

YOUNG ADVENTISTS CRYING

NEWS • ANALYSIS • OPINION

\$3.75

ADVENTIST TODAY

VOL. 5, NO. 1

JANUARY • FEBRUARY 1997

**Financial Shortfall
Rocks Literature
Evangelism**

**Religion Professors
Face Conference
Presidents**

**Tensions Peak in
Adventist Higher
Education**

Adventist Futurist Leland Kaiser

What's In the Future?



FOUNDATION BOARD

Keith Colburn, *Secretary/Treasurer*
Raymond Cottrell
Donald Shasky, *Advisory*
Council Chair
Edmund Jones
Jim Kaatz
Douglas Schultz
Ervin Taylor, *Board Chair*
Jim Walters

ADVISORY COUNCIL

Jo & Ken Abbott
Gary & Jeanne Bogle
Antonius & Lilia Brandon
Todd Burley
Charlotte & John Cassell
Judy & Keith Colburn
James & Kathryn Dexter
Merlyn & Rosemary Duerksen
Douglas and Patricia Ewing
Beverly & Donald Farley
Gary & Sharon Fraser
Annette & Gary Frykman
Richard Green
Kathi & Richard Guth
Jackie & Jim Henneberg
Dennis & Jolene Hilliard
Susan & Wayne Jacobsen
John & Judy Jacobson
Elton & Marga Kerr
Dean & Dolores Kinsey
Janis and Richard Larsen
Florence & Ken Lorenz
Don & Penny Miller
Rick Murray
Thaine & Wanda Price
Gary & Ruthe-Marina Raines
Judith Rausch
Joyce & Phil Reisweig
Gordon & Judy Rick
Missy & Richard Rouhe
Cherie & Glenn Rouse
Doug & Sandy Schultz
Don & Ursula Shasky
James & Maryann Stirling
Ervin & Marilynn Taylor
Bob & Karen Torrey
John & Nancy Vogt
David Van Putten
James & Priscilla Walters
Betty & James Webster
Stephanie & Tim Welebir

Inside Adventist Today

A “Virtual” Adventist Church

Adventist Today recently interviewed Leland Kaiser for his perspective on how the Seventh-day Adventist Church could fulfill its mission in North America most effectively. The seminal concepts that he expressed merit the thoughtful consideration of everyone for whom the church is important, and especially all who are in a position to implement them. The report of this interview on pages 12 to 14 may prove to be the most important document to appear in any denominational publication in the last decade of the twentieth century.

Among the counterproductive roadblocks to a highly effective mission of the church in North America to which Kaiser calls attention is the economic pressure our health care and educational systems are experiencing. This pressure, he suggests, has the potential of becoming what he calls a “mortal blow” to the mission of the church. Another is the fact that Adventism “has built a structure that inhibits the spreading of our truth.” A third major roadblock is our highly centralized system of control whereby the world church now imposes onto the church in North America policies that may be appropriate elsewhere in the world, but not here.

Responding to these counterproductive pressures Kaiser suggests a restructuring of our health care and educational systems. To replace our present highly centralized control system, he proposes what he calls a “virtual organization” that relies on “shared vision” rather than tight administrative control. With respect to evangelistic outreach he suggests that “the best way to save souls” is to focus “on their felt need”—which was the method Christ used in his ministry.

For the full impact of this seminal interview, you should read the report a minimum of two or three times. It is worth an entire year’s subscription to *Adventist Today*.

The editorial on page 15 “Will Someone Please Page the Three Angels?” proposes a restructuring of the General Conference in relation to the world divisions of the church that would respect differing cultural perspectives and place a higher level of administrative responsibility on the divisions.

But these are by no means the only “must” reading in this issue. Two stories focus on specific tensions in our North American higher educational system. One of these relates to a summit meeting of North American college and university presidents at which they all felt disappointed—and some of them “betrayed”—by a communications glitch and a proposal that would provide for the church overseas to pass judgment on institutions in North America. Another news article reports tension between church administrators and the school of religion of a major college.

On pages 8 to 11 Albert Dittes recounts the demise of literature evangelism in three major North American unions in the wake of questionable financial policies that left a debt of \$3 million for the three unions to repay, and that adversely affects 65 people in leadership and management positions, 200 or so active commissioned literature evangelists, and 100 part-time employees.

Yes, challenges galore. Challenges concerning which *Adventist Today* readers will want to be aware in order to influence appropriate solutions to them.

Raymond F. Cottrell, Editor

A LOOK AT ADVENTISM'S FUTURE

- 12 **Adventist Institutions: What's in the Future?** *Interview with Leland Kaiser*
- 15 **Will Someone Please Page the Three Angels?** *Raymond F. Cottrell*
- 17 **Crying Just Enough** *L. Jill Lamberton*
- 19 **Can God Touch Our Lives Through Myth?** *Robert Engstrom*
- 21 **Divine Uses of Doubt** *John McLarty*



L. Jill Lamberton 17



Raymond Cottrell 15



John McLarty 21



Ron Jolliffe 23

NEWS AND ANALYSIS

- 6 **Tensions Peak in Adventist Higher Education** *Jim Walters*
- 8 **Financial Shortfall Rocks Literature Evangelism** *Albert Dittes*
- 11 **Families Retreat to Reflect on New Year**
- 22 **Sahly Accepts NAD Education Post**
- 24 **Religion Professors Face Conference Presidents** *Jim Walters*

LETTERS

- 4 **Jesus Seminar**
- 4 **The Real Conservatives**
- 4 **Adventism/Judaism**
- 4 **Sabbath/Sunday**
- 5 **Adventists and Christian Right**
- 5 **Women's Ordination**

SOUNDINGS

- 23 **Encounter at the Bridge** *Ron Jolliffe*

ADVENTIST TODAY

VOL. 5, NO. 1
JANUARY • FEBRUARY 1997

EDITOR:
Raymond Cottrell

EXECUTIVE EDITOR:
James Walters

MANAGING EDITOR:
Cherie Rouse

ASSISTANT EDITORS:
Cheri Lynn Gregory
James H. Stirling
Colleen Moore Tinker
Susan G. Walters

EDITORIAL ADVISOR:
Steve Daily

ART DIRECTOR:
Richard Tinker

DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT:
Norman L. Vance

OFFICE MANAGER:
Hanan Sadek

EDITORIAL CONSULTANTS:
Antonius Brandon, *Loma Linda University*
Barry Casey, *Columbia Union College*
Glenn Coe, *South Windsor, Connecticut*
Larry Downing, *Anaheim Adventist Church, CA*
Pamela Maine Harris, *Southern Adventist University*
Frank Knittel, *La Sierra University*
Beatrice Neall, *Union College*
Caleb Rosado, *Walla Walla College*

Adventist Today reports on contemporary issues of importance to Adventist church members. Following basic principles of ethics and canons of journalism, this publication strives for fairness, candor, and good taste.

Unsolicited submissions are encouraged. Payment is competitive. Send a self-addressed stamped envelope for writers' guidelines.

Annual subscriptions:
\$24 (\$40/2 years) for individuals
\$18 for students
\$35 for institutions
(Payment by check or credit card. Add \$10 for addresses outside North America.)

Telephone: (800) 236-3641
Fax: (909) 884-3391
E-mail: AToday@aol.com

Adventist Today (ISSN 1079-5499) is published bimonthly for \$24 per year (\$18 for students, \$35 for institutions) by Adventist Today Foundation, 1845 S. Business Center Dr., Suite 140, San Bernardino, CA 92408. Second-class postage paid at San Bernardino, CA. **POSTMASTER:** send address changes to *Adventist Today*, P.O. Box 1220, Loma Linda, CA 92354-1220.

Copyright ©1997 by Adventist Today Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering open dialogue in the Adventist community.

FIRST CLASS

Letter to the Editor
Adventist Today
P.O. Box 1220
Loma Linda, CA 92354-1220

Jesus Seminar

I greatly appreciate the warm spirituality of the article by Max Phillips. But he gives far too much credit to the Jesus Seminar.

The JS represents only the fringe of New Testament scholarship around the world and their most striking "findings" are rejected by the bulk of NT scholars, both Catholic and Protestant. Even the liberal *Christian Century* has published articles against the conclusions of the JS and these are but the tip of the iceberg of a whole plethora of printed criticisms.

There is no such thing as presuppositionless exegesis. And motives constitute an equal factor in conclusions reached. The JS scholars have married the spirit of the age and are consequently heading for widowhood. They reveal no hint of understanding of "the everlasting gospel" and this alone vitiates the specious guesswork of these self-confessed publicity hogs.

The four Gospels of the NT are perfect for their purpose. And what is that purpose? "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing ye might have life through his name." John 20:31.

I recommend Stephen Neill's *The Interpretation of the New Testament* for a history of the short-lived nature of such theological vagaries as those of the JS, and see James Dunn's *The Evidence for Jesus* regarding the claims for the Gospel of Thomas.

Desmond Ford

Newcastle, California

The Real Conservatives

According to professor Greenwalt's article, "Where are the Real Conservatives?" plus other such articles that I've read in your magazine, perhaps you should change your name to "Which Adventist Today is Whining and Sniveling?"

I dare say that the majority of us Adventists have been run-over, ground up

and stomped into the ground one way or the other by our beloved but imperfect church...

Too bad the professor can't talk about the good instead of the bad, like how he has been employed by an organization that has provided food, clothing and shelter, plus all the many other benefits, to him and his family...

Dear professor, the only "good" to our future is the coming of Jesus. If you expect otherwise, then I fear for you. I, too, will be remembering you and your family in prayer.

Rod Chanslor

Lakeside, Arizona

Adventism/Judaism

I was struck by the novelty of Jim Walter's "analogy" of Adventism and Judaism editorial, November/December, 1996. The fragmentation of Judaism is not of recent origin. In fact it goes back to the postexilic period and was flourishing in Christ's day. The two best known groups, the Pharisees (orthodox), and the Sadducees (liberal), were actually political parties disguised as religious factions. There must have been a third group, essentially voiceless, whom Mark (NKJV 12:37) identifies as "the common people [who] heard him gladly." The Pharisees and Sadducees, of course, were bent on destroying this itinerant preacher from Galilee.

I have difficulty seeing a parallel between this scenario and the development of orthodox, conservative, and "progressive" (not identified as such in this editorial, but so characterized in other AT articles) Seventh-day Adventists. For, if the analogy is to hold, it is the conservatives, the middle group, who hear Jesus gladly, and the other two groups who are out to "crucify...the Son of God afresh" (Heb 6:6 KJV). I am sure Walters did not mean to suggest such an implication.

It is easy to get into difficulty when an elitist hierarchy is proposed—almost always for the purpose of elevating one group at the expense of others.

New Testament diversity (Rom 12:4-6; 1 Cor 12:4,5; Eph 4:11,12) is a diversity of gifts not of belief. As Paul has said so succinctly in Romans 4:4,5, "There is one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism."

Neil W. Rowland

Lincoln, Nebraska

Sabbath/Sunday

The four articles "Revisiting the Sabbath Doctrine" in your July/August issue were both relevant and enlightening. It is ironic that Desmond Ford, our former champion of righteousness by faith whom we sent into exile for challenging the tradition of the elders, now is brought back as our champion of the Sabbath! Perhaps Adventists, like Samuel, and later Saul, need to take a closer look at this David among us!

It is also ironic that Seventh-day Adventists, who formerly slew all the Apostate Protestant champions of Sunday Sacredness with their key-text debating sword with the challenge, "Show me not two or three, but even one 'thus saith the Lord' in the New Testament to prove Sunday is the Sabbath," now are in danger of being slain themselves with their own weapon hurled back at them in the new challenge, "Show me one New Testament text to prove the Sabbath was binding upon Gentile Christians, and I will show you three, nay five texts that prove the opposite." (Acts 15:7-11, 19-20, 28-29; Gal 2:10, 4:10; Rom 14:5-6; Col 1:16) Will those who took the sword now die by the sword? Perhaps Ellen White had good reason to warn her brethren against entering into debates! The key-text method is a double-edged sword that cuts both ways.

Ellen White's scenario for the end-time portrays events similar to those in Christ's

day. The Sabbath controversies loomed large in his ministry and contributed significantly to his final passion. It takes no great stretch of imagination to project how the present social, religious, and political turmoil over "family values," abortion, crime, and moral issues could focus eventually on bringing back the Law, and coalesce around the issue of Sabbath-keeping. As these issues come to the fore and are widely agitated, we need to change our thinking and learn from Christ's methods.

The Jews have taught for centuries that Gentiles are not obligated to keep the Mosaic Law for salvation, but are bound only by the "Noahic Laws." Arguments based on Mosaic Law and Covenant tend to end up throwing the Sabbath baby out with the Typical bath water. Rather than getting bogged down in arguments about Mosaic Law and Covenants, it seems to me that we should follow Jesus' example. Like his argument for the binding nature of marriage, his argument for the Sabbath went back to Adamic Law and Covenant at Creation, and showed it was made for man, and hence superior to later specific derivative Mosaic legislation. (Mark 2:27; 10:1-9; Matt 19:1-12) The Law of Moses, and the Mosaic Covenant, included the Sabbath, ...re-enshrined it in new typology, and enjoined its subjects to "remember" it, but it did not institute it. (Ex 20:8) The two accounts of creation in Genesis each climax in provisions for meeting universal human needs. The first account's count-down ends in the Sabbath, the second account ends with marriage. (Gen. 2:2-3, 22-24) It has been argued that these are etiological myths formulated later to explain the origin of the Sabbath and marriage to later generations. Advocates of this argument, however, must explain why the Sabbath rest and the resulting seven-day cycle antedates the giving of the Law in numerous instances (i.e. the manna, Ex 16; God's call to observe a festival of "rest" [sabbath] connected with the seven-day cycle in Egypt, Ex. 3:18; 5:1-9,17; 10:9;12:14-17,19, and the existence of a seven-day cycle even in Noah's day, Gen 7:4,10; 8:10,12). It is unlikely that later scribes "invented" all these details just to substantiate an etiological myth. There is still no satisfactory scholarly explanation for the existence of the seven-day week apart

from Creation. The New Testament argument for a continuing Sabbath "rest" is grounded in Creation. (Heb 4:4) This, like Mosaic Law, re-enshrines the Sabbath in new typology, and shows its present and future relevance. While Christ fulfilled some of the Sabbath's typology at his first coming, much remains to be fulfilled, and hence the Sabbath cannot be nailed to the cross, but remains meaningful until the new Creation is completed. (Heb 4:9)

As Dr. Ford rightly points out, the issues are complex, and there is no place now for the comfortable and complacent to rest in the false security of proof texts. As the issues are debated now and in the future, "one man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind." (Rom 14:5) Your articles help this process along. And as time passes, events may help clarify the remaining questions.

Arlin Baldwin

Coarsegold, California

More Sabbath/Sunday

The line between honest exploration of the differences within Adventism that are recognized by many thinking individuals, and the exploitation of controversy simply for the sake of conflict is a narrow one. In the July-August issue on the Sabbath, you crossed that line.

"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath," and the subject of acceptable Sabbath behavior will always be with us. The Bible leaves no doubt however, that "the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God." When you invited non-Adventists to contribute the bulk of the articles trashing the Sabbath and questioning the biblical validity and divine authority of the Sabbath, you moved outside the realm of the honest differences within Adventism and embraced, even invited, controversy for the sole purpose of sensationalism and conflict.

I find this unacceptable and very disappointing. . . . You have lost all credibility as moderator of the discussion of Adventist differences.

Michael J. Merickel

Stanton, Michigan

Adventists and Christian Right

I was disappointed but not surprised by Jan Long's attack on the Christian Right. As Adventists stand on the political sidelines and watch, abortion rolls along and the mass murder of innocent babies continues. Legislation for assisted suicide and euthanasia [is] now reality in the United States. Gay rights activists continue their relentless assault on traditional family values through aggressive legal and legislative action.

Adventists need to recognize that these are moral issues that have been dragged into the political arena. It is time for us to depart from paranoid separation and join forces with all evangelical Christians in fighting the moral war that is now raging in this country. If this war needs to be fought on a political battlefield, so be it. We need to recognize that the enemy is not "apostate Protestantism," but is in fact Satan, at work to lead this nation into deepening moral decay. It is our obligation as Christians to stand up for righteousness and be counted. And if we remain politically passive in the name of denominationalism we will one day be held accountable.

Douglas Pinto

Mount Airy, Maryland

Women's Ordination

As a matter of clarification to the fine letter by Carol Mayes in the September-October issue, I know that quite a number of my Andrews University faculty colleagues who are theologians (I am not) fully support women's ordination. Indeed, the retired dean of the Seminary, Raoul Dederen, gave a major speech to that effect at the General Conference in Utrecht. In fact, it may well be that "the theologians at Andrews University" which Ms. Mayes refers to may be in a minority among theologians here.

Harvey Brenneise

Berrien Springs, Michigan

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Tensions Peak in Adventist Higher Education

by Jim Walters

Mounting tension between Robert Folkenberg, General Conference president, and leaders of North American Division higher education culminated at a meeting in Tucson, Arizona, in December. Two catalysts for this tension were an article regarding Adventist higher education which Folkenberg had proposed to publish in the *Adventist Review* and a document entitled "Total Commitment to God," which calls for an annual assessment of institutional spirituality. Already concerned about the impact of the proposed article and the document, the NAD education leaders experienced new frustration over the outcome of the meeting itself.

Last summer the NAD education office learned that Folkenberg was planning to publish an article which would criticize certain religious aspects of the church's colleges and universities. The planned article as well as certain public

The upshot of these efforts was an agreement to hold a summit in Tucson which would focus on assessment of spirituality in NAD colleges and universities. With one exception, every college and university president and board chair attended this meeting at a time and place that fit Folkenberg's schedule: December 5-7, 1996, in Tucson.

The importance of the Tucson meeting was heightened by the document entitled "Total Commitment to God" which Folkenberg himself developed and presented last fall to the Annual Council for adoption. The document contained many of the concerns which Folkenberg originally planned to include in his *Review* article. The final draft calls for all church institutions—conferences, hospitals, colleges, schools, food factories, and all levels of organization—to devise plans for spiritual

"Total Commitment to God" Document

The document's purpose is to save the denomination from spiritual deterioration by calling for a concerted focus on evangelism and orthodoxy. For example, it calls for colleges and universities to affirm "unambiguously in classroom and campus life the beliefs, practices, and world view of the Seventh-day Adventist Church..." Each institution is to prepare a "spiritual master plan and assessment program" which it would then submit to a "General Conference-appointed, international panel" for a written evaluation.

The "Total Commitment to God" document appeared in the mass-circulated January NAD edition of the *Adventist Review*. An interview with Folkenberg precedes it. In the interview William Johnsson asks Folkenberg if the proposed spiritual assessment plan will help parents or students to decide which college or university to attend.

In his answer Folkenberg asserts that it is vital for the parents of prospective students to have access to the spiritual master plan of the school they're considering. But, he acknowledges, the plans may be long, complex, and consequently daunting. "Therefore," he instructs, "I urge every parent/student to secure from the colleges or universities to which your child may be submitting an application (1) a copy of the letter to the board from the independent panel...and (2) a copy of the report of the previous semester/quarter's spiritual evaluation."

Although his interview statements may sound tough, Folkenberg's conversations with certain educators sounded quite different. He explained that the international panel's role would be "formative," not "summative." The panel, he explained, would consult with the respective institutions and help them to form ideal plans for spiritual assessment. The panel would not be for the purpose of evaluating and summoning the institutions as would a tribunal.

The problem for many NAD educators, though, is not the call to spirituality. Rather, they worry about the proposal that "an international panel" would oversee the implementation and assessment of spirituality. Administrators from a breadth of Adventist institutions were

...they worry about the proposal that "an international panel" would oversee the implementation and assessment of spirituality.

criticisms which Folkenberg had made spurred Dick Osborn, an educational vice-president of the NAD, into action. He consulted with Folkenberg about scheduling a meeting between the president and the leaders of the NAD colleges and universities.

Meanwhile, independently of Osborn, Dick Greenslaw, chair of the Association of Adventist College and University Presidents and president of Florida Hospital's health sciences college, began to lay similar plans.

accountability. The Annual Council voted to accept the document but did not put it into the G.C. Working Policy as the president desired. One of the Council's reasons for this decision was that the document was not written in the style of policy statements. The NAD Year-End Meeting merely voted to "receive" the document.

The contents of the "Total Commitment to God" document escalated the concerns which NAD education leaders already had.

alarmed by the implications of such a plan. For example, some professors and administrators at Southern Adventist University worry that their accreditation might be in jeopardy. "How will accreditation bodies view the integrity of a university's governance system if its vital religious focus is evaluated by a foreign board whose authority supersedes the legal board of trustees?" asks Pamela Maize Harris, chair of Southern's journalism department.

Most NAD educators view spiritual assessment positively. "If Christian colleges are to have spiritual elements in their mission statements, they have an obligation to have methods of assessing how they are doing," Dick Osborn told *Adventist Today*. "What are you doing to accomplish your lofty goals?"

Osborn believes, however, that spiritual assessment is much more complicated than surveying the students and sending a report to the board. It might require novel approaches such as these which some schools are already trying: students "journaling" throughout their four years of college to keep a record of their experiences, and having seniors complete a paper explaining how an Adventist world view influenced their perceptions of their major fields of study.

Osborn tells of one business department that contacted graduates after 10 years to ask them how attending a Christian college had positively or negatively affected their lives. Some 75 percent responded that the Christian values they had learned in their programs had made a difference in how they performed on the job.

Long-term developmental issues are crucial, says Osborn. But the most important factor "in transmitting faith maturity and denominational loyalty is the teachers' congenial, personal relationships with their students centered around the teachers' positive relationships with Jesus Christ and the church."

The Tucson Higher Education Summit

Kent Hanson, an attorney from Corona, California, moderated the Tucson meeting. Hanson is legal counsel for Loma Linda University and La Sierra University and is an active Adventist

churchman. He demanded that the agenda for the dialogue include equal coverage of all points of view with no one person dominating the discussion. He took his role seriously, even flying to Silver Spring to work with Folkenberg on the agenda. According to host Dick Osborn, Hanson did an excellent job, fulfilling his role with passion and heart.

The first day's discussion was candid and open. School representatives asked Folkenberg to explain the implications of an international board assessing American colleges. They asked how the

Knowledgeable participants in the Friday meeting report that the discussion had been "very confusing" as Folkenberg worked through some of the practical considerations of implementing the "Total Commitment" document. But, as one participant said, implementation has no easy answers.

Besides spending Friday in discussions, Folkenberg had spent the first part of the week in intense discussions with Adventist health care leaders. His arduous schedule and his emotionally demanding prophetic style in dealing

Nearly all the NAD and higher education administrators were present that night. They were put off by Folkenberg's unannounced absence, and some felt betrayed.

board's members would bridge the cultural gaps that might prevent them from understanding the individual colleges' policies and programs.

That evening three administrators gave reports of the spiritual activities on their campuses. At the conclusion of the third report, one university president rose and asked if the group might hear the GC president's reaction. The chair accepted this suggestion, but when Hanson called for Folkenberg to take the floor, he was gone. In fact, not only was he absent, but he had left Tucson for home.

Folkenberg had told Osborn that he needed to leave on Saturday night in order to spend a few hours with some family members who would be going overseas soon. Apparently he had mentioned his departure on Friday to one or two persons only minutes before leaving. Nearly all the NAD and higher education administrators were present that night. They were put off by Folkenberg's unannounced absence, and some felt betrayed.

with complex institutions might explain his early departure.

After the educators and administrators in Tucson adjusted to Folkenberg's absence, they continued by focusing on North American concerns. Each college and university president presented plans for focusing on spiritual goals and assessment. The conference adjourned positively but early at noon the next day.

Loma Linda University will host an international meeting in March which all Adventist educators are invited to attend. Humberto Rasi, director of the GC education department, is planning the session. The focus of the session will be on the importance of mission statements, particularly their spiritual aspects. The "Total Commitment to God" document is also on the agenda. Although only half of the NAD college presidents plan to attend, Rasi sees NAD institutions as being considerably ahead of other divisions' colleges in their embracing of formal spiritual planning.

Financial Shortfall Rocks Literature Evangelism

by Albert Dittes

To finance the video production of *The Bible Story*, the president and chairman of the board of Family Enrichment Resources (FER), the former organization administering the literature evangelistic work in the Columbia, Atlantic and Pacific Unions, ignored denominational policy and invested \$264,500 in a Canadian venture.

The investors promised them a handsome profit, but fallout has resulted instead in FER voting to dissolve itself by Feb. 28, 1997, leaving a \$3 million debt for the three unions to repay. The Potomac Conference Executive Committee passed a resolution calling for the resignations of Elders Ralph Martin and Harold Lee, president and secretary of the Columbia Union. At its Jan. 30 meeting, the Columbia Union Executive Committee voted to retain Martin as president but issued an official statement

has agreed to support the West Coast colporteurs.

"As Chief Executive officer of the union, I made a mistake," said Elder Ralph Martin, president of the Columbia Union, at a Jan. 10 meeting in responding to the report of the task force organized to investigate the missing \$264,500. "I should have gotten more authority to advance money to FER. There is no excuse or blame-shifting here, but I hope you understand my intense desire that the literature evangelism program be successful. We wanted products for the literature evangelists to sell. I was so intent on helping the literature evangelists that I overstepped the bounds and I apologize."

"Yes, mistakes have been made and we need to decide what to do here to protect us from a recurrence," said Elder Harold Lee, secretary of the Columbia Union in his response. "I have no desire to hide

- consulting the Columbia Union attorney regarding the wisdom or legality of such an investment.
- a voted action of the union administrative committee.

Martin also knew the money would go for an investment out of line with denominational policy and received no written explanation from the Canadian investor regarding what the money was going to be used for and no written contract to guarantee its return. The task force also cited him for failing to monitor how the money was spent.

Harold Otis, Jr., president of FER, sent these funds to a Canadian investor hoping for an eventual return of millions of dollars. FER wired the money in six installments between April 24 and July 14, 1996, through the Columbia Union Revolving Fund (CURF) since FER itself did not have wiring arrangements with its bank. Each amount of funds wired was replaced at CURF by union operating or plant funds. The investor, a Canadian broker operating an offshore Panama company, wrote a letter pledging \$25 million to FER.

"The task force believes that this investment was highly speculative," states a press release issued by Dick Duerksen, communication director of the Columbia Union and official spokesman for the operators of FER. "An Article in *Forbes Magazine* in late 1996 warns against such investment deceptions. The task force has no way of knowing at this time whether this is a legitimate investment. The investor has promised the return of the money many times but has never met the deadlines he has given. The FER board chairman and the FER president still hope this is a legitimate business deal, and the money will be returned."

The task force noted three Columbia Union management weaknesses revealed by the missing \$264,500:

1) The union officers advanced the money to FER, not a violation of policy in itself, but knowing FER would use it in a speculative investment.

2) The union administrative committee job description contains no guidelines for how much money the committee can authorize to be spent.

3) The Columbia Union had no

Harold Otis, Jr., president of FER, sent these funds to a Canadian broker operating an offshore Panama company and pledging \$25 million to FER.

disapproving his part in a misappropriation of union funds. The committee made no mention of Harold Lee, feeling his relationship to the incident had been "incidental and peripheral," according to a news release from the Columbia Union office.

Adventist literature evangelistic work in these unions faces a period of uncertainty, with no present plan to process contracts in the Atlantic and Columbia Unions after May 31, 1997. Pacific Press

anything and extend apologies for my weakness in judgment."

The committee accepted the Martin and Lee apologies.

Martin apologized for making an unauthorized transfer of \$264,500 to FER without:

- the knowledge of the FER board or finance committee chairperson, the two union vice presidents or Columbia Union conference presidents.

finance committee, meaning there is no independent reporting about the association of FER or financial transactions occurring between union committees.

The Atlantic, Columbia and Pacific Unions had created FER in 1992 as an economical approach to literature evangelism. The Home Health Education Service colporteur organizations in these unions had gone broke using three percent of their tithe dollars. By consolidating their efforts, they hoped to streamline the colporteur work by using only one percent of union tithe dollars as well as increase product sales, make new products available and improve the financial situation of the literature evangelists.

They incorporated FER in 1992 with its headquarters in Maryland and organized a board of directors with 15 members, five from each union including the union presidents, treasurers and one conference president per union. Each union loaned FER money for startup expenses, dividing gains and losses based on the percentage of each initial loan. The three union committees constituted the FER constituency. The board then elected a finance committee consisting of the FER officers and three union treasurers, with Sylvester Bietz of the Pacific Union as chair.

"Gross sales nearly doubled between 1992 and 1996," states the task force report issued by Duerksen. "However, there was a pressing need for new products, and financial difficulties arose when the company was attempting to secure financing for a new series of *Bible Story* videos."

As it turned out, FER operated in the red each year, starting with a loss of \$481,695 in 1992 and finishing 1996 with a \$3.376 million debt.

Management gave two reasons for the loss of funds. For one thing, the foreign language program suffered many write-offs. FER would often pay the commissions for such books sold, then receive no further money from the customer. A literature evangelist would often collect commissions on bad contracts, then quit. FER also invested large sums of money to develop a *Bible Story* video product, including \$333,638 with Blue Duck Production with no video yet. They later

sent another \$320,000 to Nissi Financial Corp., in an attempt to raise dollars for the video project. FER tried to cut losses by allowing cash-only foreign language literature sales.

In discussing the FER literature evangelistic program Harold F. (Bud) Otis said one of his goals was to develop the *Bible Story* videos. "*The Bible Story* set is 45 years old," he says. "The last new product—*My Bible Friends*—came out 25 years ago. Last year the Pacific Press released a

and I saved them \$7.7 million. So they are still \$4.7 million ahead."

"I have nothing to hide and did nothing wrong," he says. "I did what I was authorized to do. We have invested nothing in video productions yet. I went to the Dec. 3 board meeting with a cash plan to turn things around. It had the endorsement of a reputable CPA firm. But the board closed the company before reading my letter."

The task force cited several managerial weaknesses of FER. A policy of confer-

The monthly finance committee meetings did business mostly by telephone conference and sent no minutes to board members.

new series of books for kids, the first investment in literature evangelist products in years."

Regarding the performance of FER, Otis says his programs were working. He eliminated conference publishing directors and their secretaries, whom he described as "bureaucrats costing \$60,000 a year," and replaced them with district leaders and multi-language people covering 18 conferences. A series of 24 Ken Cox videos on the *Conflict of the Ages* series helped his literature evangelists sell books. "I doubled the sales at FER in three years. The following year the publishers had a tremendous price increase," he says. "That meant literature evangelists getting into fewer homes and a cut in sales."

Otis feels the one-percent-of-tithe given to FER was inadequate. "Each union had been giving three percent of their tithe and went broke and asked me to run the program on one percent," he says. "If they had given 1.25 percent of their tithe, FER would be alive today. Now, when they write all bills, it will amount to 1.5 percent of their tithe for the last five years. I saved them \$7.7 million in tithe. This is a worst-case scenario. They write off \$3 million

ence hiring approval of all literature evangelists and consulting of conference presidents before appointing area leaders never went into effect. The Columbia Union president always served as chairman of the board despite the bylaws requiring a rotation of this office. Two board meetings a year were not enough for a new, experimental company. The monthly finance committee meetings did business mostly by telephone conference and sent no minutes to board members. Success stories constituted most of what little communication went on. FER also gave no financial report at the three union constituency meetings. The task force felt management was too busy with video production to manage the company.

"We were not told anything other than the publishing work was going great," says Susan Sickler, who served two terms on the Columbia Union Conference Committee. "They would say videos would be on line any day."

Another problem concerned accounting and audits. "Internal accounting misstated the financial condition of the company, and the problem was compounded when General Conference auditors did not make proper adjustments to the 1994

and 1995 financial statements, thus giving FER officers and board members a distorted picture of FER's financial health," the FER press release of the task force report states.

Finally, no lay people wound up serving on the FER board. "There were lay people on the committee at its beginning, but as they resigned, they were not replaced," says the report. "The only lay person on the FER board at its end was Ron Wisbey, whose job description requires him to report to the Columbia Union president."

The harshest criticism went to Ralph Martin. While the Columbia Union Executive Committee acknowledged that he received no personal financial benefit

Martin himself said he was unaware of the deteriorating financial situation at FER until the fall of 1996. After the Sept. 11 meeting, the board ordered an audit which ultimately resulted in the company voting to shut itself down at a specially-called Dec. 3 board meeting.

He said the FER board put great emphasis in producing 15 videos based on *The Bible Story*, hoping it would bring \$40 million in return and enable the organization to restore medical coverage to literature evangelists.

He got into trouble finding funding for this video production.

Martin said the board authorized Bud Otis to pursue funding of the video project at its Jan. 5, 1996, meeting after a

transaction. We should have gotten written substantiation of the expenses. At this point we were told that Tom Tiffen was going to use his own money to invest in the scheme that would provide funding for the videos. No Columbia Union money was invested."

Martin said that the "officers" set up a line of credit and loaned the money to FER, stipulating repayment with interest at a certain date from union income funds. He admitted he should have consulted the conference presidents because the money was borrowed against the tithe dollars they would send to FER. Also, he should have notified the union committee and FER finance committee, he admitted. But the Canadian businessman convinced Bud Otis and Reginald Frood, FER business manager, that he was a legitimate broker and trader accumulating resources to enable video production.

"Eventually FER sent \$264,500 against their line of credit," he said. "That is a huge amount of money but should be measured against the \$40 million that the videos were projected to return to FER. It also has to be measured against the profit that FER reportedly earned in 1995. If FER had been successful in obtaining the videos they would have established the LE ministry as the most financially secure and most successful literature ministry in the church."

Tiffen promised to return the money to Otis but never did.

Regarding lessons learned, Martin said all church organizations need closer guidelines and supervision. He felt the board should have met more frequently and demanded detail cash positions. The finance committee should have monitored the cash flow daily when finances became perilous. He says business people need to be involved in these enterprises, "especially in an industry that has such an unsuccessful history as our literature work."

What about the future of literature evangelistic work in FER territory? Sy Bietz, former finance committee chairman, says that is hard to determine. The Pacific Union plans to turn their literature evangelistic work over to Pacific Press, which has the same program copied from FER. "Pacific Press has a financial

He says business people need to be involved in these enterprises, "especially in an industry with such an unsuccessful history as our literature work."

and shared responsibility with him for failing to seek the facts of the FER operation with sufficient diligence, it stated that Martin "bears a major portion of the responsibility for financial losses connected with a \$264,500 advance made to FER. The committee stated "its disapproval of Elder Martin's poor judgment and unacceptable financial oversight in connection with this transaction, and specifically of his failure to document the transaction and to acknowledge the speculative purpose of the advance." In his reply to the Columbia Union Executive Committee, Martin told his side of the FER debacle story. Regarding some of the problems, he said the FER board "met only twice a year, which was not enough to monitor operations." The FER board failed to detect the financial peril of the company in time because it "trusted the FER financial statements, which showed a profit for 1994 and 1995." He acknowledged having been misled by the auditors.

proposal by Dru Cox, who had the contract to produce the videos and Gary Ferry, an investor who had agreed to place \$2 million in reserve to advertise the videos. This action was based on FER having \$2.6 million on hold in a bank and getting the approval of an attorney, the latter of which was not done.

"The original FER board approval did not allow FER to put any money at risk," Martin said. "When we discovered that participating in the search required that Columbia Union money would be at risk, the officers immediately pulled out."

Martin then related that Otis started working with an investor named Tom Tiffen. "We knew that the money was going to Tiffen," Martin told the union executive committee. "We knew that the money was going to Canada. But we were told by Bud (Otis) that the money was for FER expenses—including reimbursing expenses that Tom Tiffen had incurred because of our pulling out of the earlier

stability FER didn't have," Bietz says. "This transfer may not affect the literature evangelists in the field at all but enhance them. The only FER failure was that it did not meet the financial expectations of the conferences. There was some poor judgment, but that will happen in an experimental program."

Otis doesn't think the option of turning the literature evangelistic work over to Pacific Press Publishing Association will work out because they lack people knowledgeable about book distribution. "Their mission is production," he says.

The Columbia Union has agreed to enter into partnership with the Review and Herald but has not yet worked out all the details. The Atlantic Union must choose between affiliating their literature evangelistic programs with either the Pacific Press or Review and Herald. Two of their conferences—Greater New York and Northeastern—did not participate in the FER program. "It's hard to predict how this will affect our workers in the field," says Ted Jones, president of the Atlantic Union. "Greater New York had over \$1 million in sales last year, and we have a strong student program. We hope that and our veteran workers selling our literature will continue."

In the meantime, Pacific Press will process the literature evangelists' contracts on the West Coast. On the East Coast, all Duerksen can say is "We are negotiating a different way to look at our literature evangelistic work. How that will work out no one knows yet."

Family Enrichment Resources is dismantling under the direction of a committee chaired by Harold Baptiste, secretary of the North American Division, and will officially go out of business Feb. 28. This shutdown will adversely affect 65 people in leadership and management positions, 200 active commissioned sales workers and 100 part-time "cash-sales" employees. "A number of the district leaders and literature evangelists in the Pacific Union have been offered employment by the Pacific Press Publishing Association," according to the news release from the Family Enrichment Resources Transition Team. "Because of the necessity of care for the final settlement of accounts, the disposition of

inventories, the updating and securing of vital records and the satisfaction of requirements relative to the corporation, Deanna Trimarchi (East Coast) and Warren Gough (West Coast) will be retained for up to 90 days beyond the Feb. 28 deadline. "All employees have the option of working as door-to-door literature evangelists."

After all administrative details are taken care of, the assets or debts—probably the latter—will be distributed among the constituent unions in the following way: Atlantic—7.88 percent, Columbia—32.23 percent and Pacific Union—59.89 percent.

"By the way you will hear talk of how much money was lost in the publishing program called FER," writes Pacific Union Conference President Tom Mostert to the *Recorder* readers. "It did have financial problems and left us with a debt to pay off. Yet, even after covering all the losses, the savings to the Pacific Union Conferences will be more than \$2.7 million in the last four years. Also, keep in mind, the program was attempting to operate on less than one half the subsidy given before, while it more than doubled the number of litera-

ture workers and number of books sold. Further, many of the new concepts pioneered by FER have been adopted by the Pacific Press... So, although we are sorry for FER's difficulties, there were many successes along the way."

Then, in this same statement, Mostert tries to sum up operating out-of-line with denominational policy. "It can be very difficult to stay focused on our real reason for existence in this world," Mostert says at the beginning of his comment. "With so many who live around us as though this life is all there is, with radio and television bombarding us with messages pushing personal fulfillment agendas, with printed material of all types advancing every imaginable concept and idea, most of which do not represent a clear or even faint picture of God's thinking, little wonder it can be most difficult to stay focused in any significant way on preparing our minds and lifestyle for life in another world where everything runs in harmony with God."

The Columbia Union statement of discipline for Ralph Martin "calls on all members of the eight local conferences to join the committee in focusing anew on the mission of the church."

Families Retreat to Reflect On New Year

More than 100 families attended the annual Spiritual Renaissance retreat held December 27-30 and again on January 1-4 at the Hyatt Regency Resort in Monterey, California. About 50 families attended each weekend. The retreat was organized by John Hughson, pastor at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.

Hughson told *Adventist Today*, "It is an opportunity to exchange ideas, interact, explore possibilities, pray, and worship together."

The structured activities included more than a dozen seminars. Each attendee could choose five. Some of

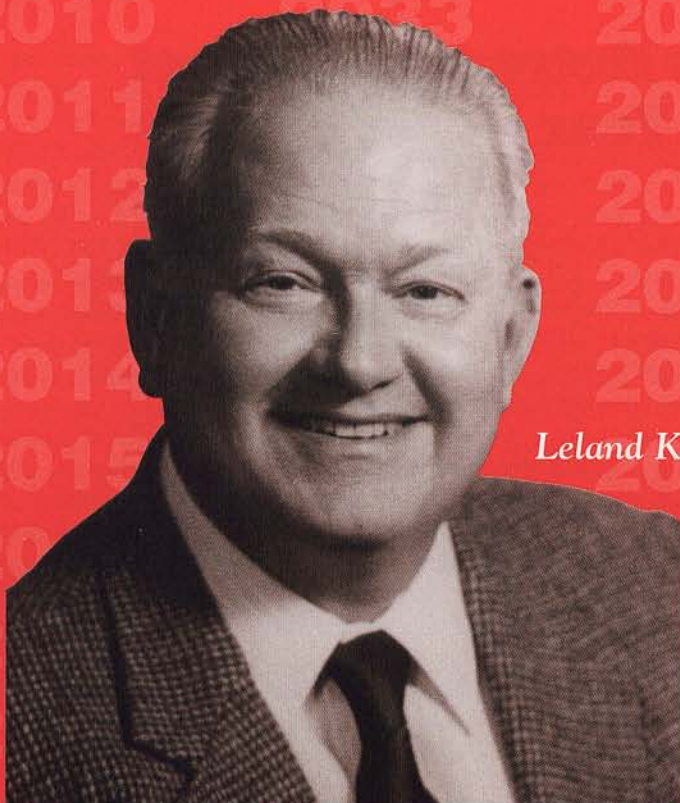
the speakers were Dan Smith, pastor of the La Sierra University Church, on "Why I Still Love the Church" and Edna Mae and Bill Loveless of the Loma Linda University Church on "The Two-Minute Lover." Activities were planned for all age groups, and the program also allowed ample time for unstructured activities such as golf, whale watching, and fine dining.

Attendees told *Adventist Today* that these annual retreats attract a broad variety of Adventists who pay \$400 - \$500 per family for this occasion to reflect on life's basic themes and prepare for the new year.

ADVENTIST INSTITUTIONS:

What's In the

Jim Walters recently interviewed Leland Kaiser for Adventist Today. Kaiser is a well known Adventist futurist who is often consulted by Adventist medical and educational institutions. He is based in Colorado.



Leland Kaiser

Future?

Adventist Today: You work with a number of Adventist colleges and hospitals. How would you characterize their importance to the Adventist denomination?

Kaiser: I think if we lose our Adventist colleges and hospitals it will be a mortal blow to the denomination. They provide very important micro spaces that are intense, planned cultures where the values, beliefs and vision of Adventism are so powerfully conveyed. This creates a soul-winning constituency that in turn feeds the church.

Challenges of Economics and Mission

You say, "If we lose them." How likely is that? What influences do you see going one way or another?

Well, we are being buffeted very strongly by the economics of the age in which we live. So many of our hospitals are having to partner with other institutions in the community, and that is not bad in itself. In fact, I encourage it. But there is a great deal of economic pressure on our institutions, and I think there is a pressure to conform to the requirements of managed care in a way that can dilute our mission if we are not careful. I am concerned about two things: the first is preserving our strong sense of mission, and the second, just surviving economically. I think our colleges will face exactly the same pressures as the cost of university education becomes greater and greater. Individual families

find it easier and easier to ask, "Why shouldn't we send our kids to the more affordable state universities?" So I see a continuing challenge to maintain our colleges and our universities and our hospitals.

Maintaining Church Ties

What is to keep large institutions in Adventism from going the way of say a Notre Dame University which is still Catholic, but is not part of the Catholic hierarchy? Or a Baylor University which is loosely Baptist?

I am not sure we will, but we should certainly try. As I take a look at religion-related hospitals across the United States, the Catholic hospitals and the Adventist hospitals are really the only two in my estimation that have maintained extremely close ties to their churches. If you look at the Methodist, Lutheran, Baptist, and Mormon hospitals, although they are still church related, that direct connection is not there. I think we should try to preserve that close connection, and I think if we can't do that, we are going to lose a lot of the advantage we have enjoyed over the years.

You see Adventists and Catholics having these close ties to their hospitals. Perhaps one reason is that both churches are quite centralized; but the trend in business and in government is toward decentralization. I wonder—How do you see this trend toward decentralization affecting the Adventist church for good or bad?

Well, it depends. First, decentralization is inevitable, and I think the church needs to do some decentralizing. But how we do it is important. If we create a very powerful network where the colleges, the universities, the churches, and all the rest of our self-supporting institutions view that network as integral to their functioning, then we can decentralize and power-share and resource-share and actually do better. In other words, we do not need a centralized power structure to maintain our colleges and hospitals.

That means that everybody plugs in to the essential mission of the church.

Right. What we could become is more of a virtual organization, and that can be

very powerful. A virtual organization is one that is bound together by shared vision but has great independence for its members. What really brings members together is no longer the control or authority, but belief in the vision itself. So the ties are virtual. What we have to do is learn how to network. We have never learned how to do that. We have always played control games which say, "If I don't control you, then you are going to wander away from me and we won't have a relationship anymore." Adventism, by the way, is marked by control. We have got to learn that it is not about control—it is about shared vision.

A Shared Vision

How can the church stay together with a shared vision when Utrecht showed that we are very split between the developing world and the developed world in regard to major social issues such as women's ordination?

That is a wonderful question. What you are really asking about is what I call postlinear spirituality, and the only thing we ever have experienced is linear spirituality.

What do you mean by "linear?"

Boxes, lines, organization charts, boundaries. The old, simple logic is that it is either "a" or "b." The kind of world we are moving into is a postlinear world. Postlinear spirituality says that I can create a network of people who are part of a commonly held and supported vision, but each member of the network is highly individualized, and as a matter of fact they can have very different policies. So the North American Division should never be constrained by the policies that the world church is constrained by. We have always said that we must all agree on the same things, and that is not true. Networking says that if you are a heart, function like a heart. If you are a lung, function like a lung. If you are a foot, function like a foot. Don't try to get a set of standards and make all those organs the same, but understand they are all part of the body. We don't know how to do that.

Would it be healthy for the church to allow for diversity of cultures and allow more relative autonomy in the divisions?

Yes. God is diversity. Although I believe God is a personal being, my favorite definition for God is outrageous diversity and outrageous creativity. We can't say one size fits all. Take a look at a rain forest and you certainly don't see a cookie cutter approach in the array of life forms; you see the unity of the diversity. The human body is another example of the unity of the diversity.

Recapitulation and Recontextualizing

It seems that type of thinking is progressive, present truth. But there is another very conservative doctrinal streak in the church that is very much tied to the past.

Yes, and there is something that brings those two things together. It's called "recapitulation." Recapitulation says that you take certain true elements of the past

We have always played control games which say, "If I don't control you, then you are going to wander away from me and we won't have a relationship anymore." Adventism, by the way, is marked by control. We have got to learn that it is not about control—it is about shared vision.

and mix them with elements from the future to create a new context. This is a recontextualizing—putting old truths in a new framework.

Will this recontextualized church come about by default or by plan?

It will have to be by plan. It will never occur by default. Default is death.

Do you see the sort of leadership in the church today that can accomplish this recontextualizing?

No. I don't think the majority of our leaders understand the concept. The reason is that we were brought up in a very parental, very authoritarian, very top-down kind of system, and what we have in the world is just the opposite.

O.K., if you don't see that leadership in the church today, how is the church going to get from here to there?

Going back to what Jesus did would be the most powerful soul-winning endeavor imaginable, because it isn't one.

Only if enough enlightened people come forward from the various parts of the church and say that there is a new way.

Where do you see those new leaders?

Here and there. I just run into them. They often are not in top conference positions. But I will find a CEO of a hospital here, I will find a college president there. Unless we have enough of those people we are in trouble. And what we have to have at some point is church-wide understanding that we need to transform ourselves into new-paradigm Adventists. The very simple idea is that spirit is eternal but forms are transient. We always confuse our tradition with our truth. We've got to see them separately. The form of the church should be determined by the culture, the society, the time, the geography, the politics, the sociology; it should be unique and it should transform itself very rapidly. The spirit never changes, but the form should change a little more rapidly than the culture does, so the church can provide leadership. I am looking for a new kind of leader and what is called "emergent spirituality" or "emergent leadership." It is

what occurs when a group of people get together that don't have a control orientation; the truth simply emerges out of the dialogue.

Reformation of the Institution

On another topic, do you see other trends beyond decentralization in business and in society that are affecting our church?

Yes, the strongest one will be deinstitutionalization.

Please explain that.

Deinstitutionalization is a reformation of the institution.

But won't that be a particular challenge for Adventism because we are characterized by our institutions?

Exactly, but let me give an example. I teach in a "virtual" university. I don't go to a specific place, but I meet my students in cyberspace. I am linked to my students throughout the United States, Canada and Europe with telephone lines and computers. I just went to Loma Linda University and talked about the need to engage in distance education. We have the ability to essentially redefine what a church is.

To me the work of the Adventist church is outside its walls, not inside. The work of a church is to go out into the neighborhoods. I was just in Rockford, Illinois, doing a program on racism, sponsored by the Lutheran church. I was there talking to the pastor of that church when I heard a noise across the street. The pastor explained that his members were out painting and carpeting and helping rebuild the neighborhood. He got it—the church was working outside its walls.

A New Vision of Service

You often speak of the importance of service, service to people's felt needs. How is our denomination doing in this regard?

I don't think [we are doing] very well. We need to engage in gap analysis. We should go out to the families in our neighborhoods and just ask the question, "What is missing here?" They say, "My husband doesn't have a job; my kids don't

have any mentors; there are no recreation opportunities; we don't have a spiritual direction." That is what generates the agenda for the church. The agenda for the church is the unmet spiritual needs of the population. But we take just the opposite approach. We say, "Come to our church on our terms and we'll teach you about Daniel and Revelation." We should say, "Wherever you are, our message has great relevance for you. It will improve your life." We'll just supply what is missing.

How do we get that new vision of service?

Well, it is currently being explored at Glendale Adventist Medical Center [Glendale, California] which is working with Adventist congregations and the General Conference to establish a laboratory in the community. The churches in the area will take this as a project and they will actually move in to meet the people on their own ground, on their own terms. I like to call it "interface evangelism." You don't come to my place, I come to yours. I don't tell you, I listen.

That is exciting!

Yes, we need to follow Jesus' example. He went out into the market place, met people on their own terms and helped them. If they were sick, he healed them; if they were discouraged, he consoled them; if they were hungry, he fed them. We have gotten away from our roots of primitive Christianity, and that is why we are in so much trouble. Going back to what Jesus did would be the most powerful soul-winning endeavor imaginable, because it isn't aimed at soul-winning. The best way to save a person's soul is often indirect—by first focusing on their felt needs.

What particularly excites you about the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

Number one, we read the Bible the right way. Second is our fervor for prophecy and our desire to carry that message to all the world. But we have built a structure that inhibits the spreading of our truth. The challenge of the church over the next decade will be reforming itself; not moving away from our basic doctrines, but creating a new context for them.



Will Someone Please Page the Three Angels?

by Raymond F. Cottrell

We Seventh-day Adventists think of ourselves as the human instruments through whom the three angels of Revelation 14 carry out their mission to the world. Between 1874, when we followed them overseas, and the 1901 session of the General Conference, we remained essentially a North American church, with a few North Americans in control of everything everywhere. We made commendable but limited progress. At that historic 1901 session, the three angels led us to adopt a form of organization and a governance policy we have followed ever since, with phenomenal success.

The first angel envisioned a world church; today, with more than nine million members in 208 of the 236 countries of the world and 88 percent of its population, we are that world church, and Global Mission aspires to plant an Adventist presence in the other 28 countries by the dawn of the 21st century.

Now, vast cultural differences from one part of the world to another confront the church with the ultimate question of how to preserve unity amid great cultural diversity. The Roman Catholic Church has resolved this world church dilemma by permitting a wide range of religio-cultural variation under strict hierarchical control. Protestant and Orthodox churches have resolved it by forming

national churches, each of which is administratively autonomous. As the only world-wide hierarchy other than the Catholics, the Adventist church could choose one or the other of these courses. Or is there a third viable alternative that will make it possible for us to remain a united world church?

These are more than academic questions, and our willingness and ability to adapt to this new environment will determine the future course of the church as a credible and viable witness to the everlasting gospel in the 21st century. The close of the 20th century thus brings us to another major turning point in our history comparable to that of 1901, one that requires major decisions and adjustments affecting church policy and governance.

After World War I with its trench warfare, the French laboriously built what they called the Maginot Line. It consisted of a continuous barrier of massive underground bunkers along its eastern border with Germany, intended to protect France against any future invasion. Or so they thought. Early in World War II Hitler's highly mobile panzer divisions easily outmaneuvered the Maginot Line and occupied all of France. The strategy of battle had changed, but French minds had not. The moral?—Inflexible thinking is the precursor of *rigor mortis*.

How Cultural Diversity Affects Church Policy

To illustrate how cultural concepts affect church policy and governance, let us revisit the 1995 session of the General Conference at Utrecht, where 2,341 delegates from all parts of the world met to chart its course over the next quinquennium.

At Utrecht the North American Division proposed that, "Where circumstances do not render it inadvisable, a division may authorize the ordination of qualified individuals without regard to gender. In divisions where the division executive committee takes specific actions approving the ordination of women to the gospel ministry, women may be ordained to serve in those divisions."

The voting delegates rejected the proposal by a majority of 1,481 to 673, or 69 percent. At that time there were 11 world

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



divisions of the General Conference. In 4 of the 11 (the divisions of Africa-Indian Ocean, East Africa, Central America, and South America) the three angels have been especially successful. With 63 percent of the world membership, these four divisions were represented by 1,126 delegates, or slightly more than those from the other seven divisions combined. The cultural orientation of these four divisions, more specifically their concept of the role of women in the home, in society, and in the church, is known to be solidly opposed to the ordination of women, and was thus responsible for approximately three-fourths, or 76 percent, of the negative vote. Sixty-five percent of the remaining 1,028 votes favored the proposal: two-thirds approval instead of the three-fifths rejection.

These four divisions, which voted against divisional autonomy regarding ordination of women, certainly have a right to their cultural preferences, and to determine the role of women within their respective divisions. And the North American proposal guaranteed them full authority to decide the issue for themselves. But does their virtual control of the General Conference bestow on them the right to impose their cultural preferences on the entire world church? They were evidently not willing to accord the other world divisions the same right of self-determination they insisted on for themselves.

Was their vote in harmony with the Golden Rule, to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Matt 7:12) and the gospel admonition to "look not [only] to your own interests, but to the interests of others" (Phil 2:2-5)? How would they have reacted if a majority had ordered them to ordain women? Does this precedent imply that they, or others, are now at liberty to impose their cultural preferences with respect to church policy on the church in other parts of the world, in the name of unity? If so, the fragile unity of the world church is at grave risk.

Here we are not concerned with ordination, the cultural aspect of the North American proposal, but with the matter of governance. The proposal did not ask the delegates to approve or disapprove of

the ordination of women, but to refer that decision to each of the world divisions to decide for itself, on the basis of what each considers best for the church in its part of the world. The proposal was based on the New Testament principle that the best way to preserve unity in spite of religious and cultural diversity is to provide for diversity. Instead, the Utrecht vote imposed uniformity, the counterfeit and unrelenting nemesis of unity.

...the Utrecht vote imposed uniformity, the counterfeit and unrelenting nemesis of unity.

True unity cannot coexist with imposed uniformity. The two are no more compatible than matter and anti-matter. Sooner or later the imposition of uniformity in religious and culturally motivated polity matters is certain to fracture the unity of the church and blunt the effectiveness of its mission to the world. Ties that bind too tightly inevitably snap of their own accord. Unless some way is found to remedy the defect in current church policy reflected in the Utrecht vote, confidence in the credibility and effectiveness of the General Conference is certain to suffer.

A Model for Unity in a Culturally Diverse World Church

The three angels have made us a world church. Surely they have a perfect solution to our religiocultural/unity problem today. What might it be? Will someone please page them and ask, "Where do we go from here?" Judging from the way the Holy Spirit led the New Testament church to resolve a similar

religiocultural/unity problem that threatened to split it into two irreconcilable factions, Jewish and Gentile, by providing for diversity (Acts 15:9-14), and the way the three angels led the 1901 session of the General Conference, I believe the three angels would respond as follows.

The time has come to complete the process of administrative decentralization begun in 1901, by delegating full decision-making and administrative autonomy to mature world divisions of the General Conference. A mature division is one in which all facets of the church are fully developed and operating, one in which there is a trained and experienced indigenous leadership, one that is fully self-supporting and able to contribute personnel and funds to the world mission of the church.

All of the world divisions should continue to meet together as a General Conference, to coordinate their continuing relationship with one another, to share responsibility for their collective mission to all the world, and to recommend plans and policies which the various divisions should consider and be free to accept, modify, or reject when not appropriate to the well-being of the church in their part of the world. The General Conference should become a coordinating rather than an administrative body, a body in which all of the world divisions could work together for their mutual well-being and for completing their collective mission to the world.

The essence of the North American proposal was to assign jurisdiction over a major policy to the divisions. Divisional autonomy is, of course, equally valid in other matters of policy. If the New Testament-based principle would resolve one major policy, why would it not do the same for others?

This plan would implement Jesus' valedictory prayer "that they all may be one...so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them" (John 17:21-23).

It would open the way for the three angels to complete their mission to the world, unhindered either by the polarizing and divisive effect of religious and cultural diversity, or by misguided attempts to impose uniformity.

Crying Just Enough

To Color My Eyelids and Stain My Frock

by L. Jill Lamberton

Jill Lamberton presented this address in the La Sierra University Church in November, 1996, as part of the annual conference of the Association of Adventist Women.

Let me tell you about my experience as a university-age Adventist woman. I am 100 percent from what we insiders jokingly call "the Adventist ghetto"—mostly educated in Walla Walla with a brief hiatus at Loma Linda Academy.

About six weeks ago all that drastically changed. I made a conscious decision last spring, during my senior year at Walla Walla College, to get away from my roots just enough so that I could gain some space to reflect on where I am from. So this last September I started a master's program in literary studies at Western Washington University, a state university in Bellingham, Washington, with an enrollment of approximately 10,000 students.

Everything around me tells me I am in a different place from what I have known previously, and the differences, believe me, go far beyond the fact that I can now purchase caffeinated beverages on campus. Indeed, during the entire first week of orientation, I found myself often unable to listen to the discussion of my classmates because I was so busy thinking about all the ways I was different from them, and all the reasons why what was going on in and outside of class would never happen at

Walla Walla College. I felt utterly different and very isolated.

By the second week, as many of you may guess, I was beginning to realize that I am a lot more like my new classmates than I am different from them, but those early impressions have remained. While I share many common interests with my classmates, the truth is I am different. What I mean to say is that I am beginning to discover all the ways in which Adventism inhabits and influences my thinking and all the ways in which my Christian world view affects the way in which I approach any text I read and any person I meet.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of my adjustment has been that in the past six weeks I have realized how poorly I speak about my faith. At the same time, never before have I needed to speak about it so thoroughly and so much. Conversations about Adventism seem to boil out of me. Why is it so difficult for me to speak about Adventism? Because I'm self-conscious of my faith, certainly. But it is more complex than that. My religious studies major and my theologian father have equipped me with the so-called correct answers for my new friends' questions about what Adventists believe, but I am still hesitant in my responses. I find myself rushing to qualify. "I don't totally buy that....I know many

Adventists who think differently on that point."

Most embarrassing for me as I talk with enquiring friends and professors is to admit that my religious tradition is not quite sure what to do with women. On this point their eyes narrow, and I feel so self-conscious that I glance down to make sure my clothes are still on—I feel that naked. I ask myself why I even try to identify with an institution in which women are still marginalized, and why I feel so closely tied to a church whose small steps on many issues are often half-hearted—often more frustrating and revealing of deep-seated prejudice than they are liberating.

Further complicating matters, I am a graduate student in humanities in an academic climate that views belief as extremely simplistic. I'm told every day that ideology is the enemy. In fact, anything that is centered is to be held suspect. The mantra of the deconstructionists and poststructuralists is "decenter, decenter, decenter." Hélène Cixous, literary theorist and deconstructionist, says, "We have to know that, to change the world, we must constantly try to scratch



Jill Lamberton graduated from Walla Walla College in 1996 with majors in English, religion, and Spanish. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in literary studies at Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington.

and tear at [ideology]. We can never rip the whole thing off, but we must never let it stick or stop being suspicious of it." (epigraph to William Corlett, *Community Without Unity: A Politics of Derridian Extravagance*, 1989)

The poet Wallace Stevens says, "The final belief is to believe in a fiction, which you know to be a fiction, there being nothing else. The exquisite truth is to know that it is a fiction and that you believe in it willingly." (Stevens, *Opus Posthumous*, 1957)

I find a vague comfort in that last quote. In fact, I've even copied it onto the inside cover of my personal planner, and I read it several times a week. It somehow gives me permission to remain a woman of faith and yet still be a contributing member of academia. You'll note, however, that the terms of the agreement are stringent: I must acknowledge that my faith is a fiction. Bleak. A compromise. Comforting but cynical.

I find myself in a dark hour, and in times such as these I turn, of course, to Virginia Woolf. In her masterpiece on the female psyche, *A Room of One's Own* (Harvest, 1989), she points out that one cannot hope to tell the truth on an issue as controversial as that of gender relations or, in this case, of faith. Rather, a person can only show how s/he arrived at whatever opinion s/he holds.

And so I have worked myself around to the question of the hour and my opinion on it, "How to reach university-age women?" I can answer this question by telling you what I need: I need my faith. I cannot escape it because to escape for me would be to stop thinking—that is how deeply Adventism is ingrained in my thoughts. I need my faith because I believe, in spite of my academic pursuits, that in order to live well I must live a centered life. I agree with Cixous that I must be suspicious of the reigning ideology.

One thing that brings many of us together is that we do not completely buy the ideology that the Adventist church hands us and asks us to uphold. But neither can I join with the "decenter, decenter, decenter" chant. I need women—Adventist women—to show me that it is possible to live honestly, faithfully, and with integrity within a world and a reli-

I ask myself why I even try to identify with an institution in which women are still marginalized, and why I feel so closely tied to a church whose small steps on many issues are often half-hearted...

gious tradition that does not fully recognize our gifts and our contributions as women. I need role models—women and men—who live lives that defy cynicism and counter disbelief. Show me that it is possible to live this way. Please.

My belief and desire for a center around which to build myself convinces me that we must collectively acknowledge the small steps and the half-hearted advances that this church has made and is making toward including women. But I think our faith must run deeper. We are not, in other words, united merely by a belief in the power of womankind, but, I hope, by what we mean when we say we join together in honoring the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. If the reason to remain a member of this faith runs no deeper than the issue of women's ordination, then I might just as easily divorce myself from this church and continue to fight outside the church where it might not be easier for women, but it is at least illegal to discriminate against them.

But I don't want to leave. Which is again why I need your leadership, men, and your leadership, women. As I was preparing this manuscript, I started going through a mental list of my friends from high school and college whom I could call to discuss my ideas. What I realized, you may suspect and even fear, was that I have very few friends left to call, because most of them have separated from this church and this faith. Adventism and Christianity as a whole have become an embarrassment and increasingly irrelevant for many of my most thoughtful friends.

And so I found myself talking with female classmates at Western—Mormons, Congregationalists, ex-Adventists, Presbyterians, and even a self-described

atheist. What surprised me is how much their feelings mirror mine. They too need to be shown how to believe in a world that treats them as naïve for doing so. They too are seeing their peers give up. They too feel increasingly isolated.

And so, to return to the words of Virginia Woolf, we, the women of disappointment, yet still the women of hope, must draw up to the fire together and repair some of the damages of the day's living. Because living today is damaging, and we need each other. As I was lost in these thoughts one recent afternoon, I turned to my collection of Edna St. Vincent Millay's poetry (*Collected Poems*, Harper, 1956), and I opened the book to just the right poem (wondering, "Is it possible that God speaks through poetry?" as my finger fell upon just the right lines). What made this poem so perfect is that it articulates what I want to hear from you, the Association of Adventist Women—those who have gone before me and have made my way a little straighter. The poem is "To a Young Girl," and articulates the thoughts of an older woman as she gazes at a younger one:

*Shall I despise you that your colorless tears
Made rainbows in your lashes, and you forgot to weep?
Would we were half so wise, that eke a grief out
By sitting in the dark, until we fall asleep.*

*I only fear lest, being by nature sunny,
By and by you will weep no more at all,
And fall asleep in the light, having lost with the tears
The color in the lashes that comes as the tears fall.*

*I would not have you darken your lids with weeping,
Beautiful eyes, but I would have you weep enough
To wet the fingers of the hand held over the eye-lids,
And stain a little the light frock's delicate stuff.*

*For there came into my mind, as I watched you winking
the tears down,
Laughing faces, blown from the west and the east,
Faces lovely and proud that I have prized and cherished;
Nor were the loveliest among them those that had wept
the least.*

How to reach university-age women? You, women of faith, whose beautiful faces blown from west and east are made more beautiful by your tears. How? Wash us in your tears. Teach us to cry just enough to bring color into our eyelids and stain the delicate stuff of our frocks. But don't leave us to drown in this disappointment and in this world too sophisticated to claim a center. No. Please. Lead us to the pool of faith. And teach us to swim.

Can God Touch (Our Lives) Through Myth?

by Robert W. Engstrom, M. Div.

Burton Mack's book, *The Lost Gospel—The Book of Q and Christian Origins*, highlights a challenge I have faced in my own ministry and faith journey. Mack portrays an early "Jesus movement" out of which came wisdom sayings, exhortations, parables, and apocalyptic pronouncements attributed to Jesus and comprising Christianity's earliest document, the "Gospel of Q." His first followers, "the people of Q...were not Christians" who thought of Jesus as Messiah or the Christ. Instead they were engrossed in social experimentation with new thoughts about traditional values, and with free association across ethnic and cultural boundaries—all called for by troubling and chaotic times. What Mack sees as missing in this "Q" document are the dramatic stories which focus on the person, life, and destiny of Jesus, stories which later in the century became the more popular form of charter document for early Christian circles.

This early shift from stressing Jesus' teachings to focus upon his person, gave rise, says Mack, to the "mythology" most familiar to Christians today, developed in Northern Syria and Asia Minor. There Jesus' death was first interpreted as a martyrdom and later embellished as a miraculous event of crucifixion and resurrection, thus forming the basis for the narrative gospels—starting with Mark in the 70s and ending with Luke-Acts early in the

second century. And had it not been for the fact that Matthew and Luke incorporated sizable portions of the "sayings gospel" (Q), it might have disappeared without a trace.

This Christ-myth allegedly drew upon Hellenistic mythologies that told about the destiny of a divine being or "son of God." Thus the cult of the resurrected, transformed Jesus was formed, proclaiming Jesus as the Christ, the Lord, the Son of God. Mack concludes that the narrative gospels cannot be viewed as trustworthy accounts of unique, Christian myth-making, and the Q gospel documents an earlier history which had no knowledge of the narratives the gospels portray.

Mack ends his book with a challenge to our Christian society: that we acknowledge the mythic foundations of our shared attitudes, values, conflicts, and behavior, and that we be willing to engage in cultural critique. His view is that we are no different from other people in that we too have "myths on our hands, and myth-making as our task." Mack sees myth-making as positive and legitimate in our current struggle to form a social vision, as we draw upon the limited number of myths, symbols, proverbs, and maxims available for guidance in our troubled and chaotic era. He asserts that every Christian generation has coined new myths, redefining their perceptions of Christ in the interest of compelling social visions under new circum-

stances. He challenges us to examine what our Christian religion might have to offer, as we rethink how to live in a multicultural world, and to ponder the social consequences of our Christian mythology. (Mack, *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q and Christian Origins*; 1993)

As a Christian and gospel minister I have great respect for the efforts of scholars such as professor Mack who utilize scientific methodology in an attempt to uncover the origins of Bible writings. However, even scientific theory and methodology shift and change with time. Pure objectivity is inevitably sabotaged, as personal bias and presupposition drive any scholar, at critical junctures, to take a crucial turn in the interpretation of raw data. Therefore I am unwilling to accept uncritically professor Mack's research conclusions that gospel stories were the product of a myth-making process late in the first century and early second century and that Jesus' earliest followers saw him only as a wise sage, thus forming a movement focusing upon his wisdom sayings. However, the scenario he describes does resonate with an understanding

Robert Engstrom, M.Div., Board Certified Chaplain in the College of Chaplains, originated this article while Protestant Chaplain at St. Bernardine Medical Center in San Bernardino, California. He loves music, writing, hiking, traveling, and time with his family.

of human behavior which concludes that we create myths to define who we are and what our community purpose and destiny is to be.

"Myth," derived from the Greek word *"muthos,"* means a "story," oft repeated, then passed from generation to generation as folklore. Such narratives arise from the emotional response a culture makes to its environment in a way that provides absolute meaning and legitimacy to its identity, basic assumptions, values, codified beliefs, and morality. Jungian psychology goes so far as to state that mythological symbols or "archetypes" are shared by all people in all places, providing a common language that expresses universal ideas, values, emotion—in a sense, universal truths.

Mythological stories often involve a god or goddess who operates in a time and place outside the ordinary, but in a way that impacts human history. Fundamental to mythology are the widespread creation stories. Eschatological myths (regarding the end of the world), myths regarding the origin of death, myths of birth and rebirth, millenarian myths (about a coming utopia), and messianic myths (regarding the coming of a savior) are some of the common myths which certain scholars believe have provided identity and community purpose among Hebrews, Christians, Muslims, and Zoroastrians. However, within the Judeo-Christian traditions, the historical perspective has usually been seen in opposition to mythical notions. (See "Mythology" and "Folktales;" Encarta, Copyright © Microsoft Corporation, 1993.) Burton Mack, of course, agrees with those scholars who see in the gospel account a Messianic myth.

My own understanding of religious myth is that it is characterized by an existential, emotional knowing that includes strong elements of faith and trust in a Supreme Being. Applying myth to the spiritual realm, however, creates a dilemma for me. For while I believe that our perceptions of God, including those found in Scripture, are partially time and culture bound, I am not comfortable taking the additional step required to see the gospel account as myth. Mythologizing the gospel stories need not suggest that God is unreal. However, most religious people inhabit the realm of folk religion in contrast to the rarefied atmosphere of Mack's scholarship. These are the people I have daily encountered as chaplain in my front lines ministry as spiritual medic to those in emotional and spiritual crisis.

One morning during my daily Worship/Spiritual Values Group, I graphically portrayed events around Jesus' "Seven Last Words" on the cross. The impact of the story upon my listeners was visibly powerful and I, too, felt a stirring within. Could this story have had the same power had I told them this was not a historical event but a myth? Probably not.

I would also be taking a significant leap from my own deeply ingrained belief in the gospel account's historicity to seeing it as a product of myth-making. So I continue to preach the Bible stories as real events, feeling the power of that literal belief. I do not fathom how I could feel the same inspirational power if I truly believed I was recounting myth. I believe that if God can create a universe, he can also choose to be present among us in human flesh, to die, and to be resurrected. However, Mack does not believe God made that choice. Believing that divine inspiration excludes myth-making does constitute a presupposition. It is equally true that Mack's more naturalistic world view presupposes his own thinking.

Professor Mack's research appears persuasive and if we take it seriously we also must be prepared to take seriously its implications. My challenge to colleagues is to answer these questions. How would we use scholarly research such as Mack's to enhance our faith and the faith of those to whom we minister? What will we do if we discover that professor Mack and his scholarly kin are correct in seeing the gospel story as myth? Will we withhold the information from our congregations? Can we gradually break the news to them in a form they can assimilate and still mature in their faith? Can we sustain spiritual life out of a mythical gospel?

Searching out answers to these questions is a dynamic process. Of course Mack's book is not the final word. Further research is required. If it became incontrovertibly clear that we must acknowledge a myth-making process in the formation of the gospel manuscripts I would likely experience emotional and spiritual shock. I have attempted to envision, in the next few paragraphs, what form our gospel proclamation might then take. I invite the reader to keep an open mind and heart—and carefully evaluate whether or not such a scenario could nurture our spiritual needs. This is purely a brainstorming exercise designed to explore implications and stimu-

late what I fervently hope will be mutually respectful dialogue from all sides of this scriptural issue. I rarely see such dialogue in print, and we sorely need it.

My current best thinking—not to be confused with advocacy—is that we would have to become accustomed to seeing God as utilizing myth to proclaim his love and solidarity with us. We would then proclaim the gospel story as at least emotionally and spiritually true. Since I presently find the stories of Christ powerfully gripping in their portrayal of unconditional love, my hope is that they would continue to be as spiritually real to us, even if we could no longer believe that God had taken human flesh and lived among us.

One direction we might have to go is to broaden our definition of divine incarnation beyond the person of Jesus to seeing the early church as more completely the "body" or embodiment of the Christ (I Cor 12). One then sees the "Christ myth" forming in the crucible of a developing church—a church anchored in the memory and growing oral tradition arising from the charismatic presence of that great "Sage" (cf. Mack) and Healer, Jesus of Nazareth. Thus the Christ story evolves as a divinely inspired community creation and confession of faith.

Such a view would see God as powerfully present, not only within the historical person of Jesus, but also in the subsequent oral and written tradition that formed the "Christ myth" as the Holy Spirit led "into all truth" (John 16:12). The Christ story, seen as God's story, thus proclaims God's unconditional love. Regardless of historicity, the miracle stories would continue to inspire hope through deliverance and healing, as God's Spirit breathed into us the breath of spiritual life, and the account of Jesus' resurrection would still attest to the power of God's love over the power of evil and death.

Is this scenario credible? Can God touch our lives through myth? I believe that, if it became necessary, God would empower us to accommodate new revelations regarding how he works in our own hearts and minds. My own faith in God will ever be rooted in the story of a people and in my own story—a story resonating with the words of the Psalmist (22:9), "From birth I was cast upon you; from my mother's womb you have been my God." I also believe that faith is always bigger than myth or history, for it embraces a God infinitely bigger than both.

Divine Uses of Doubt

by John McLarty

I've never been tempted by a hamburger. But atheism? Now that's another story.

In a curious twist, I've always found faith harder than lifestyle. Keeping Sabbath, eating vegetarian, disbelieving an eternally burning hell, practicing a little hydrotherapy when battling the flu, staying out of cinemas—that was easy stuff. But a calm assurance that I and the universe were the creations and the focus of attention of an affectionate, Almighty Being—now that was a real challenge.

My first serious brush with the idea of atheism happened when I was fifteen. Since then I've wrestled with questions raised by geochronology, prophetic interpretation, the process of revelation, suffering, and agnostic philosophers, to name just a few.

Once, while pastoring in New York City, I was going through an especially horrible period. It was my "dark night of the soul," as the mystics call it. I felt absolutely cut off from God. I was drowning in unanswered questions. The only possible solution was to drop out. But God sent me help from an unexpected source.

Ed Hare had the same kinds of questions I did, only ten times larger. I was sure talking with him would confirm my decision to drop out. Instead I discovered he was glad to be a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, was head elder of his congregation. After spending some weeks with him on an Association of Adventist Forums field trip, I returned to my church with new enthusiasm. I was saved for the ministry by someone who was honest about his questions.

While we should not trumpet our doubts, neither should we pretend that all is easy and tidy. Being honest about our own struggles can create space in the church for others.

A couple of years ago I was invited to speak for Connections, a church service organized by students at PUC. After returning home, I got a phone call from one of the student leaders. He had been ready to resign from Connections and the Adventist church because of his unanswered questions. He had listened to well-known preachers, people I greatly admired. But they hadn't helped him, because it appeared to him they had it all figured out. They had no doubts (it seemed to him). He was full of them.

In my sermon, I had been rather blunt about the difficulties of the Christian life. I talked about some of my own struggles with God and faith. I'd offered no tidy package, just a simple affirmation that God can handle our questions and that some day he'll answer them all. Somehow, hearing my story, this student thought he saw room in the church for him.

Several years earlier, I wrote a letter to the editor of the *Adventist Review* mentioning my questions about geochronology. Not long after the letter appeared, I received a phone call from Columbia, Missouri. Was I really an ordained Seventh-day Adventist pastor? the caller wanted to know. Yes. Was my ordination about to be revoked? No, not that I knew of.

He had been ready to leave the church. It seemed the only honest thing to do. He was sure he must be the only person in the entire denomination with his kinds of questions; it would be hypocrisy to stay. God used my letter and the *Review's* willingness to print it to reassure another struggling brother that there was room in Christ's church for him.

Doubt and nagging questions are not virtues. Those who question are not more

honest than those who believe. (Nor are those with a simple faith necessarily more "spiritual" than those who agonize over questions.) But if you are one of those troubled souls whose spiritual life is disrupted by questions, don't despair or drop out. Give some attention to your spiritual cousins, people like Job, Elijah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk. They all wrestled with great questions. They challenged God. Demanded answers.

Turns out that God was right. The challengers did not have all the facts. But God did not slap them down for their questions; instead he used their questions as ropes to draw them even closer to himself. And he'll do the same for you. If your questions are an expression of a real commitment to know and be faithful to the truth, then ultimately you'll find yourself at home in the kingdom whose King is Truth.

And God doesn't just offer you future hope. And as you remain faithful in God's household right now, help with Pathfinders, serve on the school board. God will use your questions to create a welcome space in his church for someone else who is looking for a home. If you are faithful, God will use your brokenness to bring healing.

John McLarty is writer and producer of The Sunday Broadcast at The Voice of Prophecy. His special interests are spiritual formation, creation spirituality, systematics, and cities.



Religion Professors Face Conference Presidents

CONTINUED FROM BACK

tions. The items mentioned appeared to fall into categories which included scriptural authority, the literalness of Genesis 1 and 2, questions of providence, distinctively Adventist beliefs, and the substitutionary view of the atonement. Echoing sentiments of General Conference president Robert Folkenberg (see *Adventist Today*, January/February, 1995), the facul-

as on the WWC campus. Several persons who were contacted for this story refused disclosive comment. Perry Parks, Montana Conference president, for example, stated that "administrators of this union are dialoguing with WWC....There are certain times when news needs to come out, and this is not the time." Lenard Jaecks, Washington Conference president, pos-

well as conference presidents. The session included at least Jere Patzer, George Reid and Angel Rodriquez of the GC's Biblical Research Institute, and Samuel Pipim and Dick Davidson at Andrews University. The theologians are all believed to belong to the Adventist Theological Society, a relatively new, conservative group.

Certain observers believe that the audiovisual conference was held in preparation for the next day's Portland meeting. During that session, conference presidents bolstered their criticisms by referring to positions held by such organizations as the Biblical Research Institute and the Geological Research Institute.

A new, independently published book by Pipim contends for a very conservative Adventist theology and criticizes by name such mainstream Adventist thinkers as WWC's Alden Thompson and John Brunt. This book was on a conference table at the Portland meeting. Pipim is a gifted African doctoral student at Andrews University who, dressed in tribal clothes, spoke eloquently against women's ordination at the Utrecht General Conference session in 1995. Some North American Adventist thinkers believe that the Portland session is but a spin-off of a larger, conservative dynamic as church ranks swell in the developing world.

The Portland meeting ended with a sense of unfinished business, with the expectation that each camp would consult and regroup for further discussion.

No one faculty member was singled out for criticism; it seemed that the whole school of religion needed to "restore credibility."

ty were told that if they don't accept traditional doctrinal formulations, they should take the ethical action of leaving denominational employment. In the session administrators referred to letters of criticism that they had received over years, and some faculty members wondered why these points never came up in their annual administrator-professor retreats.

One participant feels that the unspoken concern of the presidents was the future of the denomination, specifically, what could be done to successfully pass the Adventist torch on to the next generation. Several conference presidents spoke with passion about their concern for their own children. Because concern for the next generation is foremost in the thinking of the religion faculty, any simple division of professors vs. administrators does not exist.

Another participant felt that the Portland discussion should not be perceived as a confrontation by antagonists. Rather, it was a difficult and healthy interchange held by partners in Adventist ministry—analogous to serious, in-depth discussions that periodically occur between strong partners in healthy marriages.

The Portland session is a sensitive topic in the North Pacific Union—as well

as on the WWC campus. Several persons who were contacted for this story refused disclosive comment. Perry Parks, Montana Conference president, for example, stated that "administrators of this union are dialoguing with WWC....There are certain times when news needs to come out, and this is not the time." Lenard Jaecks, Washington Conference president, pos-

essed a different objection: "Personnel issues are considered confidential." Although Nelson has sent out a basic notice to college faculty about the Portland session, it contained essentially formal information. Although the existence of the Portland session was no secret, another meeting was supposed to be. The day before the Portland meeting, a national video-conference session was put together by the Union leadership that included some leading conservative theological thinkers in the denomination as

Sahly Accepts Post at Church Headquarters

Upon his return from North American Division meetings on higher education in California, Don Sahly, president of Southern Adventist University, announced in early February that he has accepted a position as associate director of education at General Conference headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. He plans to make the transition after graduation in May. SAU board chair Malcolm Gordon has indicated that a search committee for a new

president will be set up shortly. During Don Sahly's almost 11 years at Southern, undergraduate enrollment has risen from 1,327 to 1,625.

Sahly's tenure has been "marked by an emphasis on teaching and championing traditional values," according to a university press release. Sahly has just opened a new \$6.6 million science building, and he is best known for engineering Southern's transition last year to university status.

ENCOUNTER at the Bridge

by Ron Jolliffe

Setting:

Rural area. Dark, blustery, cold evening. Winter. Man crossing bridge hears sound. Looking up he sees a person apparently intending to jump to his death.

Man: Hey! Don't jump!

Man: What do you mean there's nothing to live for? Nobody cares? I care about you. You are a fellow human being. Don't jump!

Man: Well, I also care about you because I am a Christian.

Man: What? You're a Christian too? Well then, why don't you come down? We have a lot in common, I'm sure.

Man: What? Does it matter? Catholic or Protestant? Well, I'm Protestant. Just come down. There's a strut just below you to the left.

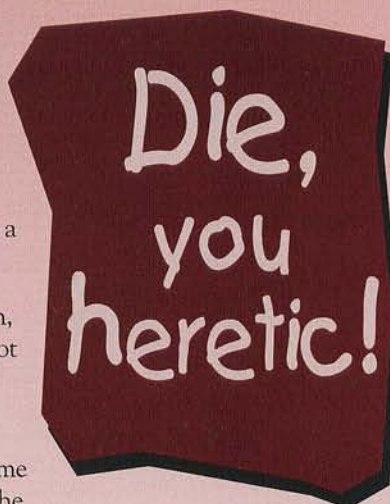
Man: What? Continental or British Isles Protestant? Actually, I belong to the tradition that developed in the British Isles.

Man: You are too? That's wonderful! Hang on tight while you stretch to the shelf about 30 inches below you on the right.

Man: You're joking, right? This is unreal. Here you are threatening to jump, I'm trying to save you and you really want to know if I belong to the Anglican or the "real" Protestant tradition? Well, no, I'm not Episcopalian.

Man: Look, just reach with your arm to the right and see if you can grab that guyline. You are so obstinate! Yes, I belong to the Reformed and not to the Lutheran tradition.

Man: OK, OK. My family comes from Scotland, not



Ronald L. Jolliffe is professor of biblical studies at Walla Walla College. He teaches Greek, aesthetics, spirituality, and several New Testament classes. His favorite leisure-time activities are reading, wood-working, sketching, and traveling.

Ireland, so we are part of the Scottish Reformed tradition. Now, will you please try to place your right foot about 18 inches below you onto that truss. Why? Because I care about you. You are a fellow human being, a Christian, a part of same national church heritage from which I come. So, please!

Man: There's a large bolt you should be able to reach with your left hand. No! I'm not part of the National Church. My family came from the Seceders.

Man: I can't believe it! Yours did too! What a small world. Brother, be careful. There's a steel arch that you can now reach just below you.

Man: By the way, do you belong to the group of Seceders that were also Burgher, or anti-Burgher?

Man: This is unreal. Who would have thought two total strangers could have so very much in common? There's a span support just beneath your right foot. Then I think I can reach you to help you down onto the hand-railing.

Man: By the way, do you belong to the Old Light or the New Light branch of the Anti-Burgher Seceder Scottish Reformed Protestant Christian faith?

Man: New Light?

[With a swift and forceful push, the man knocks the would-be suicide victim off the hand-railing on which he had just placed his feet.]

Man: Die, you heretic!

Religion Professors Face Conference Presidents

by Jim Walters, with contribution by Emily Tillotson

In an attempt to defuse mounting criticism of the School of Religion at Walla Walla College, college president W. G. Nelson presided at a meeting of his religion faculty and the conference presidents of the North Pacific Union on January 23. Frankness and candor characterized the three-hour meeting in Portland, Oregon, with nothing resolved but with commitments to ongoing conversation.

The apparent rift between the religion faculty and conference presidents is part

short presentation on "Why I Am a Seventh-day Adventist," followed by open discussion.

The seminar was very well received, judging by the number of congratulatory calls and inquiries that the college received following the seminar.

The success of the seminar, however, was sullied due to a letter signed by nine Upper Columbia Conference pastors—two of whom were present at the seminar—that was sent to a wide variety of world and regional church administrators criticizing the religion faculty. Although it mentioned specific points, the pastors' letter seemed more to lament the seminar

only backed down after someone produced a video tape of the party. It contained a reference to de-alcoholized "wine." The pastor has apologized and assured those involved that he meant no harm. To some faculty members this incident represents the breakdown of communication and the kind of steps needed to resolve the present misunderstandings.

Issues which the two Upper Columbia Conference pastors who attended the Spokane seminar contributed to the letter, plus other concerns, were the impetus for the Portland confrontation. The concerns could have been left for a college board meeting—all the conference presidents are board members—but Nelson desired to resolve the issues, if possible, by dealing directly with the principal parties.

Jere Patzer, North Pacific Union Conference president, and all local conference presidents attended the Portland session as did all but one faculty member of the School of Religion plus president Nelson, academic dean John Brunt and financial vice-president Manford Simcock. The first two hours consisted of each conference president sharing his concerns.

Contrary to the general cordiality that prevailed at previous annual retreats when these two groups met for dialogue, this special session was stern, even antagonistic at points. No one faculty member was singled out for criticism; it seemed that the whole school of religion needed to "restore credibility."

After a break, the last half-hour of the meeting was devoted to ad hoc responses by several of the faculty members. Throughout the session the support of WWC administrators for their religion faculty was evident.

The conference presidents primarily expressed their concerns by telling anecdotes and stories of incidents and asser-

Supposedly wine had been served at a WWC faculty birthday party for an esteemed department head who had also served as college church head elder for the previous decade.

of a larger gap between church administrators and institutions of higher learning (see related story on Tucson summit in this issue). Although specific incidents and anecdotes fuel the dialogue between the church's academics and its administrators, the still larger issue is one of conflicting religious world views—fundamentally different perspectives on church life.

An illustration of the type of incident that led to the Portland meeting was a seminar the School of Religion faculty held for church members in Spokane on Sabbath, October 12. Each of the seven faculty members participating gave a

speakers' absence of certain traditional reasons for confessing the faith than to oppose the reasons given. Although a second letter of concern, supposedly signed by another 20 pastors, was said to exist, it never appeared on the college campus.

A specific issue of temperance laxity came up in the Portland session. Supposedly wine had been served at a WWC faculty birthday party for an esteemed department head who had also served as college church head elder for the previous decade. College church pastor Bill Knott made the charge, and he

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22