully qualified for ordination and certification. Southeastern, therefore, considers their ordination an urgent moral imperative.

Pursuant to the constituency's resolution, the Executive Committee, "recognizing the necessity of implementing the September 20, 1992, SECC Constituency Session non-discriminatory resolution of gender inclusiveness," voted in February, 1993, to invite the North American Division and the Pacific Union Conference to support Southeastern in implementing the resolution.

As long ago as 1989 the Pacific Union Conference Executive Committee had voted "to eliminate gender as a consideration for or

(continued on page 21)

Extensive Study of Hispanic Adventists Nears Completion

"THE PROJECT IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH INTO any Latino church group in the country," states Edwin Hernandez, the director of a study of a nearly complete study of the Latino Adventist community in the United States and Canada. Hernandez is assistant professor of sociology at Andrews University. For his study, he randomly selected 80 congregations within the North American Division. To date, 3,500 questionnaires have been received from 67 congregations. "This represents an extra-ordinary participation rate of 84% of the churches," states Hernandez.

In addition to the surveys, in-depth interviews will supplement the objective data. Areas of inquiry are family life, youth values, political orientations, social mores, educational experiences and religious commitment.

The results of the study will be published both in denominational journals and in scholarly, scientific and religious journals.

The study originated as a spin-off of the Valuegenesis research done in the North American Division, but it has been broadened and adapted for the Latino context. It is not school-based, but is congregation-based, and it is not exclusively focused on church youth. It encompasses both youth and adults. Hernandez, the principal investigator, is assisted by seven other Latino Adventist scholars. The study is funded by the North American Division and four Adventist schools: Andrews University, Atlantic Union College, La Sierra University and Loma Linda University.

Prophecy Countdown Buys Station for $5 Million

PROPHECY COUNTDOWN, INC., AN INDEPENDENT MINISTRY OF SEVENTH-day Adventists, closed a deal in late November to pay the Christian Science Church $5 million for a short-wave radio station, according to an announcement by the Christian Scientists reported in the Orlando, Florida, *Sentinel*. The paper notes that Prophecy Countdown already broadcasts on 32 television stations across the United States and on the European Super Channel, which is picked up by stations across Europe.

The paper also reveals that earlier this year, the broadcast ministry, which has 45 employees, bought a 24,000-square-foot building in Mount Dora, Florida, for $775,000, to house its expanding operations. Prophecy Countdown has made Mount Dora its headquarters since 1987. The new station it has purchased, with call letters WCSN, is located in Scott's Corners, Maine. It has been used by the Christian Science Church to broadcast news and religious programs to Africa.

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