

**YOUTH PASTOR TERMINATED**

NEWS • ANALYSIS • OPINION

# ADVENTIST TODAY

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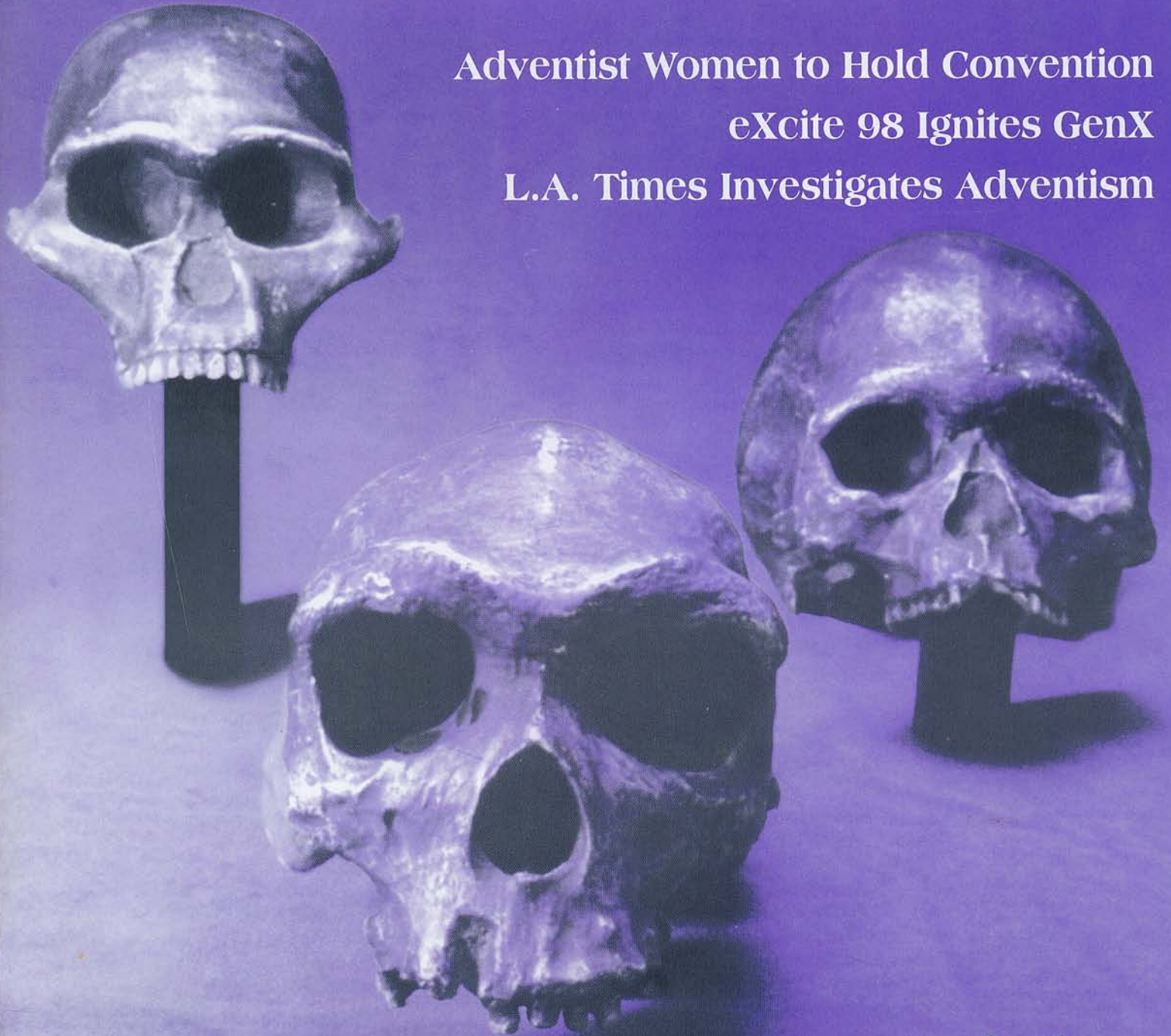
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SEPTEMBER • OCTOBER 1998

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## How Long Ago Did God Create?



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## When Was Creation?

Sounds like a simple question. It brings to mind the words of Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." It's a simple, elegant statement that has been part of the bedrock of Christian belief from the very beginning of the church.

Adventists have long held that creation occurred during a single week about six thousand years ago. George McCready Price, the father of modern-day Creation Science, was an Adventist. So, for an Adventist, the question should be an easy one. Except it isn't. Turns out to be excruciatingly complicated.

In surveys of our readers, the date of creation ranks low among topics of concern, but among Adventist scientists, it is a perennial concern. One's views on geochronology can affect one's employment.

The Conference on Science and Faith at Andrews University (see article on page 14) presented a vigorous reaffirmation of the church's commitment to a short geochronology. But the affirmation was complicated. It turned out that even the most conservative scholars did not believe the stars or the sun and moon or even the earth were created during the week of Genesis 1. The basic matter of the earth was already here, they believe; creation week involved only the creation of life on earth.

So if "creation" means the appearance of life, then conservative Adventist theologians and scientists believe creation occurred a few thousand years ago—more than six, less than ten thousand. More than half of Adventist scientists believe life first appeared on earth more than ten thousand years ago.

If "creation" means the emergence of the universe, then conservative Adventist theologians and church administrators see no problem with believing creation happened fourteen billion years ago. But no one at the conference presented clear principles of interpretation that could guide a person in distinguishing between the creation statements in the Bible that must be tied to a short chronology and creation statements that are independent of the chronological indicators in the Bible record.

## More than half of Adventist scientists believe life first appeared on earth more than ten thousand years ago.

Why do we readily allow the validity of conventional astronomical chronology but not of conventional geological chronology? The answer is easy. Conventional geochronology is seen as a threat to the Sabbath, which is central to Adventist identity.

This is probably the area in which the conference yielded the most definitive answer: openness to conventional geology does not necessarily mean the death of the Sabbath. If you had listened in the halls at this conference, you'd have encountered Adventist scientists and theologians who no longer believe in a short chronology, even for life on this earth. And you'd have also discovered that these people are avid Sabbath-keepers and advocates. While Adventists have long feared that any compromise in geochronology would automatically send us down the slippery slope and result in the collapse of Sabbath theology, the hallway conversations of this conference indicated otherwise.

A potentially greater threat to Sabbath-keeping is a continued effort by the church to lock together Sabbath-keeping and a particular geochronology. These efforts have made some students of science feel unwelcome in the Adventist church merely because of their views on the date of creation.

I don't have the final answer to the question, "When was creation?" But I am convinced it's much less significant than the question, "Where is your flock?" We cannot allow complicated questions over dates to keep us from offering a home and pastoral care to students and scientists. The most important questions in connection with creation are, "Who is the Creator?" and "How should those made in his image live?" The Sabbath addresses both of those questions.

Let's teach the Sabbath; let's teach creation and environmental stewardship; let's lift up Jesus as the divine Creator and Savior.

We can leave the question of when for later.

John McLarty, *editor*





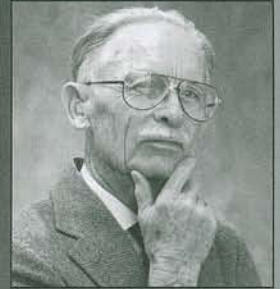
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The skulls pictured are (L to R) Australopithecine, 2 million BP; Neanderthal, 100,000 BP; and Cro-Magnon, 90,000 BP.

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**PUBLISHER:**  
James Walters

**EDITOR EMERITUS:**  
Raymond Cottrell

**EDITOR:**  
John McLarty

**MANAGING EDITOR:**  
Colleen Moore Tinker

**ART DIRECTOR:**  
Richard Tinker

**ASSISTANT EDITORS:**  
Gail Foster  
Cherie Rouse  
James H. Stirling  
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**EDITORIAL ADVISOR:**  
Steve Daily

**OFFICE MANAGER:**  
Hanan Sadek

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Telephone: (800) 236-3641  
Fax: (909) 785-1595  
E-mail: AToday@aol.com  
Web site: www.atoday.com

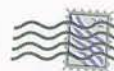
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# FIRST CLASS

AT Reader  
777 My Home St.  
Homesteadville, CA



Letters to the Editor  
Adventist Today  
P.O. Box 8026  
Riverside, CA 92515

## Congregationalism

The May-June 1998 issue of *Adventist Today* arrived this afternoon and I have already read it from cover to cover. Thank you for your excellent coverage of the issue of congregationalism in the Adventist church.

The idea seems scary, yet we have gone through many scary developments during my 74 years of life in this church and the church has survived. Every crisis that arises forces us to mature as a church, and that is good.

My favorite article in this issue was John McLarty's editorial suggesting that children of Conservatives become Liberal adults and vice versa, sometimes ending up in different congregations as a result. Perhaps this is because children always try to improve on their own upbringing, sometimes pulling a bit too far the other way in so doing.

I especially appreciated John's comment at the end of his editorial that "we (the Liberals and Conservatives) should stay together for the sake of the children." Well put!

Carol Mayes  
Chatsworth, California

The last issue of *Adventist Today* concentrated on the issues of congregationalism in the Adventist Church. One issue often left untouched in this debate is that of fanaticism and extremism. I remind you of something we all know, that David Koresh is merely the tip of the iceberg of fanatical elements along the fringes of the Adventist church, some within the church and some removed from church fellowship. All churches have their extremists, but as we are not a mainstream church we attract a disproportionate number of the fanatical element. Much of Ellen White's ministry consisted of dousing fanatical flare ups. In fact this is one of her most important legacies to our denom-

ination. The reason we did not dissolve long ago into factions and splinter groups like the Davidians (Shepherd's Rod) is because we kept tight rein on extremists. For better or worse this duty usually lies with the administrators of our church.

Of course we should remember that the church leadership, in its control of extremist elements, often becomes extremist itself. A couple decades ago the Adventist church argued in court that it had a hierarchical structure "like the Catholic Church," indicating an inverse fanaticism. More recently various administrators have crossed well over the line of appropriate control over local

**If I were a Hebrew  
scholar I would likely suffer  
the same anxiety as  
Mr. Gane when I read  
*Patriarchs and Prophets*.**

congregations, sometimes driving out capable pastors, and even entire congregations. In order to preserve both unity and diversity we also must make sure the leadership is kept in check.

Jim Miller  
Madison, Wisconsin

## Doctrine and Theology

I appreciated your article "Doctrine and Theology: What's the Difference?" (Jan-Feb. 1998) very much. It spawned the questions I ask in this letter. Which doctrines of the 27 fundamental beliefs of the SDA church are in fact "doctrines," and which are "theology," according to your article's assessment of the situation? I got your point about the difference between the two, but I'm at a loss as to exactly how to apply that point to what

the church has taught me about truth. What should my attitude be toward a church that allows only "doctrines" on certain points that should be "theology"? I want to know truth; and if some of our "doctrines" are, indeed, not entirely truth—and it's beginning to look like that is the case—I want to know that. If our church has become too detailed in its statements of 27 beliefs, in what precise ways has it done that, specifically relative to our exact doctrines?

Please, if you can, give me some guidance here. Since finding out a couple years ago that our traditional sanctuary/investigative judgment/Daniel 8:14/1844 doctrines are not supportable by Scripture, context, accurate exegesis, etc., (though the church teaches that they are), I have come to the point of not trusting that other of our beliefs are right also.

You mentioned the theologian "famous for his cogent defenses of the Adventist system," and how he was troubled about the traditional Adventist understanding of the second coming. I guess I want to know, where else, specifically, are we wrong?

As you pointed out in your article, the SDA denomination provides a center from which people can diverge and connect. In which of the 27 have they gone too far, creating "doctrines" when some of these 27 issues should be left as "theology" for the mavericks, the eccentrics, the fanatics, the adventurers, and the dissidents to roam around in?

Dollie Moulton  
Pearcy, Arkansas

*The editor responds: Mr. McLarty's editorial did not attempt to distinguish the core teachings of the church. No one person can do that. But future issues of AT will publish the thinking of some of the best scholars in the church who have wrestled with this very topic. Keep reading.*



### Attrition in SDA Pastors

Over the past 5 years or so I have noticed that a high number of personal colleagues and acquaintances have left or been fired from the SDA ministry...Most of these...were totally called, dedicated, spiritual men and...women. I wonder what the average attrition rate from losing ministers in our church is...and how it has typically compared with other like faiths, i.e. level of conservatism, style, basic mainstream American religions, geographic locations etc. . .

Beck, via the Internet

### Non-Canonical Ceremony

I find it heartening to read Roy Gane's testimony in regard to his own problems with the ongoing evolution of the SDA sanctuary doctrine ["Our Cherished Doctrine", *Adventist Today*, March/April, 1998]....It appears that Mr. Gane's grappling is still continuing to this day....[He] skillfully avoids confronting or claiming Biblical authority for two key features of the sanctuary doctrine, firstly: "The repentant sinner brought his burnt offering to the door of the tabernacle and placing his hand on the victim's head, confessed his sins,...." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 366 (354-355). This feature I do not find in Scripture.

The second key feature of the sanctuary doctrine avoided by Mr. Gane is in regard to the blood. The Word states that: 1. Some of the blood was put on the altar of burnt offering (in the outer court); 2. All the rest of the blood was poured out at the bottom of the altar.

Contrast this with the sanctuary doctrine in *Patriarchs and Prophets* p. 366 (354-355): "By his own hand the animal was slain and the blood was carried by the priest into the holy place and sprinkled before the veil, behind which was the ark."

A new and non-canonical ceremony is introduced in this scenario. After the blood was used up, (rest of the blood, NIV), some extra blood is conjured up and this extra blood is carried into the sanctuary before the veil for a new ceremony not mentioned in Leviticus 4:20.

If I were a Hebrew scholar I would likely suffer the same anxiety as Mr. Gane when I read *Patriarchs and Prophets*. "For until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart." 2 Corinthians 3:14,15.

Michael Pestes  
Moorhead, Minnesota

### For the Birds

I wanted to take a minute to thank Anita Strawn de Ojeda for her article "Church is for the Birds" in the July/August issue of *Adventist Today*. It is one full of truths that I believe would do most of us good to think about often...How easy it is to just stick our heads in the sand [and] get too comfortable with life as it is...I pray that our denomination as a whole will become more like the geese. May our leaders be able to uplift the burdens of the ones behind. May we be willing to also lead. In whatever position we hold, may we always cheer from behind. Most importantly, when someone falls out of formation, may we look for wisdom through Christ and his example in caring and nurturing instead of condemning and justifying.

Tamie Collum Fernandez  
Birmingham, Alabama

### Undermining the Church

I can no longer subscribe to *Adventist Today*. It is getting increasingly clear that your magazine undermines the Adventist church.

Bob Forss  
Clovis, New Mexico

### Casting Doubts

I try to keep an open mind but it seems that you ought to be trying to maintain our integrity—rather it appears to me that anything that you can do to cast any doubts you do it. There are some things we need to know but you seem to drag the bottom of the barrel.

Alten A. Bringle  
Lakewood, Colorado

### Presenting Mrs. White

I did not appreciate your magazine the way you presented Mrs. White.

A. D. Burch  
Apopke, Florida

### Instrument of the Devil

After perusing the Nov.-Dec., 1997, AT, I feel it is being used as an "instrument of the Devil to confuse men's minds."

Monty Phillips  
Lansing, Michigan

### Love the Disagreeable

*Adventist Today* keeps getting better and better. Your presentation and honesty in showing all sides of the issues confronting our church are most commendable, as is your plea that we love those who do not agree with us. Keep up the good work!

Ralph and Anne Wiseman  
Lowden, Washington

### Branson Appointment

In the July-August issue of AT, in the account of editorial changes at *Spectrum*, your reporter mistakenly said that his appointment is to "the religion faculty." Dr. Branson's thinking and writing has long dealt with (among other things) political theory and political policy, and we are excited that he is teaching in our history and political studies program. At the same time, he is heading a new center—affiliated with the college and located across the street from the nation's Capitol—that addresses law and public policy issues from the Adventist point of view.

Charles Scriven, President  
Takoma Park, Maryland

### One in Christ

I appreciated the article "How Can We Be One With Them?" (AT July/August 98) What an excellent example of becoming one in Christ! It is Christ who joins the body together.

Jean Boller  
Bothell, Washington

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*Adventist Today*, P.O. Box 8026  
Riverside, CA 92515-8026  
E-mail: atoday@aol.com



# Potomac Youth Pastor Terminated

COLLEEN MOORE TINKER

**O**n May 13, 1998, the Potomac Conference of Seventh-day Adventists voted to recommend that Sally Jo Hand, the conference youth director, "seek a ministry opportunity in another area of ministry immediately." The executive committee affirmed her "...ability to do pastoral ministry," but said it "cannot affirm her effectiveness in the youth department."

This vote came nearly four years after Sally accepted a call to become the first female conference youth director in the Adventist church. She left the Arizona Conference where she was the solo pastor of the Stafford and Willcox churches and where, in 1993, Arizona Conference president Herman Bauman ordained her at the annual camp meeting at Camp Yavapines. She also had focussed much time working with the conference youth programs and Pathfinders.

In August, 1994, Sally agreed to take the position in the Potomac Conference.

include training youth leaders in local churches, summer camp ministry, networking Potomac youth leaders with various geographic area coordinators, a quarterly newsletter for youth leaders, and more. She anticipated using the conference summer camp as a meeting place throughout the year for her youth leader training seminars.

## No Summer Camp

What Sally didn't know was that the summer camp was not to be part of her responsibilities. Bonny Musgrave, wife of the camp ranger, had directed camp the summer before Sally's arrival in the absence of a youth director. The conference executive committee agreed that she should continue as director, especially since the executive committee feared her husband would quit if Bonny couldn't have the job. This arrangement was irregular; in almost all cases the conference youth director is also camp director.

After accepting the job, selling her

advised her that she should decide if she'd take the job regardless of the summer camp situation. Since Sally had already accepted the position, sold her house and said good-bye, she decided to continue with her move. Since McMillan had not officially told her she would not be camp director, she reasoned that she would probably be able to negotiate something when she got to Virginia.

After arriving at the Potomac Conference Sally learned that McMillan's call to her had been at the executive committee's request. When Sally asked him why he had told her he was calling on his own, not as a representative of the executive committee, he replied, according to Sally, "Because I'm sick and tired of doing their dirty work."

Additionally Sally learned that then-treasurer Marvin Griffin had been against hiring her. He had stated to the executive committee that a woman could not do the job of a conference youth director.

Further, Sally learned that the conference had interviewed two experienced youth ministers before interviewing her. In both cases the administration told the men that they wouldn't be camp directors if they came. Both men refused the job.

"We wanted a youth leader who would spend the majority of her time building a youth ministry network similar to Pathfinders," Broeckel says. "She [Sally] never had a call to be the camp director," he continues. "She's never been able to accept that although it was clearly never part of her job description."

## Model Program

During the ensuing four years Sally instituted an active youth ministry training program. She did present a proposal including using the camp as a center for ministry training, but Broeckel didn't accept it, so she used other venues. She also established a Youth Council (of which Bonny Musgrave was a member

**What Sally didn't know was that the summer camp was not to be part of her responsibilities.**

The executive committee had told her that her new position was largely undefined. Previously three people had held the youth directorship, but because of financial considerations they were restructuring and hiring only one director. Sally asked for a written job description, but they told her that they wanted her to assess the conference's needs and her interests and define the position herself. They told her, in fact, that her lack of formal experience was why they wanted her: she would come with no preconceived ideas about the job, and she would be able to do something "that had never been done in Adventism."

Sally proposed a program that would

house, and bidding farewell to her congregations, Sally was preparing to move to Virginia when she received a call from Len McMillan, director of the now-extinct "Family Ministries" department. He emphasized that he was not calling on behalf of the executive committee but was calling entirely on his own. He told her that she should not expect to be the camp director and that he believed the youth director should not be in charge of summer camp.

Sally called Herbert Broeckel, the new Potomac Conference president who was then moving to Virginia from Northern California. He said that he was too far away to know all the details but



but attended only once) which met regularly. Her program and Youth Council eventually caught the attention of Ron Whitehead, Associate Director for Youth Ministries for the North American Division, who, in February, 1997, said he wanted to use the Potomac Conference and Sally's program as one of five models for training other conferences to do youth ministry.

Broeckel, however, didn't see Sally's program the same way. "We had the problem of two strong women [Sally and Bonny Musgrave] in conflict," he said. "We had hoped a youth council would develop, but it couldn't happen because these two women wouldn't sit at the same table together."

The Potomac's youth ministry budget had not changed in 14 years; it allocated \$90,000 per year for summer camp, and \$10,000 for all other conference youth activities. During Sally's second year, she had exceeded budget by \$12,000. She worked with the treasurer to bring the expenses for her growing program closer to the budget allocation. Meanwhile, she and the youth council, with input from Ron Whitehead, began work on a proposal for a budget increase that would more nearly match the youth ministry budgets of other similarly sized conferences. They eventually prepared a proposal requesting a budget of \$47,000. The executive committee never voted on the proposal.

"It took years for the former treasurer [Marv Griffin] and the current treasurer [Kurt Allen] to have confidence in her staying within the budget," President Broeckel said in explanation for the apparent reticence to grant a youth ministry budget increase. "She overspent; both the previous treasurer and the cur-

rent treasurer spent long hours working with her to help her stay within budget."

When asked if the Potomac's youth ministry budget was equivalent to other similar conferences' budgets, Broeckel answered, "In some places yes, in some places, no. We hoped we could give her more money; we could use more money in the youth department."

### Three Concerns

Three other issues became major concerns for Herb Broeckel. The first was

his wife an apology, he said, if they granted Sally permission to move when his wife's wishes had been thwarted. Ultimately the committee voted 7 to 6 that Sally not move, but she believed she had to make the move for her son's sake regardless of the vote. She told President Broeckel that she was moving anyway, and she did, in time for her son's senior year.

The second issue was Sally's working on a master's degree in art therapy from George Washington University. (She

**He had stated to the executive committee that a woman could not do the job of a conference youth director.**

that on February 4, 1997, Sally's 16-year-old son was in a nearly fatal car accident when he fell asleep driving the 48 miles home after classes and school activities at Shenandoah Valley Academy. She decided that she needed to move from Staunton, where the conference office is, to New Market, where the academy is. She also believed that she couldn't conscientiously put her son in the dormitory and then devote her life to helping other people's children.

She requested permission to move and was startled when Broeckel told her in executive committee that his wife had wanted to move to New Market years before when they had previously been in the conference. They had stayed in Staunton since Herb was in the conference office. The conference would owe

had undergraduate degrees in art and religion, and she had put herself through seminary at Andrews University as a single mom of three boys.) As she visited schools for weeks of prayer, however, she realized that she needed more training than her M.Div. in order to help the students who came and talked to her about problems ranging from sexual molestation to family violence and drug use.

The executive committee denied her request for tuition for her degree. (Even though Sally financed her own M.Div., the conference stood by its policy of only paying for one master's degree.) They did agree for her to take classes as long as they did not interfere with her work and she did them on her own time. She also agreed to teach one art class at Shenandoah Valley Academy, and that class would count as a practicum toward her degree.

Sally asserts that these classes in no way affected her job or the traveling and speaking engagements her position required.

The third issue was a rotator cuff injury Sally sustained on a youth white-water rafting trip in July, 1997. By September she was having acute pain and physical therapy treatments three times a week. She began to miss Monday

## Adventist Women to Hold Convention

**T**he Association of Adventist Women will hold its 16th Annual Convention on October 15-18, 1998, at the Song-Kerlee Convention Center in Loma Linda, California. The theme for the occasion is "Women for all seasons."

The convention will feature outstanding speakers, workshops, an agape supper, Sabbath services, and a banquet honoring "women of the year." For more information call the Adventist Plus Line at (800) 732-7587.



morning worship at the office because of her therapy appointments. By December, the executive committee told her to take two months off to heal while they applied for workmen's compensation for her salary. (The application was denied.)

By February President Broeckel felt Sally had lost credibility with the executive committee. They didn't understand, he told her, why she was gone from the office so much. He asked that she move back to Staunton. She agreed but said she couldn't move until her shoulder healed enough to be able to pack.

### No More Support

"She had moved," Broeckel told *Adventist Today*; "she was teaching art and taking art classes. The administration felt that for the entire past school year she had not been making herself available. I decided not to support her any longer, but I'm not taking any responsibility for the attitudes of the executive committee."


On May 21, 1998, Broeckel called Sally into his office and told her that the executive committee had voted to affirm her as a pastor but not to continue as the youth director. He advised her to find a pastoral position by September 9, 1998. According to Sally's notes from the meeting, Broeckel told her, "You and I have both been in this church long enough to know that it is much better for you to find a position yourself than to have your president look for one for you."

Meanwhile, Sally has accepted a position as an associate professor of theology at Walla Walla College. Beginning this fall she will teach 12 hours of religion classes, and the school has helped to arrange for her to continue her master's degree by commuting to Portland, Oregon, for classes.

"Sally is very gifted and capable," Herb Broeckel says. "She can do any job she makes up her mind to do, and she does it well. One thing I agreed to do was to treat her as I did any other worker

and not become her personal mentor. I'm sure it's been hard for her, being a single mom, but I believed she had the strength to stand on her own feet as a woman. Now she has accepted a position to teach at Walla Walla College; I hope we've gotten a win-win situation out of this."

"I have told the committee when I disagreed with them, for example, when they fired the Takoma Park pastor [Mike Pionkowski] for not sending his tithe to the conference [see *AT*, May/June, 1996] and when they fired Richard Fredericks," [AT, September/October, 1997] Sally acknowledges. "And I did move to New Market against the president's wishes. But I loved my work, and I've always made it my first priority next to my son. It seems, though, that I've been in conflict with the administration almost since the beginning."

"But I love to teach, and I'm looking forward to starting my new position at Walla Walla and to being on the West Coast where I can be closer to my family." 

## Grass-roots Movement Going Global

MARYAN STIRLING

I've got a tiny bottle of olive oil in my purse, and I'm keeping it there. My friend Isabel used oil from that vial to anoint me for service at the end of Prayer Summit IV at La Sierra in July. The rest of the oil is for me to use to symbolize the healing presence of the Holy Spirit in my ministry. I am authorized to pray for healing or whatever—and to anoint with oil in the name of the Lord. I hadn't expected this.

The Prayer Summit idea began with a women's prayer group in Riverside led by Janet Lui. They asked for funding to organize prayer for the General Conference session in 1995. The grass-roots movement appears to be on its way to going global. At least twelve language groups participated, coming from several continents.

The Summits have been shaped by New Zealander Garrie Williams and his

emphasis on the Holy Spirit. Williams has written three books laced with stories of miraculous healings in answer to prayer. His daily devotional, *Welcome Holy Spirit*, highlights every scriptural mention of the Holy Spirit, from Genesis to Revelation, straight through. He

emphasizes Ellen White's experiences with Spirit power, some of them not widely known.

Another Summit, in 1999, is in the planning stages. Theme: "The Spirit and the Bride Say Come." I can't imagine missing it.

### Book Review Revisited

Through an editing oversight, the final sentence in the last paragraph of the review of Paul A. Giem's *Scientific Theology* by Ervin Taylor published in the last issue of *Adventist Today* did not express correctly the view of the reviewer. Here is the correct final paragraph:

This is a book with an approach and thesis that might have made an interesting contribution to the science/religion dialogue in the late 18th century or perhaps up to the middle of the 19th century. At the end of the 20th century, it is difficult to know how to classify it. It is certainly a unique, scientifically literate approach to Adventist apologetics. However, with a title that is an oxymoron of "epic" proportions, one way to characterize it is to suggest that the volume establishes Dr. Giem as the scientific and theological Immanuel Velikovsky of our time.



# eXcite 98 Ignites GenX

COLLEEN MOORE TINKER

**I**t began as the vision of two women at La Sierra University. Jennifer Tyner, assistant vice-president for student life at LSU, and Shasta (Emery) Burr, senior communications major, began to imagine what would happen if they could ignite Adventist young people under the age of 35 with a passion for serving Christ and the church. The result of the vision was a four-day weekend, eXcite 98, at LSU featuring a variety of workshops, musicians, and speakers.

Over 1,500 Gen X-ers from across the North American Division attended eXcite 98 during the four days from August 6-9, 1998. In addition, many NAD churches followed the eXcite 98 recommendation to have someone under 35 give the Sabbath sermon on August 8.

On Friday morning, August 7, a series of keynote speakers began addressing the young people. First to speak was a team: Alex Byran, pastor of the Atlanta, Georgia, New Community Church, and Erin Miller, a pastor from Asheville, North Carolina. General Conference president Robert Folkenberg followed them with a short address, after which he fielded questions during a question-and-answer period moderated by Adam Rose, an attorney from Portland, Oregon.

Byard Parks spoke Friday evening. He is the pastor of three churches in Colorado:

Franktown, Colorado Springs South, and LifeSource Seventh-day Adventist World Outreach, a congregation which focuses on ministering to the Protestant community.

Shasta Burr gave the sermon on Sabbath morning, and Dwight Nelson, pastor of Pioneer Memorial Church at Andrews University, gave the afternoon address. John Henderson spoke on Saturday evening and encouraged the audience to remain ignited with the Holy Spirit after the weekend was over. John is a 1998 theology graduate from Pacific Union

weekend. "At first it sounded like a lot of enthusiasm to get together and celebrate our spiritual gifts and diversity, but for what?" he recalls. "But God had a different agenda."

None of the speakers had conferred in advance, Parks says. Yet each one came with a talk that dovetailed with the others, and the result was a theme of commitment and sacrifice, of being willing to die, if necessary, for a cause and a movement. "I could feel the Holy Spirit's presence," Parks remembers. "The response to Rojas's call was overwhelming."

The worship team was from the Redlands Celebration Center, and according to Parks, they didn't elicit much enthusiasm or participation from the audience. They

**"At first it sounded like a lot of enthusiasm to get together and celebrate our spiritual gifts and diversity, but for what?" he recalls.**

College who will spend the next year doing evangelism, while supported by a private sponsor. Following his talk, Jose Rojas from the General Conference spoke briefly. He apologized to the young adults for any time the church might ever have hurt them and stressed that the church needs them. He ended with an altar call to which the entire audience responded.

Parks admits that early in the planning stages of eXcite 98 he was frustrated by what appeared to be a lack of clear vision for the

spoke and played almost as if performing instead of leading, he explains, and throughout the singing the audience members chatted among themselves and didn't become involved in worship.

But in retrospect Parks says that even this detail became part of God's plan. "If the worship had been premier," Parks asserts, "people would have said that the audience's responses were the results of emotional highs generated by the music. This way their responses [at the ends of the sermons] were clearly to the Holy Spirit touching them through the powerful sermons they heard."

The two women's vision has begun to be fulfilled. Many who attended eXcite 98 have gone back to their communities and are starting small group Bible studies, community fellowship churches, and prayer groups. According to Jennifer Tyner, An eXcite 99 conference is in the planning stages for next summer, and next March, Andy Nash from the *Adventist Review* will be helping to produce a conference called Empower. This conference will help to train Gen-Xers in leadership and will help them to find their niches in ministry roles.

## Spectrum and AAF Select New Leaders

**S**pectrum, the magazine produced by the Adventist Association of Forums (AAF), has selected a new editor to replace founding editor Roy Branson. Bonnie Dwyer, a journalist from Northern California, will serve as the new editor. Bonnie has worked at Pacific Union College for the past five years, most recently as an assistant to the president. AAF has also selected a new president, David Larson, who is on the Faculty of

Religion at Loma Linda University. He replaces Les Pitton, executive vice-president of Adventist HealthCare, Inc.

Dr. Branson will be a part time faculty member in the history and political studies program at Columbia Union College. He will also head a law and public policy center which will help students to pursue careers in law and legislative advocacy.

"I want to maintain the vision of Spectrum's founders," Bonnie says. "I want the magazine to be a place where Adventist thinkers can share and discuss their ideas."



How the LA Times' 2-part story on Adventism came about:

## The Story Behind the Story

JAMES WALTERS

In the spring of last year two Loma Linda physicians contacted the *Los Angeles Times* to suggest a story idea—the high number of doctors leaving or being fired from employment at Loma Linda University. Tom Gorman, the *Times* reporter whose beat includes Loma Linda, began to explore the allegations. He soon found other issues, such as the former denominational head auditor David Dennis's law suit against the denomination, about which a major story in the *Washington*

the church's headquarters on crisis management in anticipation of a very negative story, says one General Conference department head. When the two-part story ran there was a corporate sigh of relief, with the story getting much less attention than it did when the interviews were taking place.

One west coast Adventist official repeatedly requested that the *Times* run a "positive" story, said Gorman. This official didn't like what he had heard of the tenor of the interviews taking place, and he implied to the *Times* that a negative story could result in a lawsuit, according to

Adventist church as employer. However, William Shea, a physician-turned-biblical-researcher at church headquarters, said he didn't mind his name being used because he planned to retire in a year, and he gave the story's most provocative quote, followed by an equally perplexing reporter's comment. Shea, in reference to the church's firing of Dennis, allegedly said: "They gave him the bum's rush. It was a kangaroo court." ...He contends that Dennis was forced out for doing too good a job as a 'whistle-blower.'"

This quote, and particularly the reporter's interpretation, could be seen as meaning that Shea disagreed with the tribunal's charge that Dennis had a sexual relationship with a teenager who resided with the Dennis family for a time in the 1970's in Singapore. When questioned, Gorman clarified his meaning by saying that he was not trying to determine guilt or innocence, but he was interested in church process. Shea, recalled Gorman, had been concerned about inadequate due process, a rush to judgment.

A week after the Adventism stories ran, Gorman said that the *Times* had received a lot of email—most of it from Adventists and positive. Although some Adventists will view the stories as negative, Gorman said that the goal was solely to inform. He said that the good the church is doing in its schools, hospitals and by the rank and file members is unquestioned. However, he continued, many members are not aware of issues going on in some of the church's projects, and reporting important, little-known information is the job of good journalism.

A week after the Adventism stories ran Gorman said that the *Times* had received a lot of email—most of it from Adventists and positive.

*Times* had been run. And the Dennis case, which alleged irregularities at the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, caught the *L.A. Times'* attention, becoming the sole focus of part two of the recent *Times'* focus on Adventism. So what began as a possible local story grew to one of national and then international proportions.

Reporter Gorman estimates that he and colleague Eric Lichtblau interviewed between 100 and 200 persons. Some of these persons had been told by the reporters to expect a major story on Adventism to appear last winter. But due to various factors—including two other major stories on religion that the *Times* has run this year—the Adventism story didn't appear until some 8 months after it had been originally written.

Some Adventist leaders were apprehensive about what the reporters would write. There were a number of meetings at

Gorman. Nevertheless, the church headquarters and its institutions were most cooperative in giving material and in setting up interviews. A sidebar on Loma Linda University was run alongside the first story. However, the original LLU segment was 4 or 5 times longer. The *Times'* editors felt that much of the material was too in-house and dated.

A large number of those interviewed requested that their names not be used, said Gorman. This supposedly was because of fear of repercussions within the Adventist community or from the

### Coming Next Issue... Holiday Meditations:

- Communion
- The Christmas Tree
- Giving Thanks in Hard Times



# ...ADRA Answers Back

AL DITTES

**M**ario Ochoa, executive vice president for ADRA International, agreed to answer *Adventist Today's* questions raised by the *Los Angeles Times'* article about ADRA.

**Dittes:** The *Times* article said US government relief funds built two tennis courts and hired a tennis pro in Rwanda. It also said ADRA workers in Bolivia solicited Christmas gifts from contractors for a US-sponsored food program. Were these things true? How did you handle them?

Ochoa: In Rwanda, the first tennis court was a concrete slab for a warehouse being built with AID (Agency for international Development, a US funding unit) funds. When the building was finished, they built a real tennis court, but only with money from the sale of oil cans or flour sacks. In La Paz, one employee went to a vendor and asked for Christmas presents for children of ADRA employees. When we learned of it we told him to stop and to return the gifts.

**The *Times* also accused ADRA employees in Haiti of buying supplies in Miami which were available on the island.**

This is absolutely false. Our people went to Miami for things such as vehicles and computer supplies. The confusion arose because the original purchase records were kept at the Inter American Division office instead of in Haiti. We corrected that problem.

**The article said that auditors found ADRA employees in Mozambique purloining commodities and profiting by selling food "unfit for human consumption" to unsuspecting villagers.**

Selling commodities unfit for human consumption is a normal AID procedure spelled out in the policy book. Such commodities are sold for animal consumption and destroyed if unfit for either. If there had been an instance in our records of our

**Selling commodities unfit for human consumption is a normal AID procedure spelled out in the policy book.**

selling outside of protocol, we would like to know. But it never happened. I told that to Mr. Lichtblau. We have strict controls.

**Auditors voiced concern over \$105,000 in AID funding forwarded to an Adventist-owned university, presumably Andrews, for human research. This sum appeared to include "pure profit" for the school.**

ADRA and AID did a joint study about food security in Mozambique involving nutritional elements and environmental issues such as reforestation. We opened bids and awarded the grant to Andrews. The auditors' concern was not the money but the fact that we chose an Adventist organization. The local AID people were aware of this fact and approved it.

**The article states that an auditor named Vail found that substantial sums for humanitarian work were untraceable because a supervisor in Sudan had "just ignored" standard accounting procedures. Was anything done?**

We had a "shoebox accountant" in that office during 1990-91. Vail was shocked, and we corrected the problem. Now a CPA is in charge of the computerized accounting system. We had no money stolen from us there. We have few Adventist church members in Sudan. In 1990 we hired a non-Adventist appointed by the state, and the person was not fully trained. We now train our personnel there, even though we still hire non-Adventists.

Back to Rwanda. ADRA workers were accused of diverting truckloads of goods meant for the poor, selling them for personal profit, or trading them for "favors." One ADRA worker built a house with the money, another opened a restaurant, and a third bought a van. Auditor Vail said after ADRA personnel were warned about possible abuse, they built a second tennis court.

Nobody sold truckloads of goods. Vail denies telling the reporter that. People in the street made these charges to AID investigators. We don't have the full story. AID considered a criminal investigation against the ADRA director there but decided against it. We don't know why. We are still working on a settlement with AID.

**The *Times* said ADRA billed the government \$920,000 in rent for its Maryland headquarters even though the church said it had donated the space and auditors said such billings were not allowed.**

Before 1990 we were paying rent in other quarters. After we were given space in GC headquarters, that was considered a donation for rent. We never billed AID for rent. The auditors put expenses into the cost pot. Rental expense is allowed as an expense but not when it comes as a donation. The \$920,000 is the equivalent to what we would have paid for rent but never billed the government for.

**Is ADRA's using government funds for its humanitarian work a compromise of the Adventist practice of separation-of-church-and-state? Is it leading to conflicts involving evangelism?**

The US government and the United Nations recognize us as a humanitarian agency. We don't involve ourselves in proselyting for converts. We separate church and state clearly and don't use government funds for evangelism. The accusation of blurring church and state in Nepal came from a disgruntled former employee. A former regional director for us was a Buddhist. He wanted to be director. We said no, and he quit and accused us of misusing funds. We tell everybody we work with that we are Adventist.



## From Crisis to Qualified Glee:

# Church Leaders' Reaction to Articles

*The two-part Los Angeles Times story on Adventism caused a stir at the church's headquarters. The anticipation of bad news in the crisis management meetings of several months ago turned to muted glee when the stories appeared.*

*The following is from the 'Monday Fax' to church leaders in North America, August 17, 1998 (the Times articles appeared August 13 and 14), from Lynetta Murdoch, North American Division press officer:*

**I**t would be foolish for us as a church to be too downtrodden about these articles. The reporters failed to include much information that is very good about the church, information that they had because church communication people had pointed them toward those facets of Adventist ministry. But let me suggest 7 reasons why I think the publication of these articles is a very positive thing for the church:

### Seven Reasons to be Positive

1. A large sidebar appeared in the article printed on Thursday. It explained Adventist beliefs quite accurately, especially when you consider the sidebar was written by two secular people. How can we estimate the value of that sidebar! One of the truly major newspapers in America—the *Los Angeles Times*—presented Seventh-day Adventist beliefs sympathetically, with all the credibility of the *Los Angeles Times* behind the message. The Sabbath. The Second Coming. Our health message. Creation. The State of the Dead. Think back five years, perhaps even just five months: would you have believed it possible that the Adventist Church's beliefs would be explained so prominently and so fairly by a major publication in America? I believe this can be a tremendous blessing to our church.

2. The articles clearly describe the Seventh-day Adventist Church as an evangelical Protestant church. Never once did the articles even hint that we

are a cult....

3. These articles are appearing right before Net 98....

4. This presents local church leaders with an incredible opportunity.... These articles have awakened people's interest in the church....

5. The articles present some real issues in the church: Congregations that want to do their own thing. Developing openness in church governance. Being able to lead—perhaps even to control—one of the most rapidly growing Protestant churches. Those are real issues....

6. The articles portrayed church leaders who are willing to take responsibility for their actions, even their mistakes....

7. Newspapers tend to focus on negative things. I am deeply disappointed that the reporters chose to ignore the good news about the Adventist church, especially when there is so much good about the Adventist church in the Los Angeles area....

## Los Angeles Times Investigates Adventism

CONTINUED FROM BACK PAGE

ated U.S. taxpayer money, the wasted hopes. Not one but two courts were built with U.S. government relief aid—the second constructed so players would not have to squint in the sun. A tennis pro was hired...

Adventist auditor Wayne Vail was disgusted by what he heard, he recalled in an interview.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency, or ADRA, received \$85 million in federal cash, food and freight, plus tens of millions more from other nations and donors, during the last two years for which reports are available. ADRA was given more direct U.S. funding than all but three groups out of more than 400 federal program participants.

Along with that assistance have come serious questions about how it has been used—from accusations of corruption to complaints of unlawful proselytizing.

Top Adventist officials say any lapses are insignificant compared to the help their relief organization has provided to millions of impoverished people.

Church President Robert H. Folkenberg proclaims ADRA to be "99.44% clean, like Ivory soap."

Adventist sociologist Lawson said the church's intent perhaps can best be seen in the candor of a relief worker he met in Africa, who confided: "If I'm going to build a road, I'm going to have it go past an Adventist church."

Adventists recognize the need to separate humanitarian and missionary work, Butler said, but there is "no doubt" the dividing line is sometimes blurred. "At times, it's very difficult to separate the two," particularly when church members go to work for ADRA and become "overzealous in trying to bring people to Christianity," he said.

Even when U.S. government funds and ADRA are not involved, the church has toyed with laws prohibiting conversion efforts.

In Nepal, a predominantly Hindu state that allows the practice of different faiths but bans conversion efforts, concerns have reached such a sensitive level that ADRA recently suspended some of its operations there after allegations of illegal proselytizing.



# Chaplains Sponsor Childhood Bereavement Conferences

AN INTERVIEW BY JIM WALTERS WITH  
TIM EVANS

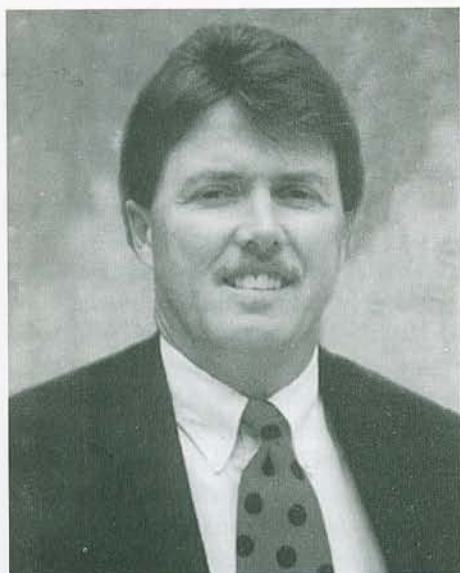
*Editorial Note: Tim Evans is on the chaplaincy staff at the Loma Linda University Medical Center, with primary responsibility for the Children's Hospital. Walters is co-founder and publisher of Adventist Today.*

**JW: Tim, you have begun what have become known as successful clergy conferences. What are your plans for the Fourth Clergy Conference to take place at the (LLU) University Church on October 13, 1998?**

**TE:** We will deal with the topic of children who are left behind when a parent dies. We have entitled the program, "The Death of a Parent: Supporting the Children."

**Do you see this topic as particularly important in our society?**

The death of a parent is a catastrophic loss for a child, and in modern society, with the fast-paced, superficial lifestyles we are seeing, there is a devaluation of life. We are seeing a lot more parents and families being disrupted by early deaths, and that makes it a topic worth discussing.



Tim Evans

**I understand you have a well-known public figure for your keynote address.**

Yes, we have Martin Luther King III coming to the campus. He is going to be the keynote address speaker.

**How did you originally come up with the children's conference idea?**

Its origin goes back to a young man I had known. I had been his youth pastor in Washington, DC. He was killed violently with a baseball bat just blocks from our home church.

**Could you tell us more?**

When I left Washington to come to Loma Linda as a chaplain, this young man was about 10. He was an angelic little kid. He came from a single-parent home, and he was really a delight to be around. But evidently he made a few acquaintances through the next few years that weren't the best. I have been told that he was in a gang fight. I happened to be in town two or three days after that happened and sensed confusion and searching on the part of the pastoral staff.

**So you saw an unmet educational need on the part of clergy and other personnel who care for kids, is that right?**

Exactly. When it comes to children I believe that clergy education doesn't sufficiently cover what children and their families experience in our modern circumstances. I felt that if we at the Children's Hospital could do something to educate, equip, and prepare clergy, we would be doing a service for the community.

**Evidently it is seen as helpful, because you have annually gotten 300 to 350 clergy, health professionals, and educators who are interested in this topic. I understand you have the prospect for a broader audience.**

Yes. Service Corporation International (SCI), the largest company of funeral homes in the world, came to us last summer and said, "We want to help you." The result of that conversation was that our conference last fall reached over 100 sites via satellite in 34 states, as well as in Canada. We estimate that about

18,000 professionals attended via the broadcast.

**What do you anticipate for this year's conference?**

SCI is actively promoting it, and they are expecting 250 to 300 sites in the U.S. They have committed other sites in England, France, and Australia. Additionally, I have talked to the directors of our Adventist world hospital system. Our dream is for all Adventist hospitals with satellite downlink capabilities to run this program.

**If a reader of this interview wants to see if there is a downlink in his or her area, is there a number they can call?**

The number is (909) 824-4367, and it will ring the chaplain's office at Loma Linda University Medical Center.

**Historically, when Adventists have been engaged in this sort of outreach there has often been a hook. Where's the hook?**

We get the satisfaction of doing good for the sake of doing good. I would love to see our church doing much more for the community without the expectation of thereby gaining baptisms. I think baptisms will come, but adding to the quality of family life comes first.



Jim Walters



# Science & Faith

## Convention at Andrews University

JAMES STIRLING

In late July science teachers and theologians from many Adventist colleges and other institutions met at Andrews University, in Berrien Springs, Michigan, to discuss problems relating to the integrating of science and faith. I joined this group as an anthropologist to observe and contribute whatever I could to the discussions. Although I shared with them a strong belief in God as Creator and Designer of the universe, I was also interested in the antiquity of human culture. This report is a summary of my observations and impressions, not a complete or exhaustive record.

I had wondered if the "Total Commitment" directive issued by the General Conference in 1996 would be stressed at this meeting, with its passage on "affirming unambiguously in classroom and campus life the beliefs, practices, and world view of the Seventh-day Adventist Church." Would that mean ignoring problems in traditional Adventist interpretations of Genesis? Would someone from headquarters be on hand to check up on the orthodoxy of the participants?

The first few days of the Andrews meetings were marked by assertions of faith in the Bible and in the Creator, with devotionals extolling the wisdom and benevolence of the original creative act, and with testimonials by some about their firm convictions regarding the primacy of the Bible.

For most of the attendees a principal "problem" was the prominence given in science textbooks to evolution as an explanation for similarities and differences in living forms. Some evolutionists make sport of "creationism," and likewise creationists sometimes deride evolutionists for their apparent stubbornness. The science teachers from Christian campuses at this conference had come up with a variety of ways for dealing with this problem in their own thinking and in their teaching.

One of those ways was to emphasize the evidence for design in creation. Evolutionists propose chance, randomness, natural selection and mutation to account for changes in living forms, but they have no convincing explanation for the beginnings of life itself. Speakers at the conference took up the theme of "intelligent design" with enthusiasm. Biochemists pointed out the apparent "irreducible complexity" of living cells (to use the expression of Michael Behe in his book *Darwin's Black Box*) as evidence that God as Designer had to have started it all. An astrophysicist, Robert Newman, described how early scholars in his field felt in the first flush of their discoveries of planetary motion that they could eventually predict any and all of the workings of the heavenly bodies. However, Newman declared, recent studies of quantum mechanics have made it very clear that there is no way researchers can anticipate the behavior of many elementary particles; uncertainty rules. Much as astronomers have learned about



**James Stirling, Ph.D.**, is an adjunct professor of anthropology at La Sierra University and assistant editor of *Adventist Today*. He studied Biblical archaeology under Siegfried Horn at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary and is interested in the human side of prehistory.



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# **...although science and theology have been thought of as traditional enemies, they have many things in common.**

the cosmos, they now realize that many of the secrets of matter and energy lie far beyond their grasp.

The staff of the Geoscience Research Institute, coordinators of the event, had papers on features of geology that suggested widespread floodlike movements of alluvial and submarine materials. Ben Clausen, head of the organizing committee, had prepared a paper discussing the strengths and weaknesses of various models that have been proposed to explain the young earth and older earth chronologies and fossil sequences in the geological column. While he did not declare which of the models he felt closest to and admitted that serious students should consider all the options, he seemed to favor a model that would put the making of the sun on the fourth day of creation week. He said, "Leaving the sun's creation out of the fourth day easily leads to leaving other creative activity out of creation week." He concluded that while "continued study and the willingness to change one's opinion [are] necessary," for him "there are two nonnegotiable points: any origins model that misrepresents God's character or that puts man's reason above God's revelation is unacceptable."

Lest some question the significance of the chronological issue, there were theologians on hand to say why it mattered. John Baldwin, from the seminary at AU, stressed the importance of the six-day week of creation and the Flood as echoed in various parts of the Bible, including the Book of Revelation.

In the keynote address, "The Scientist and the Believer," Richard Rice, from the Faculty of Religion at Loma Linda University, pointed out that although science and theology have been thought of as traditional enemies, they have many things in common. Although the scientific method stresses the need for

making reliable observations, constructing empirical generalizations, composing reasonable theories, then testing these with hypotheses aided by further accumulation of data, it also relies on intuition, widely shaped assumptions or paradigms held by other scholars, and faith in the general idea that the natural world is orderly and trustworthy. Although "religion is not an investigative procedure; it is an all-embracing way of life," Rice says that theology "carefully examines the beliefs of a religious community. It identifies these beliefs, explores their meaning, assesses their truth, and sometimes responds to criticisms about them. Like science, theology examines data, formulates theories, and tests its theories against further data."

Rice went on to point out that a religious doctrine goes beyond merely making sense of evidence, but deals with deep convictions and high values that people hold. Thus an Adventist scientist who touches on certain issues will raise eyebrows within the church. "This is particularly true when we broach the question of origins. Because the Sabbath is central to our religious self-understanding, and because Genesis 1 and Exodus 20 place the Sabbath at the climax of a seven-day creation week, our sense of identity is closely allied with a specific reading of these biblical passages. So, any approach to origins that moves in another direction will make people nervous." Yet he also pointed out that since our doctrine of creation says this is our Father's world, it is worth exploring and understanding. It deserves all the attention we can give it. "And if we are creatures whose origin and destiny are linked to this planet, then we need to view ourselves within the framework of this larger reality."



Other speakers pointed out that people who believe in God as Creator should be more attentive to preserving the ecosystems and biodiversity that now exist but are threatened by man's activity.

In the last few days of the conference, speakers attempted to grapple with some of the real "problems," like the presence of predation and parasitism. "Could there have been death before the Fall?" But one problem that loomed above others was the question of time in the human past. People have spent prodigious efforts to reconcile the findings of geology and paleontology with the time constraints of sacred history. For some people the act of creation is absolutely tied to a short chronology (six thousand years before the present).

On the last Tuesday afternoon of the conference a whole special-interest session was devoted to discussing time and process in the geological record and paleontology. Several papers were given on radiometric dating methods and problems. One paper was given on human paleontology. Lee Spencer, a paleontologist, described details of several fossil hominids and proposed that some of them showed traces of an ape "mosaic," with metric values which looked to be intermediate between apes and "modern" men, or Cro-Magnons, suggesting that some creatures like the Neanderthals were really hybrids of apes with more modern men.

My paper discussed Bishop James Ussher's chronology as compared with historical data. Ussher [1581-1636] popularized a model for earth history that granted an even seven thousand years from beginning to end. He placed Christ's life at almost the center, with 4,000 years preceding it and 3,000 following; the last 1,000 would be "the Millennium" described in the Book of Revelation as a time of desolate peace on earth. Ussher thought he found some support for his theory by consulting genealogies of the patriarchs listed in Genesis 5, where for some reason the chronicler listed the age at which each of 19 patriarchs had a first son. The age-at-birth-of-first-son varied from 187 for Methuselah to 65 for Mahalalel and Enoch. (In the Septuagint version an additional 100 years is added to each of these records.) If creation is taken as the beginning point of Ussher's chronology, 0 Anno Mundi (year of the world), then Adam's son Seth was born in 130 Anno Mundi and Adam lived another 800 years, to 930 Anno Mundi.

Nowhere in the Genesis record is there a statement indicating a span of time incorporating the date for creation. Starting from Abraham's time such spans do appear—400 years would elapse from his time to the exodus of the Jews from Egypt (Gen. 15:13); the Jews would wander in the wilderness forty years, and they would be in captivity to the Babylonians seventy years. Were the ages of the patriarchs on assuming fatherhood really meant to signal a historic span of time, or were they put there for some other reason?

The question begins when we try to match the account with historical records. The first written records were those of the Sumerians, who invented the cuneiform method of writing on clay tablets. They were doing this at least by 3100 B.C., a date well established by a variety of sources. If you lay this date, 3100 B.C., on a chart with Ussher's date for creation and the

first human, Adam, you find that Ussher would have to credit the invention of writing as being about 900 Anno Mundi (4000-3100=900). In other words, Adam would have still been alive, along with seven of his descendants (including Methuselah), when the Sumerians lived! Yet we know this was not so, not by a long way.

The problem is further complicated by the fact that at about the same time, people were living in other parts of the world and building structures that still exist—like Stonehenge in England and pyramids in Egypt. Other people had migrated to the Americas and set up farming villages in coastal Peru; farmers were cultivating the Yellow River valley in China, and in what is now Pakistan there was a long-established city, Mehrgarh. Bronze was in use in parts of Europe. And almost everywhere else people had been living as hunters and gatherers for thousands of years.

All this relates to the period we call "prehistory," previous to written records. During prehistoric times populations in differing environmental settings had adapted physically with different skin colors (concentrations of melanin in the skin), overall body shape, blood types, and other biological traits. Such changes on a population-wide basis come slowly. So the question is: How do we fit prehistory into the Ussher model? How do we fit the tower of Babel story and the Flood (1656 A.M or 2350 B.C..) into historic times long after the building of the pyramids in Egypt? Even adding a few thousand years "fudge factor" doesn't make room for the Pleistocene ice ages. There are no easy solutions to this problem.

On the whole I found the talks stimulating in content, at times exasperating (like questions about the earth being three days older than the rest of the universe and disputes that there had ever been any prehistory), and in general illuminating in terms of seeing where others stood in their intellectual journey. And there was no evidence of a witch hunt that I could see; the "Total Commitment" document was not even mentioned in the meetings I went to. It was refreshing to hear others ask questions about human giantism before the Flood, the origin of races, and other topics in a relatively non-judgmental setting. Other people and I asked and probed and listened, without incriminating or belittling one another for differences. It was even permissible, at least in small groups and at the dinner table, to ask why Adventists are so concerned about time in Biblical history. God as Creator is a pivotal belief for us, but why is it so important to know when and how long ago?

Perhaps the most important outcome of the conference was that people got to see in person others about whom they had read or heard, or who had written books or articles. I renewed the acquaintance of an anthropologist from India whom I had not seen for more than a dozen years.

Richard Rice had said in his keynote address that scientist-believers need to communicate with each other frankly, honestly, and charitably, something that can happen only when there is trust on all sides. If we have important things to say to the church and the world, we can't do it unless we are able to talk to each other first. This conference went a long way toward accomplishing that goal.



# The Ashfall Fossil Beds: 10 Million Years Old?

Geologists interpret this impressive snapshot in time as a late Miocene event that occurred approximately ten million years before the present era.

DOWELL E. MARTZ AND ROBERT D. MCHENRY

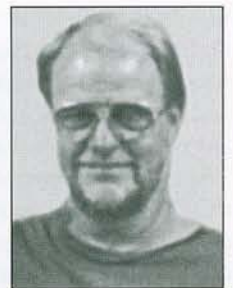
**D**uring the early summer of 1971, Dr. Michael Voorhies, a staff paleontologist with the Nebraska State Museum, was scrambling down a recently eroded gully searching for fossils which he hoped might have been uncovered by the unusually heavy rains that year. Dr. Voorhies was following a ledge of brown sandstone named the Ash Hollow formation, which outcrops in numerous places along the tributaries of the Niobrara River. Over the years this northeastern Nebraska sandstone formation has been the source of a number of ancient mammal fossils.

Sandwiched between the upper and lower members of the Ash Hollow formation is a distinct band of gray-white volcanic ash that typically averages from one to two feet in thickness in this part of eastern Nebraska. However, along this particular gully the ash layer has a vertical thickness of more than eight feet. Dr. Voorhies was elated to glimpse what appeared to be a skull protruding from the bank near the top of the ash layer. Digging revealed the complete skeleton

of a baby rhinoceros that apparently had been only a few months old at the time of death. Further prospecting promised additional juvenile and adult rhino skeletons in the immediate area which was no larger than an average-sized living room.

Since the initial 1971 discovery, Nebraska State Museum paleontologists have recovered some two hundred fossil skeletons of prehistoric animals belonging to several different species, including more than one hundred squat, barrel-bodied rhinoceroses belonging to an extinct genus called *Teleoceras*. This site has also yielded complete skeletons of three extinct species of camels, including a long-necked giraffe-camel, five species of browsing horses ranging from the size of a small sheep to the size of a Shetland pony (both three-toed and one-toed varieties), several saber-toothed deer, and numerous turtles and birds. This fossil site is now known as the Ashfall Fossil Beds State Park, and is located six miles north of US 20 between the towns of Orchard and Royal, Nebraska. It is managed jointly by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the Nebraska State Museum.

After forty tons of fossil skeletons were transported to the state museum in Lincoln during the 1970s, scientists recognized that this important paleontological site could educate the public better if a number of the skeletons could be left exposed for viewing exactly as they died. Since the weakly cemented volcanic ash protecting the specimens tends to weather rapidly, a modest interpretive center now shelters a dense concentration of fossils in various stages of excavation.



Dowell Martz and Robert McHenry are cousins who grew up in a small Adventist church in rural Missouri. Dowell is a retired physicist living in Drain, Oregon, and Bob is a retired public school teacher living in Belton, Missouri. They get together every summer for a tour of interesting geological sites. They invite reader's questions and comments.



The nature of the catastrophe that produced this outstanding assemblage of fossils is clear to almost every visitor. However, when this catastrophe occurred, and how the variety of animals found here could possibly reconcile with a Flood model of Earth history, generated endless debate within our party of four Adventist visitors this past summer. Dr. Voorhies describes the catastrophic event in the January, 1981, *National Geographic*:

"An immense cloud of glassy powder, spewed from a volcano somewhere in the western United States some ten million years ago, drifted downwind over the Great Plains and finally settled to earth in what is now northeastern Nebraska. The prodigious ashfall blanketed hundreds of square miles. Herds of rhinoceroses, three-toed horses, camels, and tiny saber-toothed deer, confused and choking, perished in the blizzard of abrasive dust."

With few exceptions, the rhino,

hillsides. Some female rhinos were pregnant and carried tiny fetuses at the time of death, and at least one calf skeleton was found with its skull nosing under the flank of an adult female, as if its last effort was to obtain nourishment from a dead or dying mother. Fossil grass seeds similar to types that today grow only in subtropical savannas have been recovered from the throat and stomach areas of several of the animals.

Apparently most of the rhino skeletons are concentrated by what was originally a small lake where the rhinos had taken refuge after the first foot or so of volcanic ash had blanketed the surrounding grasslands. In a few places the rhinos left deep hoofprints which remain today as fossilized tracks, clearly showing that many of the animals survived for some time after the initial ashfall.

At the very bottom of the ash layer, beneath the level where most of the rhino skeletons are located, Voorhies has excavated fossils of aquatic pond turtles,

Beds compare quite closely with certain fossils found elsewhere in Miocene strata, and the presence of subtropical grasses suggests that a warm climate prevailed in this area of Nebraska.

The ash particles tend to be very tiny, probably indicating they were sorted by gravity as they were carried by the wind from a source several hundred miles away. Such tiny particles are difficult to date by standard potassium-argon radioactive age dating methods due to poor retention of argon, but uranium fission track counts on the ash crystals are consistent with a ten million year age. Chemical comparison of the ash layer here with ash layers presumed to be associated with a Miocene volcanic eruption in southwestern Idaho have led researchers to the opinion that the Nebraska ash came from that source. If so, the output of ash must have been at least one hundred times greater than that produced by the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens.

Our group spent a couple of hours at the Ashfall Fossil Beds, where we toured the interpretive center and listened to a discussion by the resident geologist. As we drove away our own discussion included some of the comments below.

*Bob: I think we can view this event as something that occurred during the late stages of Noah's Flood, with a few pre-Flood animals still remaining alive succumbing to the ashfall from a volcanic eruption. Some creationists have proposed a Flood model where many volcanic eruptions occurred right near the end, with heavy atmospheric dust triggering an immediate ice age lasting a few centuries.*

Dowell: That model runs into a lot of problems. First, the volcanic ash lies directly over at least ten thousand feet of flat sedimentary strata, and those layers represent almost all of the geologic column from the Cambrian through the Miocene. We know those strata are down there from the logs of the oil and water wells drilled in this part of Nebraska. Most Adventists claim those underlying strata were deposited by Noah's Flood, but there wouldn't have been grass and trees growing on the new surface here for a long time after the Flood was over.

**Most Adventists claim those underlying strata were deposited by Noah's Flood, but there wouldn't have been grass and trees growing on the new surface here for a long time after the Flood was over.**

horse, and camel fossils uncovered at this site consist of completely articulated skeletons: in most cases the delicate tongue bones, rib cartilage, joint tendons and even the tiny bones of the inner ear are present and in their proper positions. The excellent state of preservation at this site contrasts sharply with most fossil discoveries, where the fossil bones are often scattered and complete skeletons are relatively rare.

Here death came to a wide variety of creatures and plants in a matter of only a few days, or at most a few weeks, and their carcasses were quickly covered and preserved by the wind-blown ash that drifted like snow from the surrounding

a musk deer, a few small carnivores resembling foxes and raccoons, crowned cranes, one with a partially digested lizard inside, and a smaller bird with polished stones in its gizzard area. He believes some of these animals either inhabited or regularly visited the water hole before the ashfall. A few rhino bones show evidence of having been gnawed by scavengers, and some smaller skeletons were crushed, apparently from being trampled by larger animals.

Geologists interpret this impressive snapshot in time as a late Miocene event that occurred approximately ten million years before the present era. The animals and plants found in the Ashfall Fossil



Second, it doesn't seem very likely that a herd of pre-Flood rhinos would have survived the upheaval of a world-wide flood and gone on to live peacefully here. Clearly these are not drowned carcasses that were floated into this area from somewhere else. Some of the females were in the early months of pregnancy, and some baby rhinos were only a few months old. They couldn't have been treading water for several months and still have found time and inclination for procreation in all that chaos.

*Bob: I can appreciate those difficulties. Then this event must have occurred a few centuries after the Flood to animals descended from rhinos on the ark.*

Dowell: There are many problems with that interpretation, also. If these rhinos were the direct descendants of a single pair saved in the ark, think how many generations of rhinos would have been required for the rhino population to increase sufficiently for them to migrate halfway around the world to this part of Nebraska.

The climate here apparently was subtropical when these rhinos lived and died, so they had to arrive some time before the ice age started. Eastern Nebraska definitely was covered by a continental ice sheet after this volcanic event, because multiple layers of glacial till and windblown loess lie on top of this volcanic ash layer over much of eastern Nebraska. The soils that make up these loess layers apparently came from rock dust ground up by a moving glacier, deposited by melt water along the edge of the ice sheet. Wind then picked up this dust and spread it over several states, creating Nebraska's and Iowa's fertile farmlands.

The volcanic ash layer underneath the loess layer just happens to be exposed on the surface at the Ashfall Fossil Beds because the loess layers that formerly were on top here were partially eroded away by the Niobrara River and its tributaries.

Geologists have good evidence for claiming there were at least four major advances of the continental ice sheet that covered Canada and much of the northern United States, although only the first two came far enough south to

cover this part of Nebraska. These rhinos were definitely not ice age animals. If we want to say they descended from a single pair saved in Noah's ark and arrived here some time before the ice age started, there had to be a lot of time between the end of the Flood and the beginning of the ice age.

Geologists date the start of the ice ages at about two million years ago and say they melted completely ten to twelve thousand years ago. Even if the ice ages

**Even if the ice ages were much shorter than the time claimed by geologists, there just is not enough time in Ussher's chronology for a lengthy warm period after the Flood followed by multiple glacial advances.**

were much shorter than the time claimed by geologists, there just is not enough time in Ussher's chronology for a lengthy warm period after the Flood followed by multiple glacial advances.

Also, archeologists cite evidence of Chinese, Indian and Middle Eastern civilizations flourishing at least 3500 to 4000 years ago, and the ice ages were apparently over before those civilizations got started.

It might be easier to explain the presence of these rhinos if they had survived on a mountaintop somewhere that wasn't affected by the Flood, and then migrated down to this area as soon as vegetation started growing again.

*Bob: But Genesis indicates the Flood covered all of the mountains, and all of the land animals perished except those on the ark. So these rhinos must have descended from the pair Noah turned loose on Mt. Ararat. I don't think it would take very long for them to multiply; if you started with just one pair of rhinos, and every female gave birth to a female calf at least every fourth year, you could have two to the twenty-fifth power (33,554,432) females, not counting males, in only 100 years.*

*The migration to Nebraska before the ice age started might be a more difficult problem, since there probably wasn't an ice bridge providing a route across the Bering Strait from Asia until after the ice age started, and these rhinos were here before that.*

Dowell: The fossil rhinos buried here are considered to be a different species from the five species of rhinos living today. If the five living species are descended from just one pair on the ark, there have been a lot of changes in only

a few thousand years. An evolutionist would certainly hesitate to postulate such a rapid rate of change.

*Bob: Maybe there were several species of rhinos on the ark instead of just one species.*

Dowell: But think of all the ice-age animals that lived after these rhinos lived here. If we claim these rhinos descended from ark survivors, then the ancestors of the later ice-age animals would also have been on the ark. Several different species of elephants lived in Nebraska prior to and during at least part of the ice age, plus two or more species of mammoths, huge mastodons, and the giant ground sloth. The Nebraska State Museum in Lincoln has an entire hall filled with different species of elephants and mammoths, all of which were found in layers above the volcanic ash layer where the rhinos are found. If all of these species were represented in the ark it would have been pretty full.

*Bob: I see the difficulties. Certainly the presence of these skeletons here in a layer that is clearly a volcanic ash deposit poses some interesting questions for people who accept a short chronology-flood model of earth history.*



# Why I Like the Investigative Judgment

So why do I still believe in the investigative judgment? Two reasons: I believe it's true, and I've learned to like it.

JOHN MCLARTY

Growing up, I knew the doctrine of the investigative judgment backwards and forwards. God began judging the dead in 1844. When he finished judging the dead he would start in on the living.

No one knew when that transition would occur, though it was always believed to be still future. Once a person was dealt with in the judgment, their eternal destiny was irrevocably fixed. Those already dead would make it through the judgment if the general trend of their life was in the direction of Christ. But if you were alive when you were judged, a single, unforsaken sin would damn you.

For me it was a terrifying doctrine. I lived in a house with five siblings. And you just can't keep your record spotless in a situation like that. What if, in a moment of passion, I called my brother a stupid idiot (we didn't use the word "fool" in our house) and five minutes later my name came up in the judgment? I wouldn't have had time to become sorry and ask forgiveness. I'd be consigned to hell and wouldn't even know it. This wouldn't have been so bad if our fights had been rare. But alas.

Then I got a little older and linked health reform and the judgment. In its most radical version, health reform taught there was no difference between violating health laws and moral law, so eating three

doughnuts was the moral equivalent of stealing. And I had a weakness for doughnuts. So what if I ate the doughnuts and didn't confess before my name came up in the heavenly court?

During my teen years, the investigative judgment doctrine combined with my natural insecurity to make me utterly miserable. It required a perfection I could not achieve. It warned of damnation I could not possibly avoid.

I'm an adult now. I don't have to believe doctrines that make me miserable. So why do I still believe in the investigative judgment? Two reasons: I believe it's true, and I've learned to like it. I believe it's one of the more fruitful Adventist contributions to contemporary Christian theology. And while I'm well aware of the legalism that has been closely linked with the doctrine in the past, I don't believe we improve our theology by dumping the doctrine. Rather, we need to fix it. (By analogy, do we jettison the gospel because both Luther and Calvin linked it with the idea that God damns people on the basis of his own choice without reference to character, faith or any other human factor? Of course not.)

First of all, I had better define my terms. When I speak of the investigative judgment, I am not referring to the chronology based on Daniel 8:14. I do not include any theories about a last-day group of perfect people or living on earth without a heavenly



John McLarty is editor of *Adventist Today*.



mediator. By “investigative judgment” I mean a process in heaven before the return of Jesus during which God, in the presence of myriads of witnesses, makes the final decision about individuals’ eternal destiny. Other writers have used the term “pre-Advent judgment.”

One could call this pre-Advent investigation merely “The Judgment,” except there are other processes or events also labeled judgment: The investigative judgment is distinct from the millennial judgment of Revelation 20:4 which portrays the saints judging God, auditing the records of his interaction with his creation. Another distinct judgment is the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20 in which the lost are confronted with the record of their evil.

Over the years Adventists have been rather free to reinterpret the meaning of the investigative judgment as long as they didn’t question 1844 as the beginning date. So you’ll find Adventist writers who argue strenuously that the investigative judgment is not really about people but about God himself. I dissent from this view. I believe the investigative or pre-Advent judgment is the heavenly process in which the final decision is made regarding individuals’ eternal destiny. This judgment process creates an absolutely trustworthy archive for answering every question that could conceivably arise about God’s character and activity. Thus it is connected with the “judgment of God,” but God is not the object of this first phase of judgment.

As judge, God does not need a long process to figure out who should be saved. It would take less than a nanosecond for God to reach a decision about all humans. The judgment takes time because God makes the decisions regarding eternal destiny in an open process accessible to finite beings and observed by countless witnesses. This open process creates a public record under the scrutiny of non-divine heavenly beings who have observed the lives of those judged.

Because of this open process, during the millennium human questioners will not have to rely on an archive privately created and maintained by God that tells God’s story “his way.” Instead, we will depend on records created before eyewitnesses. To state it bluntly, I believe the doctrine of the investigative judgment is one of the premier Christian arguments for the dignity and significance of human intellectual endeavor. This public judgment process is inseparable from the Adventist idea of the great controversy, which insists that God will not take us into eternity until every question has been answered. The judgment doctrine offers a promising bridge between the efforts of liberal Protestantism to respect human intellect and fundamentalist attempts to preserve a high view of Scripture.

Elsewhere in this issue of *Adventist Today* (see pp. 14-19), you’ll read of the efforts of Adventist scientists to reconcile what they’ve learned using the tools of science with what the church has taught based on its understanding of the Bible. Some Christians argue that when ideas rooted in scientific work disagree with our reading of the Bible we should simply ignore the science.

The human mind is so depraved, so the argument goes, we can’t trust it. We must simply trust the words of the Bible. While this approach is consistent with the theology of some Christians, it violates the dignity and significance of human intellectual endeavor which stands at the core of the Adventist doctrines of judgment and the great controversy. Other Christians argue that science is the only reliable source of information. While this is in harmony with the spirit of the age (or one of the spirits of the age) it violates the central tenet of the judgment:

**I believe the doctrine of the investigative judgment is one of the premier Christian arguments for the dignity and significance of human intellectual endeavor.**

that all human knowledge is limited and subject to correction.

Some Adventists are uncomfortable with the investigative judgment because it deprives them of their security. And I agree that we must correct the notion that an isolated doughnut or drink or taunt will damn you. God is first of all a savior. He delights to save, and what we teach about the judgment must not obscure that wonderful truth. (And we must honestly admit that often it has.) Jesus taught that we are God’s children. Salvation is not something we wheedle from a reluctant, stingy guardian. It is God’s good pleasure to give us the kingdom.

On the other hand, while personal security is a great value, it is not the greatest value. Truth is a greater value; so are justice and mercy. And there are at least two ways the investigative judgment serves truth, justice and mercy.

One: Classic evangelical theology has no theological basis for offering hope to pre-Christian pagans. Since all judgment was completed in Christ, the only way to be saved is in Christ. And the only way to be in Christ is to “believe with the heart and confess with the mouth.” So pre-conquest Incas and Mayas, Buddhists and Hindus in ancient India, residents of sub-Saharan Africa before Livingstone— all are automatically consigned to hell.



The judgment offers a rational basis for belief that the saving work of Jesus Christ can apply to people other than those who have an explicit Christian faith. The judgment looks for evidence of faith. Faith doesn't save us. God saves. Faith is simply our response to the drawing of God. A well-developed doctrine of judgment highlights the truth that God is able to read evidence of response (faith) besides the classic "I believe in Jesus" or baptism or church attendance, as valuable as those things are. The person who never hears of Jesus but is responding to the wooing of the Spirit is shown in the judgment to have faith and to be "safe to save." The same may be true for someone who rejects the gospel out of confusion caused by the misbehavior of "Christian" parents or leaders.

To properly understand the judgment we must keep in mind that our salvation is based on the work of Christ. We are not saved by having perfect faith or perfect behavior. We are not saved because we have reached some particular level of maturity that makes us safe for heaven. We are saved because Jesus died for us. And all who are responsive to the wooing of the Spirit will be saved. The judgment reveals the evidence of that response or the evidence of one's rejection of the Spirit.

## The judgment offers a rational basis for belief that the saving work of Jesus Christ can apply to people other than those who have an explicit Christian faith.

A second way the judgment serves truth and justice: the judgment reminds us God is not captive to verbal Christian formulae. It cautions against using the language of grace and Christian security to excuse behavior that harms others. The judgment will examine our fancy words about being Christian. Confession and repentance are not optional. Oppression, abuse, dishonesty, unfaithfulness and idolatry are incompatible with salvation. The judgment will examine the evidence: did we pursue righteousness or disregard it? Did we follow or spurn the Spirit? The judgment will not look for perfection of Christian performance; that would be futile. But it will test the reality of believers' claims. It will also contest the devil's claim to ownership of people who were not obviously Christ's.

### WHY NOT JUST TRUST GOD?

Some people protest to me, "We don't need any judgment process. God is good, and I trust him. That's enough."

I respect this kind of simple, elegant faith. But the record of the twentieth century raises questions about the trustworthiness of totalitarian regimes, i.e. regimes which do not allow for questioning.

Luba Bershadsky was sent to Siberia on trumped-up charges during the rule of Stalin. After a number of years under Stalin's benevolent reeducation regime she was at a large transshipment depot when a train arrived from the south with a fresh load of humanity.

She watched as a mother climbed out of one of the cattle cars followed by her young son. Bershadsky cursed the system that would create such a monstrosity. Then to her horror one of the guards approached the kid. But he didn't take him from his mother or abuse him. He gave him a treat and then asked the lad if he could sing a song. And there in the wasteland of Siberia, surrounded by thousands of Stalin's victims, the boy stood proudly erect and sang a hymn: "O Great Stalin, We Love You."

All across the Soviet Union while Stalin was busy killing twenty million of his own people, peasants hung his picture on the walls of their hovels, and their children sang his hymns.

Someone with the power of God could have all of us singing his praise even if he were the devil himself. He could hoodwink or coerce all of us into paying obeisance. The great value of the investigative judgment is its role in the process which will expose to human scrutiny every detail of God's interaction with his creation. God will ultimately have no secrets beyond the mystery of his tenacious love. Our final worship will be based on perfect knowledge, not on blind faith.

According to Adventist theology, God is not satisfied to be right. He will not rest on "Because I'm God" as the answer to questions raised by human reasoning. Instead, he has promised that eternity will not begin until every human question has been answered to our satisfaction.

Just in case you're wondering, I don't believe the investigative judgment requires a unique holiness for Christians at the end of time. I don't believe it will damn people for momentary failings.

I do believe it will exhibit the ability of God to win the hearts of all kinds of people. It will exhibit the sufficiency of Jesus. I believe it appropriately threatens those who use the rites and language of Christianity as a cover for injustice. I believe it offers hope for good people with defective belief systems and bad people who've turned their hearts toward Jesus. But most importantly it is a crucial element in God's plan to reveal himself and make himself accountable even to us for how he runs the universe.



# What Right Did Death Have?

MARYAN STIRLING

Most students had scattered to our homes  
And summer jobs  
Before Clifton Jeeter died  
In Friesens' Lake  
On a Saturday-Sabbath afternoon.  
In 1943.

A little group  
Of summer students  
Made the hot hike, out  
White Cottage Road  
From Pacific Union College  
Life was all ahead—Ministerial internships,  
Weddings, ordinations,  
Graduate study, medical school.

The war was on in Europe  
And in the Pacific Islands.  
But Howell Mountain was at peace.  
What right did death have "on the hill?"  
There in our refuge, miles above the Napa Valley,  
Worlds away from the alluring stone wineries?  
Death belonged down there  
Where sin grew its grapes of wrath.

Didn't Clifton know  
That swimming on Sabbath was an awful sin?  
The hikers knew. The college  
Had its rules  
"I'll yell for help," Clif Jeeter said, Unbuttoning his shirt.  
"And you can all be heroes, have yourself  
A Saturday-swim  
And go to heaven, too."

They watched him wade to waist-deep,  
Splash in, and do  
His strong, sure crawl-strokes  
Back and forth. He turned  
And sent up plumes of water  
With down-plunging heels.  
"Help! You better come and rescue me!"  
They laughed, and so did he.  
Nobody seems to remember the exact moment  
When Clif's shouts took on  
A certain urgency. The swimming  
Changed to struggling.  
The calling lost its banter.  
No one knew.  
"Good show!" they yelled,  
And yelled again,  
"A little more feeling there, hey!"  
And gave him a round  
Of applause as he went under.

Someone tossed a pinecone  
While they waited  
To see his laughing face  
Break the surface,  
Where the sun  
Danced on the quiet water  
Of Dick Friesen's little lake  
In June of 1943.  
They must have tried  
To find his body.  
Someone must have come,  
With sirens, winding up the road,  
Wailing through the campus,  
Past the dorms and all.  
Police. Ambulance.  
Shattering the quiet  
Of Sabbath afternoon.

Days and nights and dawns  
On the lakeshore,  
Bettie Friesen found  
What had floated up.  
She told me—needed to tell.  
And I, a new believer,  
Needed to ask her what  
She thought it meant,  
The whole thing?  
Someone said that Clif  
Had "sinned away  
His day of grace."

That put a pretty short fuse  
On God's wrath, it seemed to me.  
But who was I to say?  
I was learning how to live  
And what to think  
And how to come to terms  
With a life overarched  
With certain judgment,  
Sustained by a fragile hope.

I'm asking still,  
A half-century later  
Swimming joyfully in God's  
Great created element  
On many a Sabbath:  
What on earth did it really mean  
When Clifton Jeeter drowned  
In Friesens' lake  
That summer day?



**Maryan Stirling** is a writer who has spent many years helping to find and polish treasures and pull weeks in the field that is the Seventh-day Adventist Church.



## Los Angeles Times Investigates Adventism

**T**he *Los Angeles Times*, with a daily circulation of over a million, ran an extensive two-part investigative report by Tom Gorman and Eric Lichtblau, *Times* staff writers, on current issues within Adventism on August 13 and 14. The articles began on the front page and filled a total of 3 full pages, with several sidebars and illustrations. The first article covers general background information on the church—size, beliefs, history, educational institutions and medical work—and issues facing the denomination. The issues include Adventist insularity, secret stipends for the wives of two church executives, the role of money, emerging congregationalism, and the “Total Commitment” document at Adventist colleges. Article two is exclusively on the Adventist

the surety that such a day indeed would dawn.

Today, ask some Adventists about the Great Disappointment and the response might well be: which one?

As the church best known for its hospitals and colleges emerges as among the world’s fastest-growing religious movements, it is suffering growing pains that are straining at its conservative traditions.

Where there once was strict obedience to the hierarchy of the multibillion-dollar church, there is now sometimes grass-roots rebellion prompting firings of pastors who have challenged the status quo.

In a denomination whose founder dictated quiet resolution of conflicts, some members today are exposing the dissension in lawsuits, on web sites and in maverick

Questions about the church’s use of international relief money have mounted, a power struggle among Ethiopian Adventists has erupted, and a pastor from Rwanda has been charged with genocide for allegedly orchestrating the executions of thousands of people who sought refuge at a church compound in 1994.

Even though only a small percentage of Adventists are openly challenging their leaders, historians of religion say the church may be facing some of its most serious upheaval.

“Some congregants desperately don’t want to hear anything negative. It shakes them,” said Queens College sociologist Ron Lawson, an Adventist who has studied the church’s development. Seventh-day Adventist Church President Robert H. Folkenburg, 57, a pilot whose 6-foot-5 frame belies a soft-spoken nature, shakes his head when he hears of such criticism. He dismisses much of it as the baseless griping of a disgruntled few among a membership of roughly 10 million, most of it abroad.

“You can always find something you’d like to improve,” he said in a wide-ranging interview. But he insisted that the Maryland-headquartered institution remains “a vibrant, positive, engaged church affecting powerfully the communities where it serves.”

### A History of Complaints Dogs Adventist Aid Agency

Back and forth they volleyed under the Rwandan sun, the minister and the church auditor.

Too distracted to finish the match, the minister idled to the net. Pained, he began to reveal to the auditor what had gone so terribly wrong in the African nation’s Seventh-day Adventist hunger relief program—the purloined food, the misappropri-

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Pained, he began to reveal to the auditor what had gone so terribly wrong...the purloined food, the misappropriated U.S. taxpayer money, the wasted hopes.

Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), focusing on recent irregularities. The full articles are available on the Internet at [www.latimes.com](http://www.latimes.com). The following excerpts typify the articles:

### Currents of Change Roil Seventh-day Adventists

In the beginning, there was disappointment—the Great Disappointment, as the faithful of the Seventh-day Adventist Church would come to call it.

It happened on a brilliant Maine day in the fall of 1844. A sickly teenage prophetess named Ellen G. White, the church’s scriptural architect, waited with her brethren for Jesus Christ’s predicted return.

When he failed to materialize, White urged her disheartened followers to cherish

publications that accuse church leaders of everything from authoritarianism and cronyism to fraud and financial abuses.

Some educators at Adventist colleges have joined the fray as well, resentful that church leaders want to formally assess their and their students’ total commitment to God with annual reports and outside evaluators. Some women, meanwhile, are voicing objections to the irony that a church co-founded by a woman, although it allows women to serve as pastors, limits their duties and refuses to fully ordain them.

Overseas—where membership is swelling—controversy is also swirling.