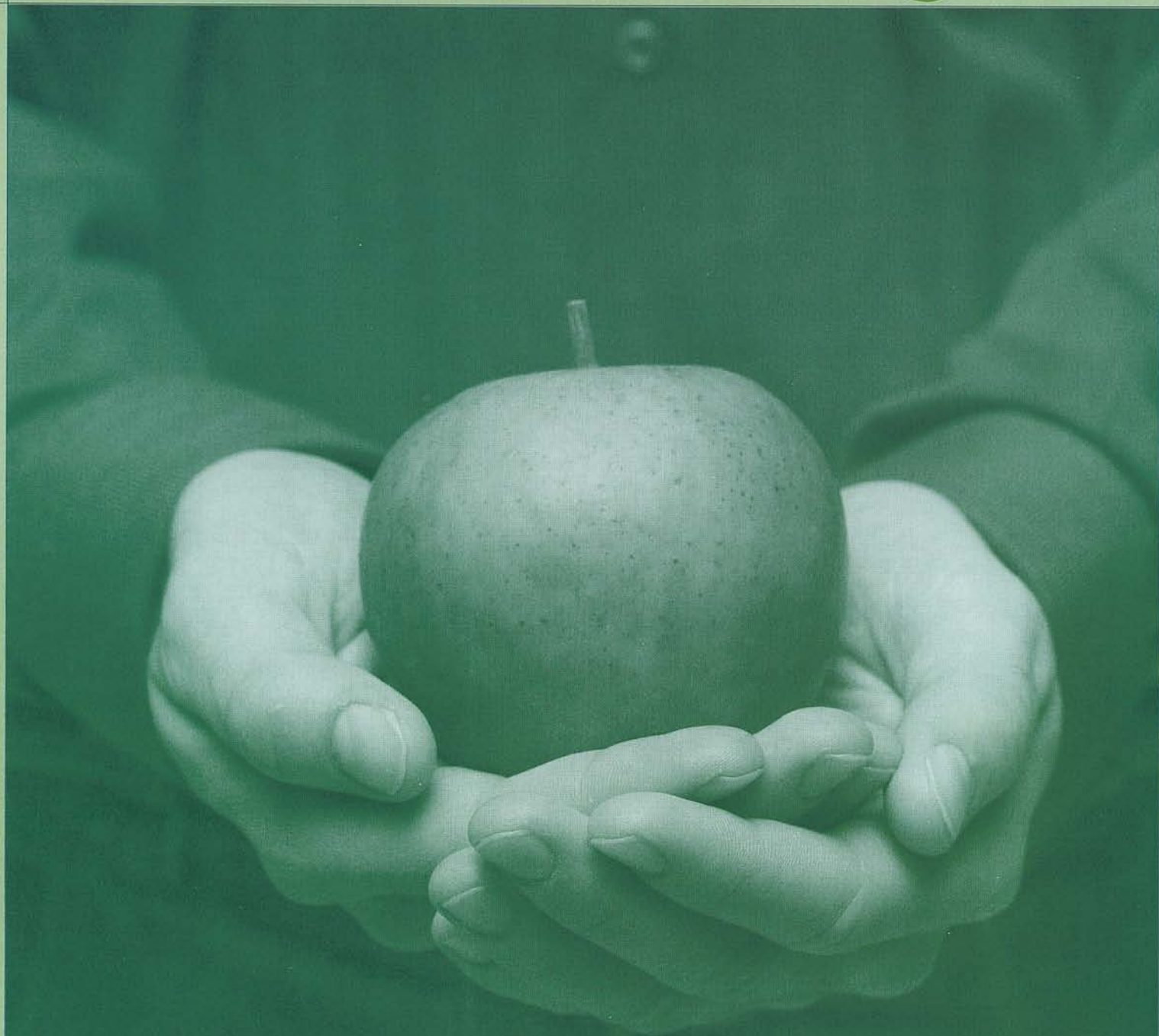


adventist today

NEWS
ANALYSIS
OPINION

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The Church and Slow Tsunamis

JOHN MCLARTY



Speed kills. At least it did in the Indian Ocean when the tsunami, traveling at 500 miles an hour in the open ocean, smashed onto coasts, killing 150,000-plus. In reaction, churches and individuals, governments and NGOs (non-governmental organizations) are providing water, food, economic aid, counseling and transportation assistance. Somehow the drama of sudden catastrophe awakens generosity.

But within a year or two we will have largely forgotten about the tsunami. It was sudden and dramatic. We responded. Now we can return to our normal life, and the people in Africa and Asia will return to their pattern of dying by the unnoticed millions in the slow tsunamis of waterborne and sex-borne illnesses.

Every year more than two million children die from impure water. But since the contaminated water is what they drink every day and does not arrive at 500 miles an hour, our sympathies are not sufficiently aroused. In reality, slowness kills far more people than speed. According to the World Health Organization, an estimated 640,000 children under 15 years of age acquired AIDS in 2004. But who noticed?

Given the drama of the tsunami, Christians have instinctively known that the appropriate response is aid, not sermons. We know authentic Christianity calls us to participate in alleviating here-and-now suffering as well as offering future hope. Even the gospel apostle himself made fund-raising for the victims of drought a major component of his work (1 Cor 16:1). But do we have the same sensitivity when confronted with the slow tsunamis of chronic disease?

Faithfulness to Jesus requires us to serve material and earthly needs as well as addressing future, heavenly concerns. After three days of preaching, Jesus ordered his disciples to feed the crowd "lest they faint on the way" home. That feeding was not designed to get people to heaven, but to empower them to walk the miles to their meager Palestinian domiciles. When Jesus healed lepers and the blind and lame, he knew their skin, eyes and legs would again fail them. Jesus was giving them only

temporary relief from the weight of mortality, but he made such relief central in his ministry. And so should the church.

In Africa and Asia, following the pattern of Jesus requires the church to work to provide clean water, effective sex education (morality saves) and condoms. This will save more lives than operating hospitals. Preventing diarrhea and AIDS will not guarantee people access to heaven, but following Jesus will not allow us to do otherwise. The church must unabashedly link church membership with the expectation of specific behaviors that will protect health and diminish avoidable suffering.

According to the World Health Organization, an estimated 640,000 children under 15 years of age acquired AIDS in 2004.

But who noticed?

In American society, millions of people are suffering from different sorts of misery—diabetes, heart disease, cancer, obesity, divorce, addiction, consumer debt. If the church is going to follow the pattern of Jesus of holistic ministry, it must engage in teaching personal and social health practices. Our context requires the linking of church membership with the expectation of specific behaviors that will free people from suffering and liberate them for service.

Jesus modeled regard for humanity in the broadest sense. He opened the way to heaven through his death and resurrection. He taught us how to live righteously here and now. And he modeled a compassionate response to human needs—both in dramatic, life-and-death situations and in the case of hungry listeners facing a long walk home. As the body of Christ we must respond to howling hurricanes and to speeding tsunamis that kill tens of thousands in minutes. We must also work to save people from the slow tsunamis of chronic disease, poor sanitation, and voluntary lifestyles that foster debility and death.

In Matthew 6, Jesus repeatedly pictures God as a heavenly father who carefully attends to the here-and-now needs of his children. The church, as the household of God, must do no less. ■

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Ron Gladden and Church Planting

I just received my copy of *Adventist Today* and read with interest your account of Ron Gladden's new denomination. First of all, I was surprised to see that you had quoted from my letter to Gladden, especially since you had asked for permission and I refused to give it to you unless you showed me the article first. I expected more from *Adventist Today*.

Furthermore, I am surprised by your not reporting fairly on the movement. Your article is a basic one-sided view of his denomination and a very biased rebuttal of the official denominational position. I thought *Adventist Today* was at least fair and did not engage in biased reporting. Evidently, I was wrong.

For example, you quote Elder Schneider on the planting of over 1,000 churches since Seeds began in 1996, then

three years down the road. Only after the constituency vote are they counted as churches in the official report. This is the reason we started keeping record of church starts, because the system did not measure it. To compare starts with net increase is not a fair or honest representation.

My problem with what Ron Gladden has done is not with the organizational issues he raises. Many of us share those concerns. My problem with him is that he has chosen to do so outside the church. The track record of so doing, as you point out, is not good. He had much to offer the denomination, and I am saddened that he has chosen to leave. I believe his influence in the future will be minimal compared to what it might have been if he had remained within the denomination. I believe it is much better to work within the parameters of the church, which is what we have chosen to do. The fact that the church system can respond with over 1,200 new church plants in seven years is an outstanding accomplishment and should not be diminished by a false use of statistics. That is not honest reporting. You must compare apples with apples and not apples with oranges. By the way, many of these churches have not been immigrant churches, but native-born populations. We praise God for the immigrant churches, but we also praise him for the hundreds of native-born population churches that have been planted over the last several years.

My problem with what Ron Gladden has done is not with the organizational issues he raises. Many of us share those concerns. My problem with him is that he has chosen to do so outside the church.

you go on to rebut those figures. One can use statistics to support erroneous views and you have done an admirable job of doing so. Let me explain. The actual figure of churches planted is 1,201, as of the end of 2003 (larger today). We have the name of every church. This figure is extremely accurate and, if anything, conservative. We are reporting the church starts, not the net increase. You cannot compare apples and oranges as you have attempted to do.

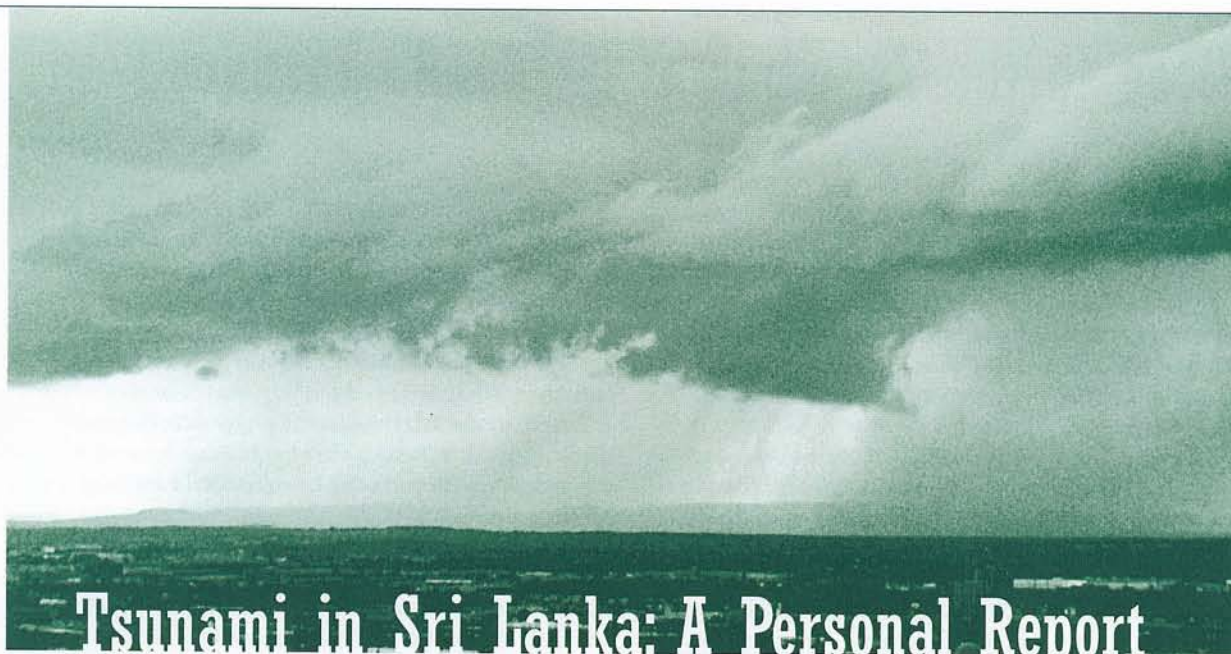
One might ask why these new churches are not reflected in the official statistics. Here is why. Most churches start out as groups, move on to company status, and finally church status. This process takes years in our system. However, they are not an official church until voted by the next constituency meeting, which may be

Russell Burrill

Editorial note: Dr. Burrill (professor of evangelism and church growth at the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary at Andrews University and director, North American Division Evangelism Institute) is correct that we quoted from his letter contrary to his expressed desire. We did so because we learned that after it was written his letter was informally endorsed by and its circulation to Adventist clergy encouraged by North American church leadership. At that point we felt it had changed from a merely personal letter to a church document.

Letters Policy

Adventist Today welcomes letters to the editor. Short, timely letters that relate to articles appearing in the journal have the best chance at being published. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. In publishing letters, AT does not necessarily endorse the views represented, but believes in giving voice to differing viewpoints. We prefer messages sent on the Internet, addressed to atoday@atoday.com. Please include your complete address and telephone number—even with e-mail messages. Send postal correspondence to Letters to the Editor, *Adventist Today*, P.O. Box 8026, Riverside, CA 92515-8026.



Tsunami in Sri Lanka: A Personal Report

RICK MCEWARD

As many of you know, Sri Lanka and other nearby countries were hit by a massive tidal wave yesterday (Dec. 26). Our family is fine, as we are 10 miles inland. If it were not for the news we would not know anything was wrong. But in the areas most severely affected, the devastation is really amazing. Villages and roads are gone into the sea. Many tourist resorts are flooded. Numerous fishing villages that used to dot the sandy shore are completely gone. Current reports (as of Monday, Dec. 27) are 5,000 dead and more than 3,000 missing. In some areas the floods have receded enough for some to return to their homes, only to find unaccounted-for family members dead. Some saved themselves in the tops of coconut trees.

Although the earthquake was felt here, it did not damage anything. It was just a tremor here; all the damage seems to have come from the tsunami. Unfortunately, it has now started to pour down rain. Over 1 million people are homeless, and there is no shelter or transportation, and in many cases, no food or clean water. I am working with ADRA to coordinate some relief, and a group of volunteers has come to assist, but it is all difficult when the only way to get needed supplies to many places is on government helicopters.

I know of about 20 of our churches that are not far from the shore. We have had a little news from those areas, but some churches have been hit, and tragically there are members missing from some of the families. We pray that those who are separated will find their loved ones alive.

The news just showed footage of one train that was carried 4 kilometers from the tracks. There are some villages still under water. We have a lot of workers with whom we have no contact. Some people have volunteered to come as medical teams; others are offering food and clothing. There are large semi trucks going from every village full of food for the affected areas.

We are really moved by this tragedy, partially because we were planning to be on the coast over the holidays, and because we were camping on the beach last week. For some reason our plans changed and we were at home safe when all of the damage occurred.

We appreciate the concern that so many have expressed for our safety. We know prayer makes a difference.

How to help:

1 If a church wants to take a collection or if individuals want to send money, that can be done by donating at your local church and having the church treasurer get instructions from me on how to send it to our union office. Donating to the church helps with tax deductions, and then there is a committee on this end that is coordinating relief for affected families.

2 Another option is to do a toy drive and send a few boxes by sea mail. The children here are badly affected; many have lost homes and siblings. Sometimes a stuffed animal or a doll can offer some comfort. The sea mail takes awhile (5 months) to get here but is cost-effective, and as big as the need is here, gifts will still make an impact even months from now. Air mail is very expensive, but it arrives in a few days. If free transportation can be arranged through UPS or FedEx, they both deliver here. Some airlines may be accepting things too, but I am not really sure.

3 Individuals and congregations can also contact ADRA directly. ■

Rick McEdward is the communication director at the Sri Lanka Mission.

Close to the Tsunami in Thailand

DARRELL LITVIN

Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand" (Matt 13:13).

I don't intend to summarize the tragedy that has taken the lives of more than 81,000 people, but I do have a personal angle to share. I write this from a luxury hotel in Phuket, Thailand. We have electricity, hot water and plenty of food. We have suffered no hardship.

I've been traveling with friends and family. We were in Chiang Mai in northern Thailand on Sunday morning when some of us felt a slight earthquake as we were packing for our flight to Phuket. No big deal, right? We started boarding our 11 a.m. flight—then we stopped—weather problems at our destination. I looked at the weather forecast for Phuket. It didn't make sense—probably there was a mechanical that no one was willing to admit. The television news started showing some footage from Phuket where the tsunami had hit an hour earlier. Many people hurt, maybe some deaths, but that was two hours south of where we'd be staying. We called our small hotel, La Flora—busy signal, understandable, maybe. We called another hotel between the known problem and where we'd be staying. A flooded pool didn't sound like a deterrent. We had a couple of hours until our revised departure. I went shopping.

Finally, it was time to catch our delayed flight. We still got a busy signal at the La Flora but what else could we do? We arrived at a rather chaotic Phuket airport. Lots of people in the departure lounge and plenty of hotel drivers waiting for delayed guests, but no one from our hotel. We found a working phone and dialed. Still busy. I talked with a few hotel drivers, and on their advice we found a hotel nearby and planned to drive up in the morning.

Monday morning, we checked the news. Reports about Sri Lanka and more details on problems south of Phuket, but we were headed north. We dialed the hotel again. No answer. I called their corporate offices; they also hadn't been able to get through. We left our families at the hotel and headed north with a car and driver. Nice drive, we made good time. No problems. Then we hit a roadblock where the police told us to expect another tsunami in 30 minutes. But cars kept going north—so we did too. In short order, we came to a washed out area with some cars destroyed and power and phone lines down. It didn't look good, but it wasn't our beach. We took some pictures out the window and continued north up a hill and around a bend.

Things changed with the view from the top of the hill—the town of Khao Lak was devastated. Bungalows were broken heaps, and debris formed a large flotsam in the bay. We continued down the hill and onto the flat where we got a close-up look. The few concrete structures looked like bombed-out hulks. Everything else beachside of the road was gone. I wondered how much warning the people had. We were maybe half a kilometer from the town of La

Flora when a dozen motorcycles and an emergency vehicle zipped by with frantic looks on their faces. Someone yelled tsunami to our driver. We accepted the advice and joined the race back up the hill. Our driver slowed down to pick up some pedestrians—and then changed his mind abruptly when he figured out we had a capacity issue. I'm torn, troubled, bewildered.

Twenty meters of elevation felt pretty safe. But now what? Maybe 300 people scan the horizon for another tsunami. We wait. Someone has binoculars and begins pointing out bodies floating in the debris down below. The scene is surreal and I'm wondering why we're here. A Huey flies overhead and that appears to be the informal signal that the tsunami danger has passed. We turn around and head back south to where our families are.

News has been slow coming out of that area. As I write, 1,500 people from that beach area are dead and a similar number are missing. Thailand's crown princess was also staying at La Flora and ran, with no warning, for safety. She made it to the fourth floor of a neighboring hotel before the wave hit. Her autistic son didn't make it. She spent the night searching the now muddy beach.

We've talked to people who were on the beach at our hotel. The person who gave my wife and me a massage survived by hugging a coconut tree. The wave went over her head and she thought she was going to die. Others got thrown around amid the surf and debris, but suffered no serious injuries. Here at the Marriott, people felt a minor tremor that morning and the tide was unusually low afterwards. Then it got relatively high. But a tsunami had never happened here before. They didn't connect the data. No knowledge, no experience.

If the tsunami had occurred at 3 p.m. Sunday we would have been checked into the hotel in La Flora. We would have been testing ocean temperatures or, more likely, floating in the chlorine-free pool with its innovative ozone filtration system. We would have been lucky to hear someone yell and then find stairs with enough steps to get above the 8-meter wave. Maybe one or two of us would have made it. Likely, we too would have been searching that night.

One of the pools here at the Marriott re-opened yesterday evening, and this hotel is returning to normal. "Normal" is a hard word to say when villages in 20 different countries are destroyed and 80,000 people are dead. But, again, I have suffered no personal loss or hardship, and this weekend I will board a plane for home. Will I leave this experience here, or bring it back home and make it central to my outlook?

I must see with better eyes and hear with better ears. But even then, will I fully understand? ■

Darrell Litvin works with hospitals in developing long-range financial plans. He, his wife, Beng, and their daughter, Hana, live in Portland, Oregon.

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The Crime of Changing Your Mind

MITCHELL A. TYNER

Joel Klimkewicz is a United States Marine, a Seventh-day Adventist—and a convicted felon, currently serving his sentence in the brig at Camp Lejeune, N.C. His crime? Following the requirements of his conscience.

Klimkewicz was born in Birch Run, Mich., and raised in a divided home, with few religious convictions. He was expelled during his last year in high school and, looking for employment, joined the United States Marine Corps. Initially, Klimkewicz was, by his own testimony, a less than productive Marine. As he puts it, he spent his salary on women and alcohol. He was reprimanded twice for insubordination and once for underage drinking. During that time he was posted to Okinawa, where he met a young Okinawan woman, Tomomi, whom he later married. They now have a 3-year-old daughter.

Klimkewicz was assigned to a six-month deployment on the USS Oak Hill in the Mediterranean Sea. During that time, he wanted to get access to the ship's e-mail system and found that there was always a long line. Then he learned he could get to the head of the line by attending classes held just before the e-mail period. He began attending the classes and found more than he expected. Chaplain (Lt.) Santiago Rodriguez, a Seventh-day Adventist minister and Navy chaplain, was conducting classes on the big questions: Who am I? Why am I here? How can I be a better person, a better husband, a better Marine? Klimkewicz instantly recognized he needed answers to those questions and became a regular in the classes. In the process he also began to turn his life around. Chaplain Rodriguez's roommate on that deployment was Klimkewicz's commanding officer, and this officer shortly began asking Rodriguez, "What are you doing to Klimkewicz? He's becoming a model Marine!"

The classes progressed through basic Christian teaching. Klimkewicz asked for and received a generic Christian baptism. Then he began asking the chaplain about his own denomination. When they returned to Camp Lejeune, Rodriguez directed Klimkewicz to the Jacksonville Seventh-day Adventist Church. Klimkewicz began attending faithfully and formally joined the church.

In the fall of that year, Klimkewicz was facing the end of his enlistment, and, now happy in the corps, decided to reenlist. To do that, he had to declare his intent early in the fiscal year which begins in October. So, as early as possible, he declared his intent to reenlist. His second enlistment period began in December 2002. By the following month, he had discovered arguments in favor of conscientious objection to bearing arms. He discussed this with Chaplain Rodriguez, Chaplain (Lt. Cmdr.) Reuben Ortiz, Command Chaplain for the Second Combat Engineers Battalion at Camp Lejeune (who is

also an Adventist pastor) and with his local church pastor, Tommy Poole. He was told that his church historically has taught noncombatancy, but that it is an individual decision, that many sincere Adventists are either full combatants, noncombatants or full objectors. As he studied, Klimkewicz felt that he had to be a conscientious objector, and he applied to the corps for that status.

Corps regulation provides that an objector whose beliefs crystallize after enlistment may be given objector status, but that if those beliefs were crystallized before enlistment, such status will be denied. About the same time that Klimkewicz applied for objector status, he was

Chaplain (Lt.) Santiago Rodriguez, a Seventh-day Adventist minister, was conducting classes on the big questions: Who am I? Why am I here? How can I be a better person, a better husband, a better Marine? Klimkewicz instantly recognized he needed answers to those questions.

identified as a replacement to be sent to Iraq. The corps immediately decided that Klimkewicz was not sincere, that he really just wanted to avoid serving in Iraq.

To rebut that charge, Klimkewicz volunteered to be sent to Iraq to clear mines, because those who do so do not carry a weapon. Mine clearing is dangerous duty, but Klimkewicz was looking for something he could do to continue to be of use to the corps. His offer was rejected—twice.

The chaplains and pastors who worked with Klimkewicz all testified that the subject of conscientious objection did not arise in their conversations until after Klimkewicz had reenlisted. Therefore his belief could not have crystallized before reenlistment. But the corps wouldn't hear it. It was determined to court-martial Klimkewicz in order to send a message to others who, as they saw it, might try to use conscientious objection as a way to avoid going to Iraq.

The corps did an Article 32 investigation of this matter, which is equivalent to a grand-jury investigation in civilian law. The result was a recommendation that the matter be disposed of by nonjudicial punishment and administrative separation from the military, with an honorable discharge. That counsel was ignored.

The court-martial took place on Tuesday, Dec. 14, 2004, at Camp Lejeune. Richard Stenbakken, Chaplain (Col.) USA (Ret.), military endorser for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and I were part of the defense team. At the end of the day, Klimkewicz was found guilty of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23



In Search of Soul Mates and Kindred Spirits

ALDEN THOMPSON

If a tragedy is relatively minor and affects someone else, we are more easily enticed by the hope of rational explanation. But the ground rules change when the chaos strikes closer home. It doesn't even have to be very chaotic to stir up questions about the role of Providence in the world. Searching my own home for misplaced keys can trigger such questions for me. And more urgent matters intensify those questions: the collapse of a marriage, the loss of a child or spouse, the onset of Alzheimer's in one we love.

How can I regard myself as a thinking, educated person if I don't have a coherent, rational explanation for events in the world we live in? At the same time, how can I have a fully nuanced conversation about the real world that touches me without using the categories of "the holy" and "the mysterious"?

Then there is 9/11 and the war in Iraq. And now the tsunami.

A Dec. 27 *New York Times* editorial refers to the "overpowering, amoral mechanics of the earth's surface," operating with "profound indifference to anything but the pressures that drive them. Whenever those forces punctuate human history, they do so tragically. They demonstrate, geologically speaking, how ephemeral our presence is."

The same point is made in Psalm 90, though we should perhaps substitute "theologically speaking" for "geologically speaking":

In the morning people are like grass which grows up
In the morning it flourishes and grows up;
In the evening it is cut down and withers....
The days of our lives are seventy years;
And if by reason of strength they are eighty
Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow;
For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

What can believers say? The heading to Kenneth Woodward's column in the Jan. 10 *Newsweek* announces: "Countless Souls Cry Out to God." And he concludes with the sentence: "The miracle, if there is one, may be that so many still believe."

Our exclamations of horror are immediate and public, but our search for meaning is much more guarded. Who is a safe conversation partner? Who will hear our questions without condemning us? Who can receive our questions and give them their full weight without having his or her own faith broken or at least weakened? The faith even of our "most admired believer" may be at risk, and that is something we would rather not know. With friends whose faith we already know is shaky, we will be even more cautious. Why should we further damage their spiritual life?

I suspect that education heightens the tension by stressing the importance of rationality. How can I regard myself as a thinking, educated person if I don't have a coherent, rational explanation for events in the world we live in? At the same time, how can I have a fully nuanced conversation about the real world that touches me without using the categories of "the holy" and "the mysterious"? To ignore science is to deny our rationality. But denying the spiritual and numinous means denying parts of our own experience. And we do not know with whom we dare begin a conversation that must include both.

The temptation to live quietly with one's own pain is

illustrated by the experience of the two brothers, Donald and John Baillie, both well-known 20th-century Scottish theologians, who left their sheltered Calvinist home for the rigors of the humanistic Inverness Academy. Drawing on John's memoir of his brother, their cousin provided this brief synopsis:

"Their minds at school were set afire by Shakespeare—'But there was no room at all for Shakespeare within the Puritanism of our early upbringing.' They were trained to distinguish fact from legend—'But our training at home did not allow us to practise this skill on the Bible stories.' They were introduced to the worldview of modern science—'But we could not make it square into the up-and-down, three-storey, geocentric universe of the Bible writers.' It was no wonder that before the end of their school days both John and Donald experienced the spiritual strain of trying to reconcile the old and the new in their education. But neither confessed it to the other through a sensitive fear of disturbing his faith."

I am particularly interested in the last sentence, for it reflects a situation that haunts many of us. Yet in some cases, at least, such well-intentioned caution represents lost opportunities to strengthen one another's faith. The book of Hebrews admonishes us to "consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb 10:24-25).

Quite frankly, my soul craves both worship and serious discussion with fellow believers. As much as we like to think we are independent, rational creatures, capable of standing before God as individuals, even our reason is vulnerable. I remember reading a sociologist once who noted that much of what we consider reasonable is largely the consensus of those around us. Such a thought may not heighten my confidence in my own reasoning ability, but it does suggest that my choice of conversation partners is crucial.

That point is made by C. S. Lewis in his essay, "Religion: Reality or Substitute?" "The society of unbelievers makes Faith harder even when they are people whose opinions on any other subject are known to be worthless."

Can Adventism provide the kind of community in which it is safe to be open with each other? I would hope so. But the challenges will be considerable, for we are

a conservative community that cherishes the conviction that God is actively involved in our world. To openly discuss the implications of the recent tsunami would be very threatening to some. And we must be sensitive to that concern.

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I would hope so. But the challenges will be considerable, for we are a conservative community that cherishes the conviction that God is actively involved in our world.

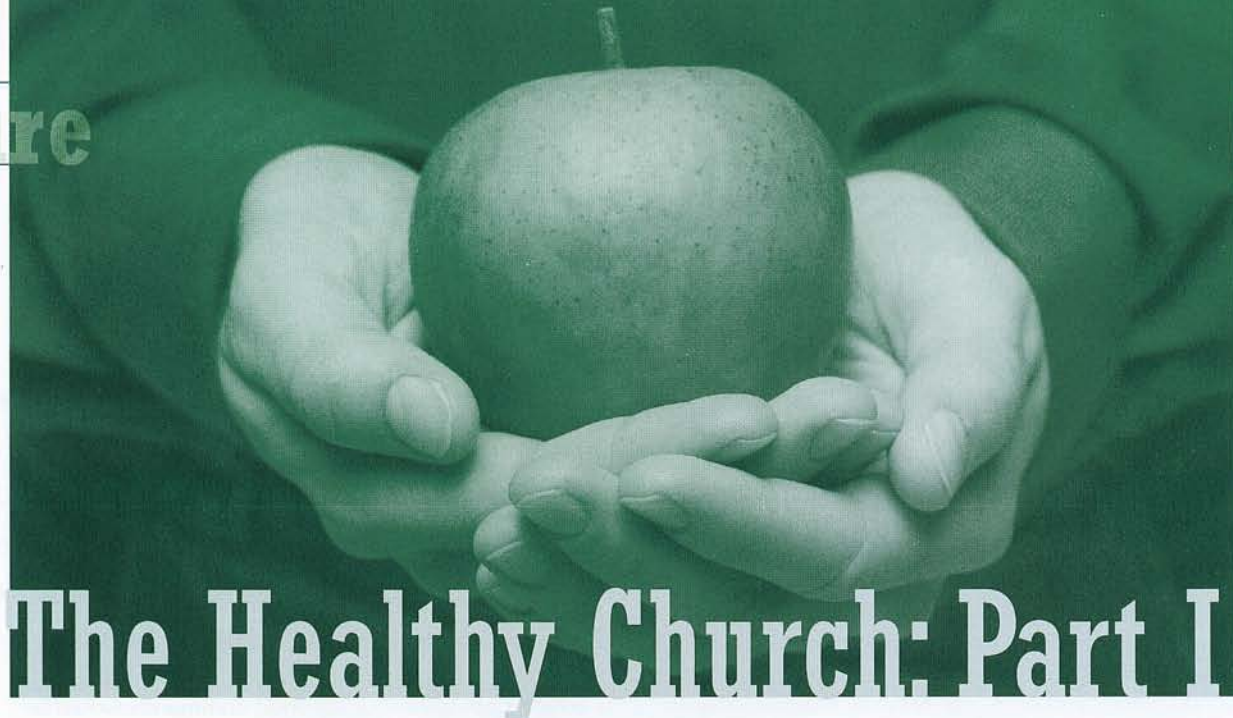
But perhaps our entire Adventist community would be strengthened if we could recognize that we live less by sight than by hope. And our hope is for a better world to come, not guaranteed safe-passage through this one. Rather than tempt us to easy answers, the tsunami should point us to realistic ones, firmly rooted in scripture. And in that connection, I can think of no better words than those of the apostle Paul: "For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience" (Rom 8:24-25). Our Adventist forebears spoke with conviction about the "Blessed Hope." They lived with a vivid awareness that this world was not their final home. Like us, they were journeying to a better place.

Many of us long to find soul mates and kindred spirits with whom we can share and explore the world we are traveling through. We desire partners in conversation as we explore all those fascinating and attractive features God has embedded within creation. And when creation erupts in ways that remind us we need a better home, we need friends to keep us company in our horror and in our questioning. Their presence in struggles persuades us we are not alone. There is a better world, and perhaps, through conversation we can help each other remember that, too. ■

Alden Thompson teaches at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

A Call for Articles: What's Working?

Are you aware of a congregation, a school, a teacher, a clergy person, a "regular" person, who is demonstrating unusual effectiveness? We'd like to hear about them. We are looking for short articles, 700 to 1,500 words, about individuals and groups who provide models of effective spiritual life. Send your queries or submissions to editor@atoday.com.



The Healthy Church: Part I

GARY E. FRASER, M.B., CH.B., PH.D.

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A Brief History

Dietary recommendations and prohibitions have a long association with religion. Judaism has regulated diet for millennia. Islam builds on the same traditions and requires abstinence from alcohol and pork. Hinduism advocates vegetarianism, based originally on the sanctity of all life, and also asceticism. Through the Middle Ages various groups within Catholicism advocated vegetarianism, for reasons of asceticism and spiritual development. A vestige of these practices remained until recently in the form of fish-only Fridays.

The Adventist faith developed at a time in American history when the idea of mixing health and religion was not strange. Prominent health reformers of the time often had an overtly religious tone to their pronouncements. Charles Wesley, founder of the Methodist church, wrote extensively on health and medical issues. Beginning in 1817, Bible Church pastor, William Metcalfe, made the American public aware of English notions of vegetarianism. Health reformer Sylvester Graham (of graham-cracker fame), was a Presbyterian minister. He advocated vegetarianism and the use of whole-wheat (graham) flour for bread. He argued that diet affected "the passions." Larkin B. Coles, a Millerite preacher-physician, was another prominent health reform author. The dire effects of alcohol abuse were recognized by the churches, and many religious leaders and members became active in the temperance movement.

Ellen White and other founders of the Adventist church had an interest in temperance and health from the beginning. Ellen experienced her first vision with health content in 1848, where she was shown that "not only was tobacco harmful, but also that tea and coffee were injurious." But her "watershed" health vision in Otsego, Mich., came on June 6, 1863, less than three weeks after the adoption of the first constitution of the General Conference and the election of its first officers. The focus of this vision was personal health improvement, and the

interventions recommended were lifestyle in nature. By 1866 the first issue of the periodical *The Health Reformer* had been published, and the Western Health Reform Institute had been opened at Battle Creek, Mich. In 1878 the much larger Medical and Surgical Sanitarium, also in Battle Creek, was opened by the talented young Dr. John H. Kellogg. This was the forerunner of the world-famous Battle Creek Sanitarium.

Most readers will be familiar with the subsequent history of Adventist health activities—the development of a worldwide network of hospitals and clinics and an emphasis on personal health outreach endeavors such as cooking schools, stop-smoking plans and health screening vans. These last activities continue; but within North America, at least, the historic emphasis within the church on personal health improvement has diminished.

Part of this decrease in health emphasis may be our increased "scientific" orientation. We hesitate to publicly promote health practices based on the pronouncements of a 19th-century visionary. Another explanation of this decreased emphasis on health within the church is theological embarrassment. Under the influence of modern evangelicalism, official church support for healthy lifestyles has come to be seen as "legalism" or a distortion of the gospel. But is it? Many Adventists think our unique "health message" is an "error to be corrected." I believe it is a "mission to be strengthened."

Why the Church Must Be Concerned About Health

While there has long been a strong appreciation for the connection between religion and health among the adherents of some non-Christian religions, more recently Christians (other than Adventists) are also giving increasing attention to the logical interfaces between religion and health.¹ Perhaps the most obvious connection follows from the concept of God as creator. The human organism, created by God with its beautiful and complex anatomy and physiology and its social,

esthetic and spiritual capabilities, deserves the most fastidious care (historically endorsed by Judaism).

Another "creationist" impulse for vegetarianism arises from the conviction that humans are to act as stewards of God's creation—engaging in agricultural practices that minimize damage to the ecology and demonstrate appropriate concern for the well-being of animals.

Second, the New Testament shows Jesus to be concerned with the physical well-being of humans and animals. Besides teaching and working to "save the lost," he healed the sick and fed the hungry. Applying in our world the principle of care Jesus demonstrated in his ministry means helping people avoid or recover from the illnesses common in our time—like heart disease, diabetes, cancer and stroke. There is unambiguous evidence for the effectiveness of church-based teaching about health practices to accomplish this goal.²

Third, as God's representatives we are called to be active in taking the gospel to the world. Vigorous, healthy people are more available to engage in Christian service than people who are infirm. When we train people in healthy living, we are equipping disciples for longer, more effective Christian service.

Fourth, since the human body is the locus of one's relationship with God, the condition of the body may have a direct effect on spiritual life. Is it possible that the way we eat, the number of hours we sleep, how we exercise, can affect our thinking and perhaps our spiritual perceptiveness? There is no direct evidence (who has looked?), but such a conclusion, also advanced by Ellen White, is physiologically and pharmacologically plausible.

The Problem of Health Ministry

The original Adventist health work was a mix of therapy for those already ill and instruction in healthy practices that would prevent disease. Today, in North America, Adventist medical institutions are very prominent. But the church provides diminishing resources to support the promotion of personal health improvement. Fortunately, our tradition of right living continues to pass down the Adventist generations, but with reduced corporate support and emphasis, it is a question how long this will continue. Ten years ago we documented that in 13 randomly selected Southern California Adventist churches, only 20 percent of middle-aged men ate flesh foods less often than once per week. When Adventists eat "like everybody else" they will probably get sick and die like everybody else. We owe our members better.

Church administrators have to balance many worthy goals, such as increasing membership, income and spirituality. Promoting the development of personal health practices by members may not seem to provide direct support to these primary goals. In addition, Adventist theologians have not developed a serious theology of health. While many theologians are personally committed to a healthy lifestyle, health as a

doctrine often seems a mild embarrassment and is passed off as a historical quirk.

In 1993 a church conference on "Adventist Theology, Philosophy, and Practice of Health and Healing" by all accounts led to a useful exchange of ideas. However, as far as this writer knows, no official statement describing the theological, philosophical and ethical bases of our health message resulted.

Does Health Ministry Work?

One question that is often raised about health work is: Does it work? The answer, of course, depends on what the goal is. If the goal is simply baptisms, then health work is not the most efficient use of evangelistic dollars. The number of people who become Seventh-day Adventists as the immediate result of participating in smoking cessation clinics or vegetarian cooking classes or receiving care in an Adventist medical center is small. If, however, we assess our health work on the basis of how much disease and suffering has been prevented and how many additional years of Christian service it has made available, then Adventist health work is an astounding success.

As science has slowly caught up with Adventist health over the last 130 years, it has become a national priority to change the health behaviors of whole populations. This has proved to be extremely difficult. This reality highlights the remarkable nature of the Adventist accomplishment of persuading people to make radical changes in health patterns. The Adventist experience points to the genius of tying behavior to the powerful motivator of religion.

If we eliminated everything from our official teaching as a church that could not properly be termed "gospel" in the Pauline sense, we would end our teaching about health. However, if Adventists were to discontinue promoting health practices in connection with religious motivation, we would contribute to an increase in heart disease, cancer and diabetes. We would increase the death rate among our members and friends and contribute to the shortening of their years of active service to humanity and to their church. That would seem to be a very curious way to "advance the gospel." It would run utterly contrary to the model and teachings of Jesus. Embracing Jesus's model of care for the whole person requires the church to actively promote healthy living. It is "what Jesus would do." ■

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2. Fraser, G.E. *Diet, Life Expectancy and Chronic Disease: Studies of Seventh-day Adventists and Other Vegetarians*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

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The Catholic Church and Other Churches

THOMAS P. RAUSCH, S.J.

Editorial note: Like other Protestants, Adventists take exception to many of the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church, including their claim to be the only "true church." Many of our traditional criticisms of Catholicism are connected with quotations from a century or two ago. We thought it would be instructive to ask a contemporary Roman Catholic theologian to address the question of the how Catholics view other churches.

How does the Roman Catholic Church view other churches? While the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) advanced Catholic thinking considerably on this question, some recent Vatican statements have, at least in the view of some, attempted to return to a less open, exclusivist position.

The Second Vatican Council

One of the most significant ecumenical moves of the council was a small but significant change in regard to how the council fathers understood the relationship between the mystical body of Christ and the Catholic Church. The first schema for what became the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, then called *de Ecclesia*, had said that "The Roman Catholic Church is the Mystical Body of Christ." In doing this, the authors of the draft were simply following the tradition of the recent popes. Pope Pius XI had said that no one could be in the one church of Christ without submission to the pope¹ and Pius XII identified the mystical body of Christ with the Roman Catholic Church in his 1943 encyclical *Mystici corporis* (no. 13), implying that only Catholics are members of the body of Christ.

While the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) advanced Catholic thinking considerably on this question, some recent Vatican statements have, at least in the view of some, attempted to return to a less open, exclusivist position.

But during the debates on the floor of the council, many of the council fathers argued against this language, and ultimately, the draft was rejected. In the final version, approved on Nov. 21, 1964, by a vote of 2,151 for and only 5 opposed, the language was quite different. The relationship between the church of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church was no longer one of simple

identity. Instead, the Dogmatic Constitution, now known as *Lumen gentium*, changed the "is" of the first draft to *subsists in*, so that it now states that the "unique church of Christ...constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in the Catholic Church" (*Lumen gentium*, 8).

This small change was extremely significant, as it signified that the Roman Catholic Church was no longer claiming an exclusive identity or strict equation between the church of Christ and itself. Yet the council did not want to take away from the unique claims of the Catholic Church. Because the council understands the Catholic Church as having "all the means of salvation," it speaks of Catholics as being "fully incorporated" into the church (*Lumen gentium*, 14).

The council also took a number of steps to affirm the ecclesial reality of other Christian churches. It adopted the language of "churches and ecclesial communities" to refer to other Christian churches. This, together with the change from *is* to *subsists in*, suggests that the church of Christ is also present in various ways in other "churches and ecclesial communities." The council's Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis redintegratio*) had no problem in using the word "church" in referring to the Orthodox churches (UR, chapter III), and post-conciliar discussion made clear that the word "church" was included in the phrase "churches and ecclesial communities" to include the Old Catholics who, like the Orthodox, were considered to have—through apostolic succession—valid orders and a valid eucharist.²

At the same time, the council sees the "separated churches and ecclesial communities in the west" as ecclesial communities of Christians united with Christ, consecrated by Baptism, living in his Spirit, nourished by the Word, and celebrating other sacraments (see *Lumen gentium* 15; *Unitatis redintegratio*, 22). They have been brought through baptism into a real but "imperfect" communion (*koinonia*) with the Catholic Church (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 3). Going a step further, the 1993 Roman Catholic Ecumenical Directory acknowledges a partial or certain "communion"

between the Catholic Church and other “churches and ecclesial communities.”³

After the Council

Discussion after the council made clear that the council did not restrict the name “church” to those communities that had valid orders and eucharist; on the other hand, it did not say that they could legitimately be called “church.” It did not want to limit the debate of theologians on this point or to prejudge it.⁴

Yet in recent years, some voices from Rome have spoken more restrictively. The controversial 2000 declaration of Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus*, stated “the ecclesial communities which have not preserved the valid episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the eucharistic mystery, are not churches in the proper sense.”⁵ While this may indeed have been implied by the logic of Vatican II’s Decree on Ecumenism, *Dominus Iesus*, in the opinion of many it seems to go beyond what the council actually said. Francis Sullivan argues, “the council never flatly declared that the ecclesial communities are ‘not churches in the proper sense.’”⁶ He notes that the Decree on Ecumenism spoke without hesitation of the separated eastern churches as “particular churches,” and that “it was the mind of the commission responsible for this text that the western communities that lack the full reality of the Eucharist—without attempting to decide which ones these were—still have an ecclesial character, and are at least analogous to particular churches of the Catholic Church.”⁷

Nor did the council decide the question of the validity of ministry in the Protestant communities. Archbishop Jerome Hamer, who had served as the secretary of what was then known as the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, has stated that the theological language of the council does not permit a conclusion concerning the validity of ministry in the Protestant communities.⁸ More recently, Bishop Richard Sklba of Milwaukee observed that Trent left open many questions regarding ministry, not wishing “to resolve issues prematurely or contrary to more ancient opinions in the church.”⁹ Thus the Roman Catholic Church does not deny ecclesial reality to the Reformation churches.

Reconciliation of Churches

If the Roman Catholic Church is able to see the Reformation churches as ecclesial communities of Christians united with Christ, consecrated by Baptism, and living in his Spirit (see LG 15; UR 22), then what prevents it from moving towards sacramental sharing and full communion with them? While ecumenical consensus statements over the last 40 years have helped to narrow the doctrinal differences between many of the churches, the crucial issue today is apostolic succession, or as it is more often termed today, apostolicity. Recognition of full ecclesiality and thus full communion is contingent on the apostolicity of a church, its faithfulness to the faith, life and mission of the apostolic church.

Some voices from Rome continue to insist on ordination in the historical episcopal succession as necessary for valid eucharist. Most recently, Pope John Paul II did this in his 2003 encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*; the encyclical says that “the uninterrupted sequence of valid episcopal ordinations...is essential for the church to exist in a proper and full sense” (no. 28) and a genuine eucharistic assembly requires a priest ordained “through episcopal succession going back to the apostles” (no. 29). This seems to make both full ecclesial status and ministerial validity depend on apostolic succession, narrowly understood.

However, few Roman Catholic theologians would want to define apostolicity so narrowly. For example, Cardinal Walter Kasper, Prefect of the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, has argued that the Second Vatican Council left open the possibility that the church could recognize more than one exclusive form and

If the Roman Catholic Church is able to see the Reformation churches as ecclesial communities of Christians united with Christ, consecrated by Baptism, and living in his Spirit, then what prevents it from moving towards sacramental sharing and full communion with them?

conception of apostolic succession.”¹⁰ And he appeals to the Orthodox churches’ more pneumatological understanding of the church’s episcopal structure to suggest that “the continuity of the apostolic ministry can no longer be understood in terms of a purely historical linear succession; rather this continuity is realized ever anew in the Holy Spirit.”¹¹ If this is so, it should not be impossible for the Roman Catholic Church to move forward to recognize the validity of the sacraments in the Reformation confessional churches, and thus their substantial ecclesiality, even if from a Catholic perspective they “are invalid according to purely institutional criteria.”¹¹

Thus apostolicity is not seen today as a mechanistic succession of episcopal ordinations. In a recent Roman Catholic study of apostolicity, John Burkhard argues that theologians generally “point to apostolicity as guaranteeing the identity of the church of a later period with the early Christian community,”¹³ and he emphasizes that the ecumenical statements of the last 40 years agree that the primacy is to be given to the apostolicity of the whole church.¹⁴ A church is apostolic if it is in continuity in its life and faith with the apostolic church, if it is faithful to the apostolic tradition of the church. In the words of the World Council of Churches Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry statement:

“Apostolic tradition in the Church means continuity in the permanent characteristics of the Church of the

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The Rationality of Love

JOHN MCLARTY

One of the distinctive elements of Adventist theology is the constant effort to show that God is best understood through a fusion of love and logic. God is neither sheer rationality nor an unpredictable lover. This is evident in the theology of Ellen White and it shows up in modern Adventist theologians as well.

The professor who most influenced my theology was an eccentric, old Norwegian philosopher at the seminary named Carsten Johnsen. He was a dreadfully boring lecturer, but he offered incisive analyses of ideas. Interestingly, though he was thoroughly familiar with the canon of Western philosophical thought, he freely used the writings of Ellen White in his critiques of theology and philosophy.

Given our habits of ignoring God and harming each other, it is a wonder that God still desires a connection with us. But God does not love only in spite of us. He loves, in part, because he desires us, he treasures us, he wants us. Like any good parent would.

One of his most provocative arguments was against the Swedish theologian Anders Nygren. It took some courage to challenge Nygren. At that time, Nygren's book *Agape and Eros* was very highly regarded and frequently cited. In it he argued for the essential irrationality of agape, the divine love. In contrast to eros, which was evoked by the desirability of the beloved, God's love was agape—utterly spontaneous, love without reason, without reference to any value in the beloved.

According to Nygren, there was no making sense of God's love. God's love was utterly outgoing, with no element of desire on God's part or desirability on the part of the beloved. It might even be said that God loved humans in spite of what they were. This was the heart of the gospel: that God loved the unlovely.

When I first listened to Johnsen's critique of Nygren, I was offended. I argued with him vehemently. He was denigrating grace. He was inappropriately exalting human beings. He was demeaning agape, divine love. He was trying to revive legalism through the back door. But Johnsen won the argument.

To say that God's love is spontaneous implies a kind of

Could it be
that You would really rather die
than live without us?
— Michael Card, "Could It Be?"

capriciousness and lawlessness on God's part. It implies God's love is utterly unpredictable. Logically, if God's love is outside of principle, how can we "count on it?" According to the teachings of Jesus, God's love exceeds reason to be sure, but it is not contrary to reason. In fact, God's agape (love) is the ultimate expression of coherent rationality.

In Matthew 6, Jesus makes repeated statements about God, using the metaphor of father. Your father in heaven sees when you act charitably toward the needy and he will reward you for this kind of action. Your father in heaven knows about your material, physical needs and will provide for them. When you pray, Jesus invites you to address God as Father, confident that he will act in the world in response to your requests.

At one point, Jesus said, "If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him?" (Matt 7:11). The Bible repeatedly uses the metaphors of loving human relationships to talk about God's love, with the model of parents and children the most frequent.

Fear not, little flock. It is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom (Luke 12:32).

The Bible pictures God as the primeval father (Gen 5:1-4) with a love more tenacious than a mother's (Isa 49:15). Parents do love their children not primarily in spite of who their children are but because of who their children are. While humans often use their powers in ways that bring ruin and pain, they also use their powers to create and heal. The capacity to do both good and evil comes from our heavenly father. Therefore, we are not surprised that he loves us even in our failures and rebellion. That is, we are not surprised if we are parents, because we know how inextricably linked we are to our own children. When they do wrong, we wince. Sometimes we are appalled. Sometimes we are furious. But our default stance toward our children is love. We love them because of who they are—our children. And God loves us because of who we are—his children.

That is what we expect a parent to do. Certainly the imperfections (and worse) in humans complicate God's love for us. His love is not unruffled. Given our habits of ignoring God and harming each other, it is a wonder that God still desires a connection with us. But God does not love only in spite of us. He loves, in part, because he desires us, he

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The Catholic Church and Other Churches.

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apostles: witness to the apostolic faith, proclamation and fresh interpretation of the Gospel, celebration of baptism and the eucharist, the transmission of ministerial responsibilities, communion in prayer, love, joy and suffering, service to the sick and the needy, unity among the local churches and sharing the gifts which the Lord has given to each."¹⁵

Full Ecclesiality?

However, a church is not apostolic merely by claiming to be so. It needs to demonstrate a fidelity to the apostolic tradition in its ecclesial life. A church not committed to the apostles' teaching, that is not a eucharistic community, that failed to encourage discipleship and holiness of life would be seriously deficient (Acts 2:42-46). A church that was not "one, holy, catholic and apostolic," that did not witness to the kingdom of God through compassionate service of the poor, that was not willing to live in visible, sacramental communion with other churches—would need to reappropriate those elements of the apostolic tradition no longer expressed in its life. After all, the principle *ecclesia semper reformanda* (the church always needing to be reformed) should apply to all the churches, not just to the Church of Rome.

If Rome needs to move beyond its too narrow concept of sacramental validity, other churches may need to take a new look at Rome, with its ancient sacramental, liturgical and ecclesial life. Vatican II's Decree on Ecumenism

recognizes far more essential elements of the church in other Christian communities than the "vestiges" or "relics" of the church John Calvin was able to find in the Church of Rome.¹⁶ Many Evangelical Christians today are still reluctant to recognize Roman Catholics as Christians. In a report of a conversation between representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Alliance (2003), the Evangelical participants acknowledge

If Rome needs to move beyond its too narrow concept of sacramental validity, other churches may need to take a new look at Rome, with its ancient sacramental, liturgical and ecclesial life.

the "presence of true believers indwelt by Christ's Spirit among Catholics," but the report is less clear on the ecclesial status of the Catholic Church.¹⁷ Certainly the ecumenical dialogues of the last 40 years have moved this question forward considerably.

Thus the modern ecumenical movement has challenged all the churches to renew their teachings, structures and ecclesial life in the search for reconciliation and Christian unity. Unity does not mean uniformity; it does not mean the loss of particular ecclesial identity in some kind of super church. But it does require fidelity to the life and mission of the apostolic church. If much has been achieved in the last 40 years, much remains to be done. ■

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Footnotes

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2. Jerome Hamer, "La terminologie ecclésiologique de Vatican II et les ministères protestants," *Documentation catholique* 68 (1971) 628.
3. Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, "Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism," no. 18; text in *Origins* 23 (July 29, 1993) 133.
4. Hamer, 628.
5. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Dominus Iesus," *Origins* 30 (Sept. 14, 2000) 209-19; (no. 17); see also UR no. 22.
6. Francis A. Sullivan, "The Impact of Dominus Iesus on Ecumenism," *America* 183 (Oct. 28, 2000) 10; see also Thomas P. Rausch, "Has the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Exceeded Its Authority?" *Theological Studies* 62 (2001) 802-810.
7. Francis A. Sullivan, *The Church We Believe In: One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic* (New York: Paulist, 1988) 32; see his discussion on "The One Church of Christ," 23-33.
8. Hamer, 628.
9. Richard Sklba, "Four Important Truths Learned in Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue," *Origins* 30 (Dec. 21, 2000) 452.
10. Walter Kasper, *Leadership in the Church: How Traditional Roles Can Serve the Christian Community Today*, trans. Brian McNeil (New York: Crossroad, 2003) 135.
11. Kasper, *Leadership in the Church*, 141.
12. Kasper, 141.
13. John J. Burkhard, *Apostolicity Then and Now: An Ecumenical Church in a Postmodern World* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 2004) 25 (forthcoming).
14. Burkhard, 236.
15. World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva: WCC, 1982) (M no. 34).
16. See Burkhard, 33.
17. Roman Catholic Church/World Evangelical Alliance, "Church, Evangelization, and 'Koinonia'," (no. 11); see *Origins* 33/19 (2003) 313.

What Is the Adventist God Like?

ERVIN TAYLOR

The subtitle of *Lord, I Have a Question* is "Everything you ever wanted to ask God but were afraid to say out loud." It turns out that the publisher added the "everything" in the subtitle, so we can't blame that on the author. However, he does indeed cover a wide range of theological territory in 203 pages of text, most of it oriented to concerns often raised within the Seventh-day Adventist faith tradition.

Smith has been senior pastor of the La Sierra University Church of Seventh-day Adventists for many years and comes from a prominent family of Adventist preachers who go back several generations. He says he has heard many, many questions and opinions from students and colleagues about many issues having to do with God and Adventism.

Including four chapter titles that are phrased as questions, this reviewer counted 50 explicit questions posed by the author. Although the linguistic forms and cultural contexts of the questions vary, some are essentially the same ones asked by Hebrews for 3,000 years—How can a good God allow so much evil?—some by Christians for 2,000 years—Why did Jesus have to die?—and one asked by Adventists for 160 years—

What happened in 1844?

While a number of the questions posed would be relevant to a larger public, the volume was clearly written in an Adventist idiom for an Adventist audience. This reviewer counted 87 footnotes in this volume. Fifty-one, or almost 60 percent, cite Ellen White sources. In the preface, Smith thanks the people who helped him

the most in finding his answers. Of the 10 individuals listed, only two are non-Adventists. Further, Smith indicates that he writes from a distinctive theological perspective within Adventism. In his preface and footnotes, Smith acknowledges his indebtedness to Graham Maxwell as well as to Fritz Guy, the late Jack Provonsa, Richard Rice and Alden Thompson. They are all credited with giving him "pieces of [the] puzzle

of a picture of God that I've put together" (6).

This brief review cannot do justice to all the topics and issues considered by Smith, but it focuses on what the author says is the main purpose of his book. In the preface he states that his "life mission is to discover God's goodness and to communicate that goodness to people" (7). He is well aware that in many parts of the Bible—especially in the Old Testament but also in the New Testament—God seems to be in the business of executing judgment and vengeance. Smith devotes chapter 7 to "hard" questions from the Old Testament and chapter 12 to dealing, in part, with the Book of Revelation. This book, Smith admits, contains some of the "roughest passages" in the entire Bible (91).

Much of this book is about the picture of God that Smith holds and wants others to share. He argues that the way we interpret a single passage in the Bible "will determine our picture of God, all our theology about Him." This passage is Genesis 2:16, 17.

Much of this book is about the picture of God that Smith holds and wants others to share. He argues that the way we interpret a single passage in the Bible "will determine our picture of God, all our theology about Him" (29). This passage is Genesis 2:16, 17: "The Lord God commanded the man, you are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it, you will surely die." There are available to us, Smith suggests, two different interpretative models for explaining this passage. One model insists God is saying, "Love Me or I will kill you." The other has God "giving a loving warning of the terrible natural consequences of trying to live on our own in this world" (31). Smith is obviously attracted to the second interpretation.

Smith writes that how we interpret Genesis 2 will also determine our understanding of "how the wicked will be removed at the end of the world." He suggests that

BOOK REVIEW

Dan Smith. *Lord, I Have a Question*. Nampa: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2004. 203 pages.

is the ultimate question—how to avoid going there” (66). On one hand are those who believe that at the end of the world, God will execute judgment and punish the wicked by burning them up. A counter view has God letting people “experience the natural consequences of separation from Him” (41). Smith argues for the natural consequences model. This allows him to believe God is “always, immediately, perpetually, and constantly gracious” (67) in wishing all to avoid hell. Simply put, God does not decide who shall and who shall not have an eternal existence or nonexistence. Humans decide this for themselves. “Only those who refuse to go [to heaven] are lost. Everyone who *wants* to be in *can* be in” (75, emphasis his).

In a chapter titled “Hard Questions About the Old Testament,” Smith admits that those who “believe the Bible is inspired and...want to love God” are “stuck with...stories that don’t seem to fit the picture of God in the rest of the Bible” (91). He considers some options to “square [the Old Testament picture of God] with this other picture of God as characterized by love” (92). He admits that those who wish to “reinterpret all the harsh passages in light of the love passages...can be accused of forcing an external agenda onto the Bible, selecting only the texts that fit what they already believe and ignoring or twisting the rest to fit that preconception” (93).

The longest chapter in the book (22 pages) is “What Really Happened in 1844?” Smith notes that it would have been easier for him to “pass by” this topic. To this reviewer, the “1844 problem” is one of those dreaded “tar baby” issues—where trying to deal with it often results only in the creation of a sticky theological mess. However, Smith correctly points to a historical fact: “What happened in 1844 is a major part of Adventist history and self-identity” (111). His own justification for including this topic is that, in his view, this totally unique Adventist question “has critical implications for [our view of] the character of God...” (106). To support such a statement, Smith had no choice but to do radical surgery on the investigative judgment doctrine to make it compatible with his view of God’s character.

Smith begins by stating that perhaps the Adventist tradition has been “wrong about the investigative judgment (IJ)...and we’re still wrong in assuming something cosmically important occurred....” His question is, “What should we do with the IJ: require it, repent of it—or revise it?” (105). Smith’s approach is to ask whether the classic Adventist view of how God deals with human sin that developed around the IJ concept is compatible with what Smith calls his “nonnegotiable anchor points.” Smith’s “anchor points” with which the IJ concept must be compatible is that it “has to be good news,” be “something that makes total sense” and can “withstand the closest scrutiny” (108). Using a series of 10 propositions—such as “the judgment is not God sitting up in heaven deciding who’s in and who’s out” (109)—Smith repackages and recontextualizes the IJ concept in ways that he argues

make it compatible with all of his “nonnegotiable anchor points.” He completes his version of a radical makeover of the IJ concept by talking about the “stages of the judgment,” including making 1844 the third of six stages in a long-term judgment process that began with Christ’s death and is not completed until a “final, postmillennial judgment” (123-125).

Commentary

While Smith draws from a number of sources, it is apparent that many of his core understandings are strongly influenced by one Adventist scholar, Graham Maxwell. Examples of direct reliance on Maxwell include Smith’s juxtaposition of God saying, “Love Me, or I will kill you,” as opposed to God giving a loving warning of the terrible natural consequences of trying to live on our own in this world”; Smith’s characterization of some of God’s actions as “emergency measures”; and his statement that the “final message that will go around the world...is the truth about God” (182). In this affirmation of Maxwell’s views, Smith clearly distances himself not only from the Adventism of the Adventist Theological Society but from much of both official and folk Adventism as well, although Smith himself would object to this interpretation of what he is doing.

It should be noted that Smith wisely does not deal in any detailed manner with two other highly charged “tar baby” issues confronting Adventism today: earth history and the role and authority of Ellen G. White. There are hints and glancing comments but little in the way of specific and definitive statements.

To this reviewer, Smith is attempting to take selected elements of his own faith tradition and refashion them in ways that were neither envisioned by the founders nor currently practiced by the vast majority of the contemporary adherents. In doing so, he has to wrench

Smith’s refashioning of traditional Adventist ideology is one of the better theological makeovers presently available in popular, contemporary Adventism, and its major features merit wide consideration.

these elements out of their original sectarian context and repackage them in ways appropriate to a larger and broader vision. This is precisely what has happened in all major religious traditions over time. Smith’s refashioning of traditional Adventist ideology is one of the better theological makeovers presently available in popular, contemporary Adventism, and its major features merit wide consideration. ■

Ervin Taylor is professor of anthropology, University of California, Riverside and Executive Editor of Adventist Today.

North American Structure and Evangelism

MARVIN MOORE

I read with interest two articles in the August 2004 issue of *Adventist Today* about Mission Catalyst, the most recent independent ministry to break with the church. The first article was actually a letter to North American Division President Don Schneider, written by Minnesota Pastor Jerry Lee Holt. The other was an article, "Para-Church Ministry for Church Planting," by *Adventist Today* editor John McLarty. Both questioned the current system of Adventist church governance. Holt argued that the allocation of funds in the North American Division appears to demonstrate that we are primarily focused inwardly on our own needs, particularly our institutions and our educational system, rather than on evangelism. McLarty's article reported widespread discontent among pastors with our current multiple levels of administration. Many of these pastors argue for

Many local churches will use the extra funds for the same purpose they are being used for now: maintaining the institution and the educational system—on the local level. The monies will probably not be used for evangelism and church growth. Whatever structural changes may be in order, I don't believe they will have significant impact on growth and outreach without significant change in several other areas.

eliminating union conferences and downsizing local conferences. The purpose of this reorganization would be to provide local churches with more funds for church growth.

Holt makes a valid point, and the call for administrative streamlining is certainly worth considering. I propose, however, that merely cutting administrative costs and transferring the funds to local churches is not likely, in and of itself, to result in significant church growth. Many local churches will use the extra funds for the same purpose they are being used for now: maintaining the institution and the educational system—albeit on the local level. The monies will probably not be used for evangelism and church growth. Whatever structural changes may be in

order, I don't believe they will have significant impact on growth and outreach without significant change in several other areas. I will mention five.

1 Pastoral and church accountability.

When I entered pastoral ministry back in the early 1960s, pastors were required to demonstrate proficiency in evangelism through the number of Bible studies they gave each month, the number of people they baptized, the amount of money they raised for Ingathering, and the number of missionary magazines their church members sponsored (the goal was two per member). While one can argue whether Ingathering was evangelistic, it was touted as such by church leaders. Pastors were required to report their activities in each of these areas to their local conference, and the ordination of young pastors depended on their success in meeting all of these goals.

Today Ingathering has virtually disappeared in North America (much to the relief of some of us). To my knowledge no Anglo-American conference requires any reporting of missionary magazine subscriptions by members. And while it's been nearly 20 years since I was involved in pastoral ministry, I suspect that in much of North America the demand for accountability in Bible studies and baptisms is not nearly what it was 30 and 40 years ago.

I propose that church administration at all levels, from the North American Division on down, must require both pastors and congregations to be accountable for their church-growth efforts, including but not limited to how they use the extra funds that reorganization provides. Unfortunately, such accountability is resisted mightily in some parts of the division, especially by pastors, and conference administrators tend to avoid demanding it. However, this kind of accountability is required in the parts of the world where Adventist church growth is exploding, which is another reason for the explosion.

2 Retaining new members.

Merely pouring more funds into evangelism as we're presently doing it won't result in a significant increase in church growth. I do believe in the evangelism we're doing now. It does win souls. However, we need to invest far more money and effort in retaining the new members that our current evangelistic endeavors bring in.

3 Evangelistic experimentation.

We need to invest money in experimenting with methods that reach the people in our communities who will never respond to an invitation to participate in our traditional evangelistic efforts. Adventists are pretty much ignorant of how to reach secular and post-modern people with the gospel. Meeting them at the point of their felt needs is surely one strategy we must try. That was one of Jesus's most important soul-winning strategies. Some experimental methods will prove disappointing, but we certainly will not succeed if we don't try anything.

4 Promoting the mission.

The greatest vision in the world for mission won't do any good if church members are never challenged to carry it out and given opportunities to do so. When I first entered ministry, a significant amount of church time was spent between Sabbath School and the worship service, or during the early part of the worship service, informing members about the church's outreach projects. Some people derisively called it "promotion," as though there was something wrong with "promotion."

I recall even back then hearing grumbling from some pastors that promotion was detracting from the worship service. And perhaps they were right. Maybe there was an overemphasis on promotion. Unfortunately, the pastors' desire to have an unobstructed worship service where we worship a holy God has in many churches become so paramount that the church members are never told up front on Sabbath morning (which is the only time when everyone is together) what to do about mission and encouraged to do it. The holy God's mission for the church languishes while we worship him. I suspect that if we were to attend church services in the third-world countries where evangelism is exploding, we would find a great deal of very enthusiastic promotion on Sabbath morning—which is an important reason for the explosion. I believe a balance between worship and "promotion" needs to be restored in North American churches.

5 Restoring a vision for mission.

However, none of these suggestions will make much difference until our North American church members, and especially our young people, catch a renewed vision for the mission of the church. Many of our members no longer feel that they are responsible for the salvation of their friends, neighbors and loved ones. In fact, many of our young people have an aversion to personal involvement in soul-winning. They view it as an intrusion on other people's privacy.

Many North American Adventists retain a sense that the second coming of Jesus is near and that the Adventist church has a mission to prepare the world for his return,

The holy God's mission for the church languishes while we worship him. I suspect that if we were to attend church services in the third-world countries where evangelism is exploding, we would find a great deal of very enthusiastic promotion on Sabbath morning—which is an important reason for the explosion.

and for the time of trouble that will immediately precede it. However, there is far less involvement on the part of those same North American church members in soul winning than in other parts of the world. That, more than anything else, explains why evangelism is exploding elsewhere in the world while it languishes in North America.

Unless these changes happen along with structural change, I don't see structural change by itself resulting in a significant increase in North American church growth. On the other hand, if we were to make these changes in the way we go about our work, growth would happen with or without structural change.

The challenge is daunting. ■

Marvin Moore is the editor of Signs of the Times.

Errata: Date of Publication of Flexner Report

Adventist Today stands ready to correct any factual errors that occur in a previously published article or in any material that appears on our Web site, atoday.com.

An informed reader of "Faith and Science in Two Divergent Adventist Traditions: A Historical Dilemma" in our July-August 2004 issue kindly pointed out an error in this article that concerned the date of the publication of the Flexner Report. The *Adventist Today* article stated that the Flexner Report was published in 1908. This is incorrect. Abraham Flexner (1866-1959) published "Medical Education in the United States and Canada" in 1910. *Adventist Today* and the article's author thank this alert reader for calling our attention to this error.

Jack W. Provonsha's Contribution to Adventist Thought

JIM WALTERS

Part 2

Editorial note: In the first of two installments of this article, Jim Walters considered the two central themes of Provonsha's theological and ethical work: love and epistemology. His writing on these themes was significantly shaped by his reading of leading Christian thinkers of his day and by contemporary philosophical currents. As he matured, Provonsha gave increasing attention to Adventist concerns and increasingly referenced Ellen White in his writings. In this concluding installment Walters examines this later work.

Provonsha the Adventist Thinker

Some professional theologians are personal atheists. Others, like Provonsha, are both personal believers and active churchmen.



Provonsha grapples with the human craving for certainty. And the natural sciences provide it—about the mundane matters of existence. But the further we get from quantifiable processes, the less certain we are. Thus, as Provonsha says, the behavioral sciences and, even more so, theology do not provide such certainty. We can know nothing with absolute certainty in philosophy. The best knowledge is more or less probable. "Rational certainty is an impossibility," declares Provonsha. "Only faith knows for sure!" (*Home Again*, 22).

Accordingly, Provonsha writes his final three books from within his faith experience. He hasn't forgotten or forsaken his former theological insights and convictions, but they are increasingly secondary to his lived Adventist faith. And it is "God" whom Provonsha experiences as Adventist believer; it is merely "god" whom he knows as a mainline theologian. It's not that these are two separate beings. For Provonsha sees them as complementary; "god" is an idea, albeit a grand idea, that emerges from one's study of nature—a god of wisdom, design, order, power and existence. These are important general concepts, but they fall far short of the God of the Bible, a God of revelation who acts as a person, and does not exist as a mere concept.

"Behind the what is a who" (*God Is With Us*, 64).

Provonsha is explicitly confessional in *God Is With Us*, and in his atonement volume, *Home Again*. Provonsha calls the latter an "un-theology." Here he avoids hair-splitting "conceptual clarity" in his passion to confess his faith in God's mysterious saving act. If Provonsha needs to engage in some "shortfall theologizing" along the way, it is merely "to create the setting for the confession" (7, 8).

In turning toward more specifically Adventist issues in his books, the progression is gradual. For instance, in *Christian Ethics* there are no Ellen White references, whereas in the *Remnant*, where Provonsha refers to Ellen White as his "spiritual mother," he several times gives two or three pages to a series of Ellen White quotations. Elsewhere he refers to White's exposition of a point he makes, or he cites her as an authoritative commentary on more obscure Biblical texts. For instance, in reference to Lucifer's rebellion in heaven prior to the Genesis story of creation, Provonsha cites Ellen White's special, extra-

Rational certainty is an impossibility," declares Provonsha. "Only faith knows for sure!"

biblical knowledge: "We shall have to depend on Spirit of Prophecy sources...since the Bible is largely silent regarding this period, except by way of inference. There are, of course, corroborating texts for most of Mrs. White's key positions if we will but search for them" (*Remnant*, 138).

Provonsha continues to appreciate his sophisticated theological, philosophical education; it is just superseded by more vital, higher concerns. And at times those earlier insights are transformed into specifically Adventist ends. For instance, take Paul Tillich's notion of the

"multidimensional unity" of the human person—a concept that Provonsha often cites. In his first book, this Tillichian insight aided Provonsha in countering another theologian's splitting of love: agape vs. eros. The theme of unity became a constant with Provonsha. In the name of unity Provonsha rejects the notion that the Hebrew people's God is different from the New Testament God—God is one. Also Provonsha rejects the forensic view of the atonement because it implies a demigod who is placated by sacrificial blood. This is a "divine outrage," says Provonsha, and it contradicts the dominant biblical theme of a loving God. And with similar unitarian reasoning Provonsha largely discounts evolutionary theory because a Darwinian god so differs from the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

In his most venturesome reconciliation of scientific evidence for very old organic material and a recent special creation, Provonsha speculates that Lucifer's defection in heaven could have occurred many years before the Genesis story (he cites several Ellen White passages). Thus, perhaps eons ago, Satan, "a universe-class contender" may have used genetic experiments that "look very much like what we see in the natural record that is attributed by the secular scientist to the autonomous working of nature in its process of evolution." Satanic life-forms could have evolved "even to the level of hominids"—but not to *Homo sapiens*, who, with our higher brain capacities, were created, as the Bible recounts, in the image of God. "The evolutionists' picture looks more like a painting of the devil than it does a portrait of God." Provonsha readily admits that his speculation is just a model, but it gives believers time to "carefully examine the evidence." And "it leaves the Genesis story largely intact. It also allows us to take seriously the messages of the rocks and fossils. You see, both accounts could contain truth," writes Provonsha, in "The Creation/Evolution Debate in the Light of the Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan" (unpublished paper).

A prophetic movement

In *God Is With Us*, Provonsha adopts "the theologians'" notion of the "invisible church." The church is all of God's people, regardless of label. This idea is refreshing to many Adventists who chaff under traditional Adventist exclusivity. Twenty years later, in *Remnant*, Provonsha further develops the invisible church as existing inside the larger world, with the visible church composed of people of both the world and the invisible church. The "prophetic movement," or the Adventist church, is wholly within the larger visible church, but like the visible church, its members too come from both the world and the invisible church.

At the second coming of Christ, those who are living and granted salvation will be found within both the visible and invisible aspects of Christianity and the Adventist Church. Provonsha questions whether the Adventist church as an institution will survive the end

time, but he accepts the need for Adventist doctrinal orthodoxy in earth's final survivors:

On that "day of judgment" the prophetic movement may, like that small nidus of ice [dropped into supercooled water], function as a social "catalyst" in an unstable world, where perhaps even large numbers of God's true church, visible and invisible, reacting to and resisting the formation of Babylon, will "come out of her" to

Provonsha creatively reasons that the real question is not how good we have to be, but how good we get to be.

stand and be counted (*Remnant*, 165).

Interestingly, here Provonsha uses the subjunctive mood (that is, "the prophetic movement may...") in expressing his ideas, as though God could choose to conclude human history in a bit different fashion. But the whole tenor of *Remnant* supports the literalness of Adventist eschatology. What gives? As traditionally Adventist as the late Provonsha was becoming, he evidently questioned, on occasion, whether the church's eschatology was literal or perhaps somewhat symbolic.

Elsewhere, Provonsha cites unique eschatological statements by Ellen White, then offers a most creative interpretation. For example, consider his quotation from *Christ's Object Lessons*:

"Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own" (69).

After asserting that "Surely the foregoing statement... does not mean what it seems to say," Provonsha creatively reasons that the real question is not how good we have to be, but how good we get to be. "'Have to be' implies the imposition of an unwanted burden, whereas 'get to be' suggests opportunity, freedom to become something valued." Those who truly want to be saved will be: "Grace is the way to goodness!" (*Remnant*, 109).

Just why we should take Ellen White literally in regard to the remnant being of correct belief, but not take her literally in regard to their perfect character, is not explained.

Specialness

Provonsha, in his last book, *Remnant*, puts a premium on Adventism's "special" role. It is not specialness for its own sake, but because of the unique role God has called Adventism to perform in earth's final days. Adventists were previously naive about ourselves being the only "true church," God's special "treasure," that we could finish God's work solo. The church has matured, but he expresses worry that we have lost our sense of being a special "mouthpiece," of having a special "message," a

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Provonsha's Contribution

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

unique "mission." We are facing in the first world the biggest crisis since the Great Disappointment. Then it concerned arrival; today it is "survival as a force in the world" (166-69).

Particularly Provonsha's earlier books concern grand, universal, human themes that are often missing in popular and scholarly Adventist writing. However, because of the nature of his final book, *Remnant*, Provonsha too addresses uniquely sectarian themes, but he provides revisionist explanations in at least four areas:

The Investigative Judgment. The original Adventist idea of the investigative judgment is "simple nonsense." That God learns something by "poring over some books" is "naive" in its "anthropomorphic literalism." So Provonsha simply rejects "out-of-hand" any need for a "pre-Advent judgment," but he retains what he calls the "essence of the idea" in redefining investigative judgment as the redeemed examining records to verify God's justice. He cites such passages as I Corinthians 6: 2, 32: "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?" (120).

1844. Provonsha finds the traditional Millerite/Adventist interpretations of Daniel's prophecies ambiguous. But this is not of "great importance." "The point is that our Millerite ancestors and their heirs were convinced from their study that 1843-1844 was the time, and it is more important what they believed and what they did

definitively addresses this issue, but he parenthetically suggests that Ellen White "apparently often 'heard' the voice of God" speaking to her as she read her library books. She evidently had an "unusual sensitivity to such intuitions" and she would "quite understandably" use "the very words of the authors through which [the intuitions] were presented to her mind—with or without quotation marks" (57, 58).

A Loma Linda physician who studied under Provonsha as a medical student recently observed that his mentor retained the traditional "Adventist mythology"—a neat, 6,000-year drama with a great controversy plot and Adventists featured in the climax. This is essentially accurate. Provonsha keeps the basic plot, but he creatively revises the script for a more contemporary society. There are certain "givens" that one must adhere to as a "believer." For Provonsha, one such given is God's goodness. He applies this abstract virtue of the divine to origins—and advances some unique ideas. But Provonsha's adoption of "unity" and "continuity" as methodological constants logically force him to reject the implications of biological evolution, and consequently evolution itself.

However, the most significant tension I see in Provonsha's work as a whole is between his "givens" or faith claims and his revisions or reasoned positions. For example, in light of what Provonsha has said about human subjectivity in knowing anything, how can we know that God's character must rule out evolutionary development? For some Adventist scientists it is as much "nonsense" to believe in a literal Genesis story, as it is to believe in God needing a hundred-plus years to pore over record books in the heavenly sanctuary.

This epistemological tension is never resolved in Provonsha's writing. He lives with it. He implicitly rejects a couple of options that other Adventist thinkers use. For example, he doesn't ratchet up his metaphorical understanding of reality to a higher level, a move that would allow him to be less committed to certain Adventist claims on origins and eschatology. Neither does he readjust his emphasis from Adventism's commitment to propositional truth to one of confessional community, a provocative proposal in Richard Rice's *Believing, Behaving, Belonging*. Provonsha is philosophically open to such new conceptualizations, as he cautions against making "any particular concept normative for all time."

Jack Provonsha has provided the church with updated rationales for traditional doctrines. Now it is up to the next generation of Adventist thinkers to grapple with an even bigger challenge: whether our basic propositional truths stand as a whole, or whether key Adventist insights demand a broader, contemporary context. If a new concept of Adventism catches on, it would be an old story: Crisis yields to opportunity. ■

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Jack Provonsha has provided the church with updated rationales for traditional doctrines. Now it is up to the next generation of Adventist thinkers to grapple with an even bigger challenge: whether our basic propositional truths stand as a whole, or whether key Adventist insights demand a broader, contemporary context.

about it than what Daniel had in mind" (133-135).

Creationism. Provonsha equivocates. In his book on God he refers to the "Creation-event" or story as a symbol that has importance in itself, but "it simply is not all that important, especially in its details." Further, as "natural history" the actual events of a distant creation cannot be precisely recalled today, and besides, any attempt would be "distorted" by the "presuppositions" of the seekers. Thus Provonsha appears open to the possibility of theistic evolution. But 20 years later in his *Remnant* book, he cites the "Sabbath problem." Then he adds, "to attribute the salient features of the theory of evolution to God is to come up with the wrong kind of God! The God of the evolutionary hypothesis...would be Nietzsche's god, not the Father of Jesus Christ" (74, 75).

Ellen White's literary indebtedness. Provonsha never

The Crime of Changing Your Mind

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

disobeying the order of a superior officer (to draw and train with his weapon). He was sentenced to seven months imprisonment; reduced in rank to E-1, the lowest possible rank; ordered to forfeit all pay and benefits while incarcerated; and given a bad conduct discharge. The two young Marines who were ordered to take him away on Tuesday evening looked as though they would rather be doing just about anything else.

Klimkewicz's wife, Tomomi, who has followed her husband halfway around the world to a new country and into a new religion, stood by, looking as though the world had fallen on her. She has a 3-year-old daughter, limited English skills, a temporary residency permit, no relatives this side of Okinawa and no income. Her church must now come to her aid.

Efforts both from the Office of Counsel for the General Conference and from congressional offices are now in

motion to appeal to Maj. Gen. Richard Huck, Commanding General, Second Marine Division, to rectify this miscarriage of justice. He is being asked to reduce the sentence to time served and a general discharge. The verdict itself will be appealed, but, in the nature of things, may not be finalized until after Klimkewicz serves his sentence.

As this story has gained publicity, several have inquired how they can contribute to the family's support. If you or your congregation wishes to contribute, checks should be sent to the treasurer of the Wilmington Seventh-day Adventist Church at the following address:

**Klimkewicz Fund, c/o Karen Park, Treasurer
104 Ocean Spray Drive, Swansboro, NC 28584**

Park's phone number is (252) 393-1805. The pastor is Tommy Poole, (910) 324-2815. ■

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The Rationality of Love

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treasures us, he wants us. Like any good parent would.

Other biblical metaphors picture God as a romantic. God is something like the tenacious lovers in stories and movies who inspire us to admiration.

I will speak out to encourage Jerusalem;

I will not be silent until she is saved.

And her victory shines like a torch in the night.

Jerusalem, the nations will see you victorious!

All their kings will see your glory.

You will be called by a new name,

A name given by the Lord Himself.

You will be like a beautiful crown for the Lord.

No longer will you be called "Forsaken,"

Or your land be called "The Deserted Wife."

Your new name will be "God Is Pleased with Her."

Your land will be called "Happily Married,"

Because the Lord is pleased with you

And will be like a husband to your land.

Like a young man taking a virgin as His bride,

He who formed you will marry you.

As a groom is delighted with His bride,

So your God will delight in you (Isa 62:1-5).

God takes delight in his people. Through the prophet Ezekiel, he even speaks of himself as a betrayed lover who, with a deeply offended heart, stubbornly and fiercely pursues his wanton beloved (Ezek 16).

The father takes pleasure in his relationship with the son. (This is my beloved son. With him I am very pleased.) The Godhead takes pleasure in doing good for people (Luke 12:32, quoted above). God's agape is not spontaneous in the rigorous philosophical sense of an impulse that arises within the actor with absolutely no reference to the

identity or character of the person for whom actor is acting. God does good for people in part because he takes great pleasure in doing us good. Like any lover would. God does good for people in part because it is his responsibility to do so, because he is our parent.

In portraying God as a parent and lover, the Bible suggests there is only one reasonable answer to the question raised by Michael Card's song: "Could it really be that you would rather die than live without us?" If we have paid much attention to love in our own experience or to parents or to lovers in literature and film, we know the answer to Card's question.

The fact that God's love is rational, or at least is not irrational, does not make God's love any less admirable, wonderful or awe-inspiring. Rational explanations of the processes of reproduction do not make the birth of our children any less wonderful. Scientific explanations of the refraction of light do not take away from the beauty and glory of a brilliant rainbow against a dark sky. And arguing that God's love is congruent with the most rigorous rational explorations does not take away our gratitude and wonder. Rather, it increases our awe and our confidence.

The truly heroic lovers of literature and the screen inspire us with their tenacity, passion and willingness to sacrifice themselves for the good of their beloved. Even when we doubt we could ever be so devoted, we honor the nobility and glory of their loving. We see that they are acting in harmony with the deepest, most important human values. Far from being irrational, they are being supra-rational. And we admire them for it.

The same is true of God. ■

John McLarty has served as editor of Adventist Today since 1998 and is pastor of North Hill SDA Church in Federal Way, Washington.

Ephesians: The Poem

ARTHUR MCLARTY

Chapter One

Grace thunders from the throne of God in eternity,
Sweeping through the galaxies, coursing toward earth,
Arriving in the fullness of time, incarnate in Bethlehem.
Love and holiness, sweet progeny of grace,
The thorns and nails the place of their embrace,
Propitiate, emasculate the guilt of sin's disgrace.
Unmeasured riches now un-tombed, by death released
Spring upward, surging forward, splashing time,
Dissolve despair, removing stain, creating faith.
Grace gathers and carries God's favored cargo,
Unresting till safely it sweeps the celestial shores,
Setting God's children on a sea of glass.

Chapters Two through Six

Like Jesus striding to-ward Bethany,
Grace draws near the corpse undone
By sin and guilt, ruined already at birth;
Nature's due, the wrath of God, yet deserved.
Perdition cringes at the victory shout,
(Impotent guardian of Adam's spoils).
Reborn we soar in chariot of grace
Whirlwind ride to heaven's throne.
There seated safely, how sweet His voice:
Enlightened walk no matter the darkness;
Our antiphon so joyful yet revealing,
Simul justus et peccator still we sing.
Rejoicing, mourning, mourning, rejoicing,
Not either but both together,
We live the paradox, the saved of God,
The saved-by-grace children of God.