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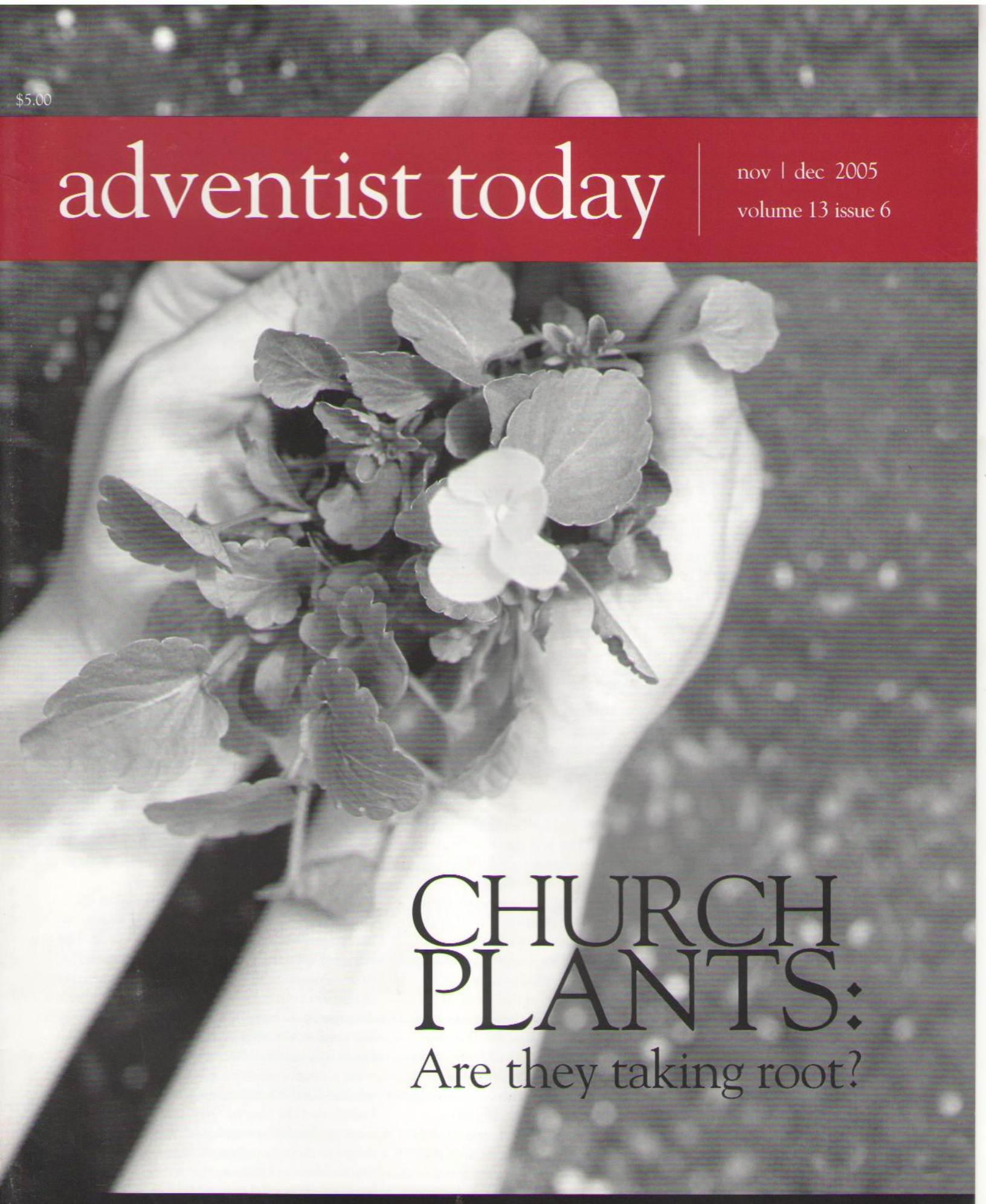
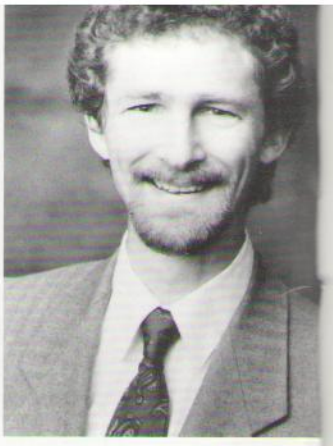


CHURCH PLANTS:
Are they taking root?

Editorial | John McLarty

Mr. President, That's Wrong



As I write this, the United States Senate is debating whether we should continue revoking the right of Habeas Corpus for detainees held in the prison camp at Guantanamo. Vice-president Richard Cheney is lobbying the Senate to create a special exemption for the CIA in a bill outlawing torture. And President Bush is threatening to veto the bill unless the CIA is given this special exemption.

Mr. President, that is wrong.

If ever the Adventist church ought to speak out against government action, this is an occasion to do so. The conflict of ideas is clear: On one side is the rule of law and the authority of courts. On the other side is the exercise of power by individuals unfettered by law or court review. Adventists have long given "law" an exalted place in our theology. We picture God himself as in some sense constrained by law. God is not lawless. The law is a "transcript of his character." Humans can appropriately challenge God as did Abraham with his question, "Will not the judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25)

In ancient Israel, the king was instructed to "have a copy of the book of God's laws and teachings made from the original copy kept by the priests. He is to keep this book near him and read from it all his life, so that he will learn reverence for the Lord and to obey faithfully everything commanded in it. This will keep him from thinking he is better than his fellow Israelites and from disobeying the Lord's commands." If this was expected of a God-chosen monarch, how much more does it apply to any ruler chosen through our messy election process.

One of the common refrains in the "Book of the Law" was the declaration that there was to be "one law" for both foreigners and natives (Exodus 22:21; 23:9; Leviticus 18:26; 19:33; 24:22; Numbers 15:15; Deuteronomy 1:16; 10:19; 24:14, 17; etc.). As a nation of immigrants, we too should remember where we have come from as we make decisions about how to treat "the stranger." We cannot justify the torture of Moslem terrorists on the basis of their "non-citizenship." While it may be appropriate to make certain distinctions between the legal rights of citizens and "enemy combatants," it is evil to ignore our enemies' humanity or to trample their human rights. "Cursed is the man who withholds justice from the alien, the fatherless or the widow. And let all the people say, 'Amen!'" (Deuteronomy 27:19).

When God commissioned the establishment of the cities of refuge as shelters against wrongful punishment, he specifically declared these refuges were for aliens and native-born alike (Numbers 35:15).

This biblical appeal for even justice for native-born and foreigner alike stands in stark contrast to the move to revoke the right of Habeas Corpus for detainees at Guantanamo. So far the courts have not released any prisoner from Guantanamo in response to Writs that have been filed. This shows that the courts appreciate the threat being battled by the administration. There is no risk that court supervision will lead to a reckless release of dangerous detainees. But to completely remove the activities at this American prison camp from court scrutiny is morally dangerous. It takes us closer to the lawless exercise of power that we so lament in our enemies.

» If ever the Adventist church ought to speak out against government action, this is an occasion to do so.

No doubt many of the people detained in the secret prisons operated by the CIA in Eastern Europe and elsewhere are dangerous and evil. The US must act against these potential terrorists. But to do so outside the bounds of law subverts the very character of our nation. By using torture and lawless detentions, we lose our moral standing. If we win the war against Al-Qaida by becoming lawless like Al-Qaida, it would be better to lose the war.

As Nathan challenged King David and Elijah rebuked King Ahab, so our church must say to the President of the United States, "Mr. *President, torture is wrong. Lawless, unregulated detention is wrong. In every war there are tragic casualties. It is one of your responsibilities to make sure that in the current war, justice is not one of the killed or wounded.*"

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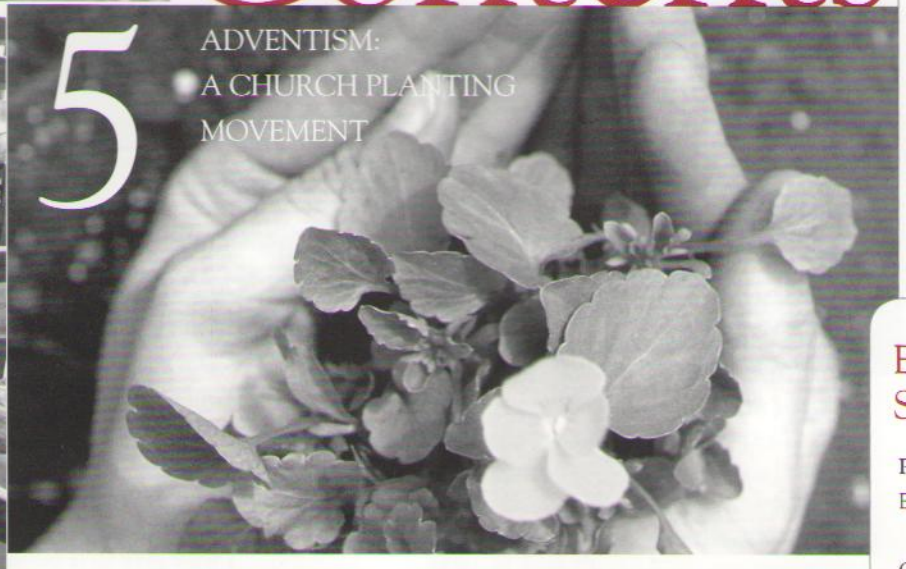

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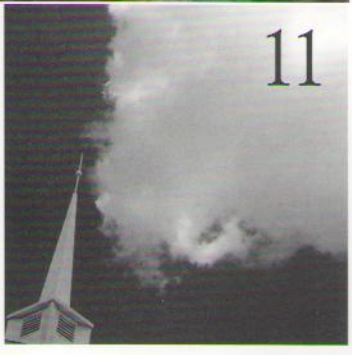

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letters

READERS RESPOND

AT'S COVERAGE OF GC SESSION

When we subscribed to Adventist Today, it was with the understanding that it now had a less critical spirit than it has had in the past, so we were looking forward to a exploring it.

But the July-August issue disturbed me just a bit. I pondered the issue a long time before I decided to respond.

The article about the accuracy of the GC Bulletins was not exactly written from an objective viewpoint when it used such strong emotional expressions as "astonished" (used several times) or "electrifying" or "brutal."

The import of the Magana-Ryan exchange itself seemed exaggerated. To call someone in his 20's or 30's a "kid" just because he appeared young and was dressed casually seemed unnecessary. And Michael Ryan's wanting to help him (or anyone) through the technicalities of parliamentary procedure was only appropriate. After all, how many seasoned individuals understand all its fine points? It seems to me only appropriate, also, that neither the "coaching" comment nor the "yea's" were included in the official minutes. And calling the official minutes of the interchange as "two robots talking to each other" seems like another example of emotional rather than objective reporting.

As to the incident in the Secretariat's office at the General Conference Session, I have a feeling that if the author had been confronted with a representative from a journal that could be perceived as somewhat hostile entering his offices with a video camera and starting to film the room, he might have given that person a less than cordial welcome. Things can be different when the shoe is on the other foot.

The author again shows his prejudice and emotion when he refers to his Web piece about the "**Bedeviled** 28th Fundamental Belief."

Other items in this issue showed a similar attitude, though not quite as strongly. What I missed was any hint of supportive concern for church leadership, a sense of a need for prayer for those who carry heavy responsibilities in their leadership roles, or for unity in the church, or for a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit on God's people.

Leaders are just as human as you and I are. They can make mistakes and errors of judgment—but so can we! So please "cut them some slack." Let's put ourselves in their shoes when we see faults. Don't lose the "fairness" and "good taste" that your journal says it espouses.

Please give us fewer emotional jabs, and more empathetic, objective reporting.

Karen Wade | Berrien Springs, Michigan

PATRICK ON GLACIER VIEW

Many thanks for putting this article on your website (atoday.com). I really appreciate reading articles that are not necessarily written by the BRI or some other biased paper. I recently attended the Sydney Adventist Forum on "25 after..." and had a great Sabbath with former colleagues. Dr Desmond Ford, a personal friend, and mentor, is still preaching with the vigor of a young man, with such passion for Christ and the Adventist Church. We in Australia are still very troubled over the continued non-Christian way the Adventist Church and its leaders treat Bro. Des. We know it is mainly out of ignorance, but surely there is no room in this century for such bigotry?

Pastor Ken L. Lawson | Via the Internet

Editorial Note: ***An abbreviated version of this article is in this current issue of*** **Adventist Today.** ***To view it in its entirety, please visit our website:*** **www.atoday.com.**

Correction

The July/August 2005 issue of *Adventist Today* contains an egregious error on page 9. It lists the cost of the *Adventist Review Bulletins* for the GC Session as $1,520,000. The actual cost, according to editor William Johnsson, was $149,000.

Letters policy

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

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 by e-mail, 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.

ADVENTISM: A Church Planting Movement

Adventism was born and nurtured as a church planting movement. From 1844 to 1900 most church resources were utilized in church planting.

During those formative years, local churches did not have resident pastors. Almost all Adventist clergy people were itinerant evangelists and church planters. At the annual "workers" meeting, the preachers would be given their assignment for the next year, usually a locality without an Adventist church. They would then spend the next year raising up a church in that locality. Everything the church did focused on its mission.

These itinerant clergy needed support, so the church developed a support system for them. Each church member was assessed a certain percentage of their property value to pay each year for the support of the itinerant ministry. They called it "systematic benevolence" or "Sister Betsy" by the preachers. The money was remitted to the local conference, which paid each itinerant preacher the same salary. Later, tithing was introduced and was utilized the same way.

Without settled pastors over churches,[i] and thus no need for pastoral salaries, our entire tithing system was developed to support this church planting activity. But beginning in 1900, Adventists began a slow shift from a "mission model" of church to a "nurture model." Pastors were placed over the larger churches and ultimately over the smaller ones. Tithe was redirected from the support of church planters to pastors who served local churches.

One hundred years later, the entire tithing system is being questioned from many different directions. "Nurture pastors" protest there is not enough money for local programs and staffing. Church planters call for more support of new churches. In most conferences the excuse for not planting churches is insufficient tithe. That is, there is not enough tithe to provide pastors for existing churches *and* to fund church planters. The very financial system designed to support church planting has now become its biggest obstacle.

In early Adventism, new converts were discipled and taught to care for themselves. They were organized into churches; then the church planter moved on to new areas. This does not mean the early churches had no problems. They did. As a result, at least once a year the preachers would visit the churches to deal with the problems and to bring revival by a few meetings. Ellen White herself conducted many such meetings. Members flocked to the annual camp meetings because that is where they could hear the preachers.

Adventist preachers explained the rapid growth of Adventism because of this arrangement of not having preachers over churches, but having the entire work force free to evangelize and plant churches.

"By what means have you carried forward your work so rapidly?"

"Well, in the first place," replied the Elder, "we have no settled pastors. Our churches are taught to take care of themselves while nearly all of our ministers work as evangelists in new Fields." [ii]

A.G. Daniels, president of the General Conference for the first 20 years of the twentieth century, presided over the church as it transitioned to the nurture model. He did his best to stem the tide, but he was unsuccessful. In 1912 he warned of what would happen if the denomination abandoned

Continued on page 6

In early Adventism, new converts were discipled and taught to care for themselves. They were organized into churches; then the church planter moved on to new areas.

A Church Planting Movement

Continued from page 5

the church-planting model of church. He said,

"We have not settled our ministers over churches as pastors to any large extent. In some of the very large churches we have elected pastors, but as a rule we have held ourselves ready for field service, evangelistic work and our brethren and sisters have held themselves ready to maintain their church services and carry forward their church work without settled pastors. And I hope this will never cease to be the order of affairs in this denomination; for when we cease our forward movement work and begin to settle over our churches, to stay by them, and do their thinking and their praying and their work that is to be done, then our churches will begin to weaken, and to lose their life and spirit, and become paralyzed and fossilized and our work will be on a retreat." [iii]

H.M.S. Richards, noted and respected Adventist preacher, entered ministry during the transitional time. He wrote: "When I was baptized, and later became a young preacher, we looked upon churches that had to have settled pastors over every flock as being decadent. Most of our preachers were out on the firing line, holding meetings, winning men to Christ, and raising up new churches. Then every few months they would come around and visit the churches that had already been established. This seemed to be, according to our view of it, the plan of the apostolic church." [iv]

When Adventism was a church-planting movement, it grew rapidly in North America. During the 1870s, every year Adventists raised up approximately one church for every two pastors. By the early 1990s, it took more than 120 pastors to raise up one church. Church planting was history. If North American Adventists today established new churches at the 1870s rate, they would be planting 1,833 new churches every year. Unfortunately, in the early '90s Adventists were planting only about 25 new churches per year.

In the mid-1990s a group of us became increasingly concerned about the loss of mission focus in the North American Church. The continent was becoming increasingly resistant to the gospel, and growing numbers of people regarded Christianity as irrelevant. Something had to be done if Adventism was to be a relevant movement in the next century. Returning to the precise forms of the 19th-century church-planting model was not feasible in the 21st century, but building a church on those spiritual roots was essential. So we set out to reignite a church-planting movement in North America based on the principles of non-pastor dependency, lay empowerment, and mission centeredness.

These were the core values of the SEEDS movement. While SEEDS has not accomplished all that we would hope, it has definitely reignited church planting as a viable force in North American Adventism. The current Adventist church planting movement is not concerned with "redistributing the saints," but with reaching unchurched people with the everlasting gospel. It is rooted deeply in a passion to reach lost people.

This passion to venture out and reach people who have never heard the gospel is giving birth to new kinds of churches all across North America. These churches are solidly Adventist, but they look different. They may be cell churches, lay churches, pastor-led churches or contemporary worship churches. The style does not matter. What does matter is that they are reaching unchurched people and bringing them to Jesus. The SEEDS movement also encourages traditional churches to start other traditional churches. Every new church is another place where more people can come to Jesus. SEEDS is not so much about church planting as about reaching lost people.

Has it been successful? Success is hard to measure, but church planting is no longer a strange phenomenon in North American Adventism. Conferences are beginning to plan strategically for new church plants, especially in the large metropolitan areas where Adventism is grossly underrepresented.

In the early 1990s, North American Adventists planted an average of 25-30 new groups each year. By 2004 they were producing more than 160 new churches a year. In fact, in the last 10 years 1,374 new churches have been started in North America. (Currently there are around 5,500 churches). More than 75 percent of

» Church planters call for more support of new churches. In most conferences the excuse for not planting churches is insufficient tithe. That is, there is not enough tithe to provide pastors for existing churches *and* to fund church planters. The very financial system designed to support church planting has now become its biggest obstacle.

these new plants are still in existence.

In the last 10 years the Texas Conference has planted more than 80 churches, more than 70 in the last three years alone. And it has the highest number of baptisms of any conference in North America, though it is far from being the largest conference. Their studies indicate a direct correlation between the new church plants and the number of baptisms and the amount of tithe increase.

In North Dallas, the only Adventist church was one in Richardson, but five years ago new churches began to be planted. The mother church had an attendance of 400-450 in two services. Today there are seven Adventist churches in North Dallas, with a total attendance of 1,600, and the mother church has grown to 500-550 in attendance.

A similar picture is found in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, a primarily Anglo community. For years, the Adventist church there maintained an attendance of around 300. Then church planting began. Today there are six Adventist churches in the area, with a combined attendance of 900.

Five years ago in Tulsa, Oklahoma, an Adventist layman, Bill McClendon, started a new church to reach the lost in his city. Today that church is one of the fastest-growing Adventist churches in North America, averaging more than 100 baptisms every year. McClendon is now a full-time pastor of the church, which has a weekly Sabbath attendance of more than 500 and expects to baptize 150 people in 2005.

Is church planting working in North America? The answer is obvious. We still have a long way to go; the Adventist church is a mighty big ship to turn around. But it is encouraging to see Adventists begin to reach out and touch the vast, unreaped harvest through the most effective tool–church planting.

Russell Burrill, DMin., is Professor of Evangelism and Church Growth at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University. He also directs the North American Division Evangelism Institute and serves as Ministerial Secretary of the North American Division.

References

i For a detailed discussion of early Adventism without settled pastors, see the book by the author, *Recovering an Adventist Approach to Life and Mission in the Local Church*, (Fallbrook, CA.: HART, 1999.

ii Interview with G.B. Starr, reported in the Wabash, Indiana, *Plain Dealer*, Oct. 1, 1886, p. 5.

iii A.G. Daniells, Ministerial Institute Address, Los Angeles, CA, March 1912.

iv H.M.S. Richards, *Feed My Sheep*, (Washington: *Review and Herald*,1958), p. 156.

Advisory Council Report for the Year 2005

What has *Adventist Today* offered you this past year?

By Elwin Dunn, AT Publisher and chair of AT Foundation Board

Throughout 2005 *Adventist Today* has sought to challenge and inspire people, and yes, promote the best in Adventism. Some examples:

Our St. Louis General Conference e-mail reports, starting with "Plain Vanilla," gave our readers and supporters an overview of the issues facing this session. The title alone gained the attention of the *Adventist Review* editors, to the extent they felt commentary was necessary!

Over the past three years the Adventist church has held a series of "Faith & Science" conferences, with the stated intention of bringing all voices in the church to the discussion table on the Creation issue. Despite a major effort by Adventist scientists and teachers to widen the door of church understanding on this subject, the fundamentalists' view of "in six days," 6,000 years ago, was overwhelmingly reaffirmed later by the church's leadership. In this regard, I would urge all readers to review the comments made by Alden Thompson, theologian from Walla Walla College, in the July-August 2005 issue of AT (p. 17). He urged a more open understanding of the issue. quoting from Ellen White in *Patriarchs and Prophets* (p. 113), "Just how God accomplished the work of creation He has never revealed to men; human science cannot search out the secrets of the Most High. His creative power is as incomprehensible as His existence,"

Where else might you have read about the "Dysfunctional Adventist Administrative Culture," save in the May-June issue of AT?

Yet, an entire issue of AT was made up of "The Fifth Generation: The Treasure of Mature Adventism," where our editor, John McLarty, from a long line of Adventists, stated "[as] a child of five generations of Seventh-day Adventists, . . . while the content of my faith is not identical with that of my [forebears], I treasure the spiritual heritage I have received."

Adventist Today's ongoing commitment is to "report on contemporary issues of importance to Adventist church members." Our subscribers and supporters, through their generous financial contributions, make this possible.

Your remembering *Adventist Today* with a special year-end gift will enable AT to continue on its path to success.

Feature

Ten Years of Church Planting in North America

EDITORS NOTE: On this page we present a graphic statement of the impact of Adventist church planting over the last ten years in North America. We initially planned to publish the entire list, but it was too long. These are just the first quarter of the listing of 1,396 new churches planted in North America between 1995 and 2004, as reported to the North American Division. Approximately 90 percent of these churches are still functioning. For the complete list visit our Web site, *atoday.com*.

Brooklyn Los Tres Angeles Spanish
Brooklyn New Jerusalem
Canaan French
Central Islip
Central Islip L. I. Spanish
Chinese-Vietnamese
East Hampton
East Side
First Igbo
Freeport, L. I. Spanish
Glen Cove L. I. Spanish
Hampton L. I. Spanish
Huntington L. I. Spanish
Indo-Pak Mission
Long Island Uniondale
Mt Vernon Brazilian
Newburgh Spanish
Peekskill
Poughkeepsie Spanish
Queens Bayanihan Bible Fellowship
Queens Chana
Queens Faith Temple
Queens First Russian Church
Queens Richmond Hill
Staten Island Spanish
Uniondale, L. I. French Salem
Victory Mission
Wingdale
Adirondack
Albany Spanish
Blessed Hope-Binghamton
Brockport
Buffalo Hispanic
Endicott
Gouvenor
Horseheads
Massena
Niagara Falls
Oneida Native American
Rochester South
Schenectady Spanish
Schenectady-Macedonia
Syracuse Cell Church
Syracuse Hispanic
Troy
Ben Emmanuel French
Bridgeport Tabernacle
Brooklyn Amazing Grace
Brooklyn First Nigerian
Brooklyn Glenmore Avenue Mission
Brooklyn Immanuel Tabernacle
Brooklyn Smyrne
Brooklyn Sychar French
Cape Cod Haitian Mission
El Siloe French
Glenmore
Haverhill
Manhatten Voice of Hope Mission
Methuen
Norwalk Mont Des Oliviers French
Queens Agape
Queens Heritage Mission
Queens Shelter Rock Mission
Rochester Capernaum
Roxbury
Sichem French
Siloe French
Uniondale Mission
Augusta
Derry
Lewiston
Ossippi
Portland Spanish
Rochester Indonisian
Searsmont
South Berwick
St Albans
Topsham
Turner
Attleboro Spanish
Bethesda Haitian (formerly Hyde Park)
Boston Chinese
Bridgeport Portuguese
Brockton Cape Verdian
Brockton Portuguese
Cape Cod Portuguese
Central Falls Spanish
Clinton Portuguese
Danbury Portuguese
Dorchester Cape Verdian
Dorchester Portuguese
East Boston Spanish
East Hartford Mission (Disbanded)
Fall River Portuguese
Fitchburg Spanish
Gardner Spanish (Disbanded)
Hartford Grace Mission
Hartford Portuguese
Lowell All Nations
Lowell Cambodian
Lynn
Lynn Portuguese (formerly Beverly)
Malden Brazilian
Manchester Spanish
Marlborough Spanish
Martha's Vineyard
Morija Haitian
Naugatuck
New England Ghanaian
New London Spanish
Newington Three Angels
Norwalk Spanish
Norwich Shekinah Haitian
Norwood
Pawtucket Portuguese
Providence Mt Horeb - African
Rocker d'Horeb Haitian (Lowell Haitian)
RoslindaleMt Golgotha Haitian
Shrewsbury
Southbridge Spanish
Stamford Spanish
Stratford
Taunton Spanish
Waltham Spanish (Disbanded)
Willimantic Spanish
Woonsocket (Disbanded)
Woonsocket Spanish
Worcester Haitian
Worcester Portuguese
Beaumont
Calgary Metro-Filipino
Calgary North West
Calgary Southside
Calgary West Ridge
Calgary West Ridge Fellowship
Edmonton Maranatha Spanish
Edmonton Millwoods
Edmonton Spanish (2nd one)
Gleichen
January Creek
Mirror
Morning Star
Mountain Sanctuary
North Red Deer Potter's Place
Parkland
Parkland (Spruce Grove) Fellowship
St Paul
Tofield
Vermillion
Westlock Fellowship
Westridge
Whitecourt Fellowship
Abbotsford Hispanic
Bella Coola Open Door
Burnaby Fellowship
Clearwater
Creekside Community
Dawson Creek Door of Hope
Delta New Life
Enderby
Fraser Valley
Lillooet
Lytton
Mountain Top Experience
Parksville
Penticton Three Angels
Son Valley Fellowship
Squamish
Surrey Filipino
Surrey Hispanic
Tumbler Ridge
Valley Outreach
Vancouver Ethiopian
Vancouver Portuguese/ Brazilian
Vancouver Yugoslavian
Victoria Filipino
West Boundary Fellopship
Dauphin Fellowship
Opaskwayak Cree Nation
Regina The Spirit of Truth Community
Saskatoon Riverway
Saskatoon Spanish
Thompson Group
Winnipeg Korean
Winnipeg Spanish
Cape Breton Island
Miramichi
Sandy Lake (Halifax)
Yarmouth
Gander
Stephenville
Alfred
Arnprior
Brampton Ruth
Cambridge Betesda Spanish
Cobourg
Elliot Lake
Hamilton Living Word (Cell Ch.) Christian Fellowship
Hamilton Monte Carmelo Spanish
Hamilton Spanish Cambridge
Kitchener Emanuel
Leamington Spanish
Lindsay
London Portuguese
Midland
Milton
Mississauga Filipino
Monte Carmelo Span.(formerlyWaterloo)
Orangeville
Orleans
Orleans French
Ottawa Lily of the Valley
Ottawa Spanish
Ottawa West Carleton (nee Kanata)
Stratford
Tilsonburg
Toronto Abundant Life
Toronto Ajax
Toronto Blessed Hope Filipino
Toronto Cambodian
Toronto Ebenezer
Toronto Fairhaven Christion Fellowship
Toronto Filipino Centre
Toronto Heritage
Toronto Heritage Ghanaian
Toronto Hope Spanish
Toronto It Is Written Fellowship
Toronto Kanisa
Toronto Maranatha Spanish
Toronto New Life African Fellowship nee Kenyan Fellowship
Toronto North
Toronto Oakville
Toronto Parkdale
Toronto Peel Fhilipino (Independent)
Toronto Romanian
Toronto Salem Group
Toronto Woodbridge
TorontoTamil
Waterloo
Chicuetimi French
El Est Ecrit French
Gatineau Outaouais Quebecois French
Montreal Laodicea French
Montreal New Life English
Montreal Romanian
Mount Laurier French
Mt Carmel Filipino
Pierrefonds
St Hubert Spanish

The Adventist Tribe

Whenever the church talks about church growth these days, I find myself wanting to put in a plug for the oft-maligned "cultural Adventist." The critics of this reputedly sub-par Adventist often give the impression that those who do not actively demonstrate a passionate advocacy of all that the church stands for should simply leave. Go. Be gone.

To put it bluntly, the critics seem to want a church full of the five- and two-talent people of Matthew 25, those eager to work and multiply their talents in the work of the Lord. Now let me be clear: the church urgently needs as many of the five- and two-talent people as the Spirit can send our way. There are never enough of them to go around.

I also want it clear that I don't intend to come to the defense of the one-talent person who buried his gift in the ground. Jesus gave a pointed judgment on the man, and I see no reason to quibble with it.

But I do want to put in a good word for the father of the epileptic boy who cried out to Jesus, "I believe, help my unbelief." I want to reassure all the struggling saints who find great comfort in Jesus' words, "Come to me, all you who are weak and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." I want to give a glimmer of hope to the "weak" ones described by Paul in Romans 15:1: "We who are strong ought to patiently bear the weaknesses of those who are not strong." I want to encourage the thoughtful reader of Scripture who resonates with the book of Ecclesiastes, the one whose most urgent prayers are still far from demanding: "Never be rash with your mouth, nor let your heart to quick to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few" (Ecclesiastes. 5:2, NRSV).

Put another way, I want the sales and marketing people to prosper, but not at the expense of service, or research and development, or accounting, or management. If you wish, you can replace that modern business metaphor with a biblical one: the body of Christ. As Paul argues so persuasively in 1 Corinthians 12, every member of the body is important, and a wound in any part affects the whole. Anyone who has ever picked raspberries knows the power of one tiny sliver in one little finger. The whole body knows.

Part of our challenge, however, lies in the fact that much of American Christianity has turned into a religion of the exuberant. Those who are more puzzled at the trauma in God's muddled world are likely to be left out on the streets. The well-known Evangelical cult expert, Walter Martin, for example–famous in Adventist circles for his begrudging willingness to grant the status of "Christian" to Seventh-day Adventists–was prepared to bracket the very heart of Ecclesiastes, indeed 11 of its 12 chapters, as not being God's message for us. The fact that he was committed to a "high" view of Scripture makes his judgment on Ecclesiastes all the

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The Adventist Tribe

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more striking: "It is almost universally agreed among Biblical scholars that Ecclesiastes portrays Solomon's apostasy and is therefore virtually worthless for determining doctrine. It sketches man's life 'under the sun' and reveals the hopelessness of the soul apart from God. The conclusion of the Book alone mirrors the true revelation of God." (*The Truth About Seventh-day Adventists*, Zondervan, 1960, p. 127).

In my experience in classroom and church, the book of Ecclesiastes speaks to an important segment of today's generation like no other book in the Bible. It allows us to see the chaos in the world, yet still catch glimpses of the Creator. That's crucial if the church is to be healthy and inclusive.

Two additional closely linked features of our American culture also work against us when it comes to building an inclusive body of Christ. First, Americans have become so individualistic that we have almost no patience with the church if it does not match our expectations and needs. We're down the road to the next one. In many cases it can be another Adventist church. But increasingly it may be a church of a different stripe and flavor. Denominational loyalty is increasingly rare these days, and Adventists have not escaped the trend.

» How can a community build continuity through the generations in a culture that emphasizes freedom and the power of choice and in a land were individualism is rife?

The second feature that works against us is shot through with theological implications, namely, our love of freedom. Adventists put this within a theological framework and argue that God expects us to *choose* to follow him. In a free-will theology, God's goodness is what wins over the hearts of his people. By contrast, the Reformed theology that dominates today's evangelical world puts the emphasis on divine sovereignty. In such a theology, we don't choose God so much as God chooses us. Yet in our freedom-loving land, even those who hold to such a theology paradoxically end up *choosing* a church which confirms their convictions.

So for those who believe that the church should be a community for all people, a great dilemma looms: How can a community build continuity through the generations in a culture that emphasizes freedom and the power of choice and in a land were individualism is rife?

That's why I would like to see Adventism recover a sense of "tribe." A Protestant church can never be bonded by the same genetic links that hold together ancient (and modern) tribes. But there are mysterious bonds that can move us in that direction. The Sabbath is one of those bonds. For whatever reasons, the significant majority of even the most stubborn and strident independents still want to be known as Seventh-day Adventists.

These days there is a steady trickle away from Adventism, to be sure, often tinged with anger. I believe we ought to pay close attention to the reasons why people leave. If the church can demonstrate a healthy love of diversity, some who have left may be able to come home again. I would like that a lot.

But for all my love of a diverse but unified family, the very nature of our human families illustrates the enormous tension between genetic links and a free-will bonding. A husband and wife, for example, are only bound together by choice and constantly reaffirmed promises. That bond is vulnerable and fragile, as our world so amply testifies today. By contrast, the bond with parents and siblings is an inescapable iron chain. Even if we passionately hate our parents and siblings, we are still forever bound to them by blood. It is not hard to find in Adventism that same tension between the bonds that hold us and our desire to freely choose.

In the end, the story of the prodigal son may offer us the best illustration of the kind of tribal community which I would like to see in Adventism: A rebel can leave home and lose himself in all kinds of evil–but still come back home; an angry elder brother can totally misunderstand and misrepresent his father's love–yet still be part of the family. The father accepts them both with open arms.

Tribal thinking poses all kinds of problems, to be sure. Self-centered and arrogant impulses so easily surface in a tribe. That would certainly be a concern if we choose to emphasize the tribal nature of Adventism. Still, I believe the body of Christ should seek to include as many of God's children as possible. I'm willing to put up with some discord and discomfort along the way if I can know that my church is seeking to meet the needs of all God's children.

An Adventist tribe? Yes. We understand each other better than anyone else, and by God's grace we can put our energies to work for him in ways that could startle and transform the world. We might even surprise ourselves. And God? I suspect he would be overjoyed.

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Twenty-Five Years After Glacier View

Abstract by Dr. James Stirling of a Presentation by Dr. Arthur Patrick to the Sydney Adventist Forum, October 22, 2005

What has happened in the Adventist church during the 25 years since Desmond Ford presented his views at the Adventist Glacier View Ranch in Colorado? By now we may be able see more clearly just what happened and what difference it may have made in the church since—and what it might mean for the Adventist future. The full text of Dr. Patricks's paper can be obtained by going to the Adventist Today Web site, www.atoday.org.

I. A Short Definition of "Glacier View"

A lecture on Daniel 8 delivered by Dr. Desmond Ford on October 27, 1979, to a chapter of the Association of Adventist Forums at Pacific Union College (PUC) in California evoked both interest and concern throughout the Adventist world. Church papers carried word that a review committee would meet from August 11 to 15, 1980 at Glacier View Ranch. During July, 125 people were invited to attend, and they were given a 990-page manuscript to read before coming. (In printed form later it filled 694 pages.) Once there, the 115 who arrived engaged in five days of discussion. By the conclusion of the conference on August 15, 1980, the committee had produced, and voted approval of, two consensus statements relating to landmark doctrines within Adventism: the sanctuary, and spiritual gifts. Meanwhile, six attendees were asked by the General Conference president to define major points of difference between Ford's manuscript and traditional Adventist concepts. Their individual attempts, screened by a 28-member committee, were read to, but not discussed by, the large committee. The conference closed without further actions. Many of the delegates remained at Glacier View and were joined by others on the evening of August 15 for a further conference that would become known as Consultation I.

However, by the beginning of Consultation I, rumors were already spreading that a small number

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of administrators had met with Ford and were recommending that the church's South Pacific Division (SPD), which included Australia, take decisive action. The next month, the executive committee of the SPD met in Wahroonga, New South Wales, Australia, and terminated Ford's employment. That was the beginning of a process that within a decade would exert appreciable influence upon the dismissal or resignation of a large number of Adventist ministers, teachers and members in Australia and New Zealand.

II. The Primary Documents of Glacier View

The principal document received by the Glacier View conferees was written by Desmond Ford following his October 1979 Forum address and continuing until early July 1980. This was the last date that would allow committee members in distant parts of the world to receive the manuscript and have three weeks in which to assess it. Ford's six chapters embrace 425 pages of the printed version. Chapter 1 offers a history of the Adventist sanctuary doctrine, noting the way in which the church's writers have recognized certain interpretive problems. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 look at the way in which the Day of Atonement is presented in the biblical books of Hebrews, Daniel and Revelation. Chapter 5, "Rehearsal and Resolution of the Problem," prepares the reader for Chapter 6: "Ellen G. White, 1844, and the Day of Atonement." Then follow 269 pages of appendices either written by Ford or collected by him as having relevance for the issues under discussion.

The conferees also received "study papers on key topics, prepared by Seventh-day Adventist scholars, sent to delegates before, and read prior to the conference." In all, therefore, each delegate had about two thousand pages of "homework" to assess, in addition to meeting other demands upon their time, like employment, family commitments and travel.

According to Richard Hammill, the General Conference vice president who formulated the Sanctuary Review Committee, the initial invitees included 55 Bible teachers, six editors, 10 pastors, three ministerial secretaries, 11 college and university presidents, four local conference presidents, 11 union conference presidents, 10 division presidents, eight members of an earlier committee appointed to study the Book of Daniel, 12 General Conference headquarters employees, and nine retired General Conference officers. The longer of the two consensus statements developed and voted by the attendees related most directly to Ford's first five chapters; the shorter consensus statement focused directly on the content of his Chapter 6. Adventists were able to read the consensus documents in the church's "General Organ," *Adventist Review* (September 4, 1980, 4-15), and elsewhere.

III. River or Torrent?

While on a long journey during April and May this year (2005), I read Ford's Glacier View manuscript in full. I applauded the historical substance of the book, as well as the author's grasp of the problems that indicate the necessity of such studies. The marshalling of evidence is impressive. The manuscript is clearly the work of a person writing within a particular religious community as a believer-participant; that is, its tone is probing and constructive, not iconoclastic or vindictive. The consensus documents offer positive perspectives that invite ongoing communication and research in order to integrate conclusions and clarify a cluster of matters needing further consideration.

In short, any person who offers such a quality work deserves gratitude, respect and an ongoing role in the continuing dialogue and dialectic that is a healthy part of a religious community. Why, then, did Glacier View become Adventist shorthand for pain, dissension and division?

The first reason derives from the context of the time. Like a river that would nourish a land in ordinary times but cause destruction in flood times, the church was undergoing a deluge of new information. At the end of the Second World War, the long struggle between Fundamentalism and Modernism was ongoing for Adventism. For a movement that belonged in neither camp, many issues were potentially volatile. Some of these surfaced in the early phases of the movement, spearheaded by Robert Brinsmead and his colleagues. The conversations between Adventists and Evangelicals during the 1950s signalled the ending of an era and the beginning of another phase of Adventist development, as did a sequence of events at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. By 1970, in Western cultures, the quantity of new information that required coherent incorporation into Adventist belief systems was rising toward flood levels. From 1972, the establishment of effective headquarters archives and regional research centers offered the church

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fresh resources to assist it in the task of assessing and interpreting new data coherently; but few busy administrators were able to use these facilities. By the end of the 1970s, Adventism was being inundated with new information. The Forum address at PUC and the Glacier View manuscript, taken together, may have been instrumental in breaching a levee bank, but they contributed only a stream to the torrent of new information that characterized the era. The overarching question of the time called for a coherent Adventist response: How should evidence function in the process of shaping and sustaining faith?

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IV. The Division President and the Crisis: A Subjective Interpretation

Within this dynamic context, the process and outcome of Glacier View depended on one person more than any other, Pastor Keith Parmenter, president of the SPD. Parmenter's role as the hard-pressed leader of the church during this era must be assessed carefully if there is to be any hope of interpreting Glacier View effectively. The following is my perspective.

Parmenter, as a competent, gracious chairperson did not have the time to assess the constant stream of new information or to utilize the facilities of the Ellen G. White/ Seventh-day Adventist Research Centre as a way of separating rumor from reality. I was director, and on no occasion do I recall him using the Centre's facilities for even one hour. The escalation of tensions in the church due to a range of controversies led Parmenter to adopt a position that he maintained consistently against both usual policy and direct suggestion: he decided to handle the issues "administratively" rather than with counsel from such advisory bodies as the Biblical Research Committee.

Parmenter did not attend the illuminating series of meetings offered early in 1982 by White Estate representatives Robert Olsen and Ronald Graybill. He chose not to acquaint himself with the 940 pages of documents made available at the 1982 Prophetic Guidance Workshop, the high-water mark of the intense discussion relating to Ellen White that began to escalate in 1970. Furthermore, he directed that these written materials and the tape recordings of Workshop discussions not be shared with the church at large. Additionally, he wrote a letter directing that my reports of the Workshop, written for the Division paper, were to be kept in "a personal file." His administration allowed no effective avenue for the correction of significant disinformation, as when a *Record* article suggested that Ellen White's use of the writings of other authors was "about 0.002 per cent."

I list these observations not to denigrate my friend, the president of the Division, but simply to illustrate Parmenter's resolute determination to control information relating to the life and writings of Ellen White and do his utmost to protect her from what he perceived as the potential effects of investigation in the light of newly available data. To the *biblical question* aired in the Forum meeting at PUC the leadership of the SPD gave an *Ellen White answer;* it became clear to me that Parmenter's stance indicated that, in his mind, the real issue of the era was the authority of Ellen White. The status of Parmenter's understanding of Ellen White's life and writings by the time of Glacier View meant he could hardly be expected to handle the complex issues other than the way he chose to do. Essentially, to save Ellen White and the church from chaos, he believed that the Glacier View consensus statement had to be marginalized in favor of the ten-point summary. Next, Ford, and then all those employees whom Parmenter perceived as questioning the doctrinal authority of Ellen White, must be dismissed. Parmenter's conviction was so strong that he took the lead in the process of disregarding the essential adequacy of two letters Ford wrote. He expected Ford to renounce his convictions if he was to remain an employee of the church.

In short order, the same scenario obtained for scores of other ministers.

V. Three Options for Adventism: Reversion, Rejection, Transformation

After being away from Australia for nearly 16 years, I returned in 1973 to find that a significant pressure group, including former pastors, evangelists, and administrators, was committed above all else to achieving the dismissal of Desmond Ford. This was considerably due to the fact that his role at the time required him to understand and interpret

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the increasing volume of new information that was arriving on the church's corporate desk. I participated from 1974 in the effervescent (at times, stormy!) meetings of the Biblical Research Committee convened while Pastor Robert Frame was the church's Division president. I attempted to assess the outcome of events like the Palmdale Conference of 1976 and the much larger Righteousness by Faith Consultation of 1979. By now we have a clearer view of what happened.

Following the conflicts that gained intensity in the 1950s, during the 1970s the Adventist Church in Australasia made significant progress in better understanding and presenting "the everlasting gospel;" but it failed to win the support of certain older members. In addition, viewpoints similar to those of the Concerned Brethren were promulgated by a variety of independent groups. As a widely known advocate of the gospel emphasis, Ford attempted to offer suggestions—for what he believed (wrongly, as it turned out) would be a select audience at PUC—whereby the church might resolve certain important conflicts with reference to the interpretation of Daniel and Hebrews in particular. However, in the ensuing months, a vigorous *rejectionist* impulse further inflamed the already powerful *reversionist* impulse, in part due to the worldwide distribution of Ford's oral suggestions. A more thoughtful attitude was also identifiable at the time, well illustrated in Ford's Glacier View manuscript and the work of the Sanctuary Review Committee that met during August 1980. Now it seems imperative for the church to understand and nurture the demanding median stance, a *transformationist* response.

» people now perceive more realistically that Adventist doctrine is not static; indeed, teachings develop in scope and clarity as God's people walk with him and search the Scriptures in the light of new circumstances.

Intense conflict so overshadowed the constructive achievements of the church in the late 1970s and early 1980s and continued with such powerful momentum, that only slowly did the effects of the change that started in 1984 become apparent. It is important to observe initial perceptions of Glacier View as a backdrop for understanding factors that make the present era so different from the situation of the church at its nadir during the early 1980s.

VI. Using the Lantern: Interpreting Glacier View

Sabbatarian Adventism was born within a millenarian awakening, deeply informed by such apocalyptic writings as Daniel and Revelation. This matrix generated language and metaphors that critics used to describe and symbolize Glacier View, such as the Great Controversy theme with its series of vivid contrasts: Christ/Satan, light/darkness, good/evil, righteousness/sin, truth/error, orthodoxy/heresy, loyalty/apostasy, Jerusalem/Babylon, remnant church/fallen church. Ellen White's writings were mined for her application of these: the omega of apostasy; stars admired for their brilliance going out; last-day deceptions; the shaking; signs of the end and more. Such terminology was employed most of all by those who would finally locate in the reversionist camp, but the same lexicon was adapted and used to some extent by both extremes in the continuing warfare. Ford was, for his opponents, the omega of apostasy, functioning like a *praying mantis* that conceals intentions and character in order to deceive and destroy. For others, the church was the villain, victimizing a knight in shining armor. Between the extremes was a more nuanced interpretation: Glacier View provided an instructive example of Adventist theological development. In the words of a prominent General Conference participant, "The speed of a convoy is the speed of the slowest ship."

It is important to assess all such immediate interpretations in the light of serious reflection by competent persons writing as historical perspectives became possible. The first history of Adventism to be written by a trained historian, Richard Schwarz (1979), was revised by Floyd Greenleaf (*Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, 2000) and offers a useful overview of Glacier View in the context of the "Twentieth-Century Debate Over Fundamentals." For Richard Hammill, the General Conference vice president appointed to supervise the process leading up to the Glacier View, the conference involved a number of problematic elements: "a serious mistake in tactics;" official reporting that was at times "the opposite of the discussion on the committee;" the ignoring of crucial

pieces of evidence; the perception by the church's Bible teachers that they had been "betrayed;" "hasty" action "due to the ineptitude of the Australasian Division officers" and more.

The core theological issue of the 1970s was that of salvation in Jesus Christ as viewed in the light of a discussion within Adventism that began to gather intensity two decades earlier. A new interest in understanding the General Conference of 1888 was flagged at the General Conference of 1950, spawning a major Bible conference, providing part of the context for the Adventist/Evangelical discussions, stoking the furnace of the Brinsmead Awakening and stimulating a plethora of publications. By the onset of the 1970s, a better exposition of Righteousness by Faith brought the Australasian church to the edge of a significant revival, with unprecedented numbers of young people rejoicing in the Good News and openly sharing their faith even on city streets. The General Conference presidency of Pastor Neal Wilson (1979-1990) included significant attempts to meet Adventist crises with large-scale councils; located at the top of an impressive list is the Righteousness by Faith Consultation that reported its findings with a statement titled "The Dynamics of Salvation" in *Adventist Review*, July 31, 1980.

The relaxing of tensions relating to the church's understanding of Righteousness by Faith carried a potential for resolving other issues, particularly the doctrine of the sanctuary and the prophetic ministry of Ellen White. Immediately after the Glacier View conference, during a retreat in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney, I read *The Letter to the Hebrews* in my Revised Standard Version, with the Glacier View consensus statement open before me as a point of reference. "Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary" echoed and extended a teaching I had listened to by Edward Heppenstall and led me to muse that, for the first time in such a document, my church was actually helping me in a significant way to hear the heartbeat of Hebrews. It only remained for the fuller documentation and discussions of the 1982 Prophetic Guidance Workshop in Washington, D.C., to place a capstone on the edifice of faith that had been, for me, in a dynamic process since 1957. Thereafter my perception of the essential profile and mission of Adventism would be more sustainable, even though many small modifications would be necessary.

Today when we read the principal Glacier View consensus statement in the light of "The Dynamics of Salvation" statement, we find reason for cheer and hope to permeate the church. But there was no time for this connection to be explored effectively between the release of the "Dynamics" document on July 31, 1980, and the event that was, for many

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observers, a professional martyrdom, set in place on August 15, 1980. In hindsight, it is apparent that exterior circumstances were pressuring the church to ask frankly and openly how evidence should function in support of faith. The Glacier View consensus statement went a long way toward offering effective answers, with reference to the church's doctrine of the Sanctuary. Did the small cluster of administrators who met on August 15, 1980, perceive their decision as meaning that tradition was taking precedence over the quest for truth, and that the convictions of the church's scholars were being sacrificed to that end? In any case, their decision was a major factor in thrusting the church into an era of unprecedented controversy and tragic loss. Fortunately, it is now possible to better define the church's teaching on Righteousness by Faith and to highlight this understanding as one of the promising signs of a brighter day.

More than that, people now perceive more realistically that Adventist doctrine is not static; indeed, teachings develop in scope and clarity as God's people walk with him and search the Scriptures in the light of new circumstances. Fritz Guy expressed this reality succinctly in 1980. Since that time, Rolf Poehler has written a magisterial dissertation that offers a roadmap through this doctrinal development from Millerite times to the 1980s. Others have since continued this mapping process closer to the present, a task that must be undergoing. Such research needs to be expressed in language that engages the attention and commitment of the entire church; probably George Knight has achieved more in this regard than any other person.

VII. Gleams of a Golden Morning?

Adventism is, in essence, a quest for "the truth as it is in Jesus" presented in the Scriptures. The church must be open to every avenue for understanding the Bible, religion, and human beings. By 1980 an almost bewildering array of new evidence needed systematic incorporation into Adventist belief and practice. Twenty-five years later this demand continues. However, the church must now meet an additional imperative: postmodern society will listen to the church only if it has something meaningful to say. These twin demands, for evidence that sustains faith and for existential meaning, profoundly challenge Adventism and its mission within Western culture. In the lantern-light of history, how do the issues of 1980 appear in 2005, and what sort of report card does Adventism merit after 25 years?

First of all, the issues of 1980 have *a historical basis*. Insights from a cluster of studies now give the church a far better appreciation of its Millerite foundations, prophetic interpretation, and doctrinal development. The maturation of Adventist historiography means that the church in 2005 is in a far stronger position to bridge a chasm sometimes separating the present faith and understanding of its adherents from the realities of the church's heritage.

Second, the debate over *method in Bible study* that created tensions in 1980 and at the time of Consultation II can now be viewed in a much calmer light. The spiritual gifts of those men and women

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who have devoted their lives to the various aspects of biblical studies, taken together, help the church to hone and extend its appreciation of the Bible as its sole rule of faith and practice. The long years of study the church has devoted to Daniel and Revelation since 1980 have clarified major issues. The writings of a cluster of scholars move through and beyond the issues constructively.

Third, the entire agenda of 1980 was permeated with *theological content*. The way in which the church has understood and defined its doctrine since 1844 is brilliantly illumined in the scholarly dissertation by Seminary student Rolf Poehler and within the copious writings of one of his principal mentors there, George Knight. The church has also become more aware of how to do theology well, as recommended in the masterful manual provided by Fritz Guy. But in making such remarks we must be aware that enormous progress has been made in specific theological areas, such as that of

Revelation/Inspiration, wherein the dissertation by Ray Roennfeldt offers a useful orientation. Clearly, in 1980, there was a great nervousness in Adventism that recognizing particular problems in its *investigative judgment* teaching might move it toward an inadequate conception of *the biblical theme of judgment*. This concern is now put to rest by several authors, not least in the winsome writings of Norman Young. Available are studies offering a cogent clarity on how Scripture portrays God as the faithful Judge who puts himself on trial in the cosmic struggle with "the accuser of the brethren." Christ as Substitute and Surety is now portrayed with a biblical precision much lacking in the early experience of older Adventists.

Fourth, the issues of 1980 had enormous *pastoral significance*. Those who lead the church administratively are pastors to field ministers and people, and the frontline people who deliver pastoral care and nurture are the church's evangelists and local ministers. There has been dynamic growth in the church's perception of what effective pastoral care includes and how it is best delivered. There is now a stronger sense of the value of relationships in the church and a better appreciation that believers can learn to respect, value and even learn from a variety of perspectives. Such a perception augurs well for the process of building a community that is nurturing and focused on its daunting mission to offer the Good News "to every nation, tribe, language and people" (Revelation 14:6, NIV).

Finally, the crisis of 1980 was in a considerable measure fed by misunderstandings over the content and implications of what is now *a maturing discipline, Adventist Studies*. Herein, Scripture is the foundation and Ellen White has special significance, due to the way she leads to "the greater light." The church has moved from an unthinking certitude about Ellen White through an era of painful conflict about her life and ministry toward a time of more effective consensus about how to understand and apply her writings. We have learned through painful experience that there is no way the church can control information; rather, its role is to faithfully interpret the entire body of evidence. The writings of the church's reversionist and rejectionist critics have increasingly been exposed as inadequate or unnecessary in the light of the primary documents that illumine the way the Lord has led and taught the church in the past. A brighter day is coming, as with greater understanding we walk by faith into the future.

VIII. Summary: An Analogy for Meditation and Application

There are many trails and roads by which people can get from Sydney to Avondale, where the Adventist school is. The Great Northern Walk is like the Appalachian Trail in the United States, challenging to hikers. Then there is a circuitous route, by way of the old convict road, and the meandering Pacific Highway, loved by motorcycle riders for its many curves. All of these require hours or days of travel. And now there is the F3 freeway, by which one can make the trip in an hour.

In his Forum talk and his Glacier View manuscript Desmond Ford suggested that to better fulfill its mission, Adventism needed to construct a freeway through the historical, biblical and theological landscape. It was no dishonor to the pioneers of Adventism that for most travelers the Northern Walk and the convict road had been superseded by the Pacific Highway, or that a freeway seemed a necessity by 1980. After a quarter century we can see clearly that the church needed to assess, with the help of every available source of knowledge, whether a road could be constructed that was more efficient in fulfilling God's purpose for the Advent Movement.

A quarter century later, some Adventists still prefer to persevere along the Great Northern Walk; others opt for the circuitous route through the Hunter Valley; while others choose the dangerous curves of the Pacific Highway. But in the light of detailed surveys and careful assessments of all the available data, with the support of a host of specialists, it is clear that a freeway was both needed and could be constructed. That some of Ford's recommendations needed further consideration, adjustment, and change does not mean his contribution lacked profound significance for the church. Indeed, the freeway he proposed has already been partially completed, as people of goodwill have patiently invested their spiritual gifts to enhance understanding within their community of faith.

Perhaps we can ponder and apply this analogy as we seek to travel more efficiently and directly in pursuit of Adventism's twin goals: mission (the everlasting gospel to everyone) and readiness for the consummation (Christ's glorious return). In this process, a paragraph from Richard Hammill's final chapter, entitled "Reflections on My Own Spiritual Pilgrimage," offers fitting guidance:

Throughout the history of the Christian Church, believers have found it hard to accept this double-edged principle—that true religion clings to the old that proves to be truth but reaches out also for new, more appropriate understandings, even as Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount tried to explain.

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The Hypocrisy of the Adventist Left

Growing up in Miami Beach, I had a next door neighbor, a single mom with a severely retarded boy who needed constant care. Instead of institutionalizing the unfortunate lad, who was entering his teen years about the time we moved there, she spent a fortune on steady nursing care at the house.

Over time we noticed a regular flow of men who, more often than not, spent a lot of time there at night. When my mother finally realized what was going on, she said (with no little schaudenfreud), "Cliff, we think Julia is a prostitute!" Immediately my father snapped back, "So what? She has that child to take care of."

I bring up this snippet to make a point about liberalism, or about what I always thought liberalism was. I have no doubt that my dad, a backslidden religious Jew who as a kid used to sleep with his yarmulke attached to his head in order not to offend God, didn't approve of prostitution any more than he approves now of me being a Seventh-day Adventist. And yet not once in my 26 years as an SDA has my father, pretty much an avowed atheist, ever mocked my beliefs or tried to turn me from them. He disagrees; finds them absurd, actually. (I still remember how foolish I once felt explaining to him about the first and second resurrections, about Jerusalem coming out of the sky, and about Satan with all the wicked attacking the city.) But he has always been respectful. "If it makes you happy, Cliff, then that's fine with me." In fact, he more than once said that if some calamity were to happen, he was afraid I'd *lose* my faith, and he worried about the emotional damage such a loss would bring. All this now, remember, from an atheist.

In short, my dad's a liberal in what I've always understood to be the classic sense of the term, that is being irrationally tolerant of beliefs or actions you don't believe or even like, as long as those beliefs and actions don't hurt others. That's liberalism, kind of in the John Stuart Mill vein. If Nietzsche said that the last Christian died on a cross, then maybe the last liberal I know will die when my dad does. It certainly won't be when the last SDA on left does. And that's because though there are leftists in the SDA church, there aren't many liberals, at least not in the best sense of the word.

In the worse sense, "yes." Most (but not all) of the "liberals" in the SDA church seem to be close-minded hypocritical dogmatists utterly intolerant of any other views, particularly those of their more conservative *compadres*.

Take, for instance, their attitude toward the Adventist Theological Society, the "notorious ATS." I am not, nor have ever been, a member of ATS, and though I don't know all that it stands for, I assume it's just basic Adventism at least as understood by the vast majority of church members worldwide. How, then, does one explain the left's "going postal" over the formation of the ATS? Shouldn't liberal scholars, in their vaunted openness, have been happy to welcome another group seeking to express its interpretation of our faith in the marketplace of ideas? Isn't that what being liberal is all about? Of course it is, but we're not talking about liberals here;

we're talking about leftists–a big difference, one that explains why ATS faced an endless onslaught of attacks, name-calling, calumny and threats that, though apparently tempered over time, still exists. (Rumor has it that *AToday* was founded partly to counter ATS).

Perhaps, though, what's most revealing is that after ATS was formed, I heard that certain college administrators swore they would *never* hire anyone who was a member of the society. What I find so amusing is that these were, I would guess, the same college administrators who constantly scream and howl "Academic freedom! Academic freedom!" anytime church leadership makes some feeble attempt to hold our schools accountable for what they're teaching our young people. *Academic freedom?* Please! Anyone who knows what's going on in some of our colleges isn't fooled by the phrase. Maybe a few gullible church administrators and parents are, but no one else.

All this leads to another example of the SDA left's intellectual hypocrisy. During the brouhaha over creation and evolution, some claimed the language in our fundamental belief on creation (No. 6) was purposely made ambiguous enough to allow for an interpretation other than a literal six-day creation. The statement in part reads: "God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made 'the heaven and the earth' and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work . . . ."

Now, let's try and be *honest* here, okay? Everyone who knows anything about us and our beliefs knows exactly what the church *meant* by those words, *everyone*. Whatever the limits of language itself or the "ambiguities" of that specific text, to argue the language used in this statement allows for millions of years of evolution is to destroy the language and intent of the text in a way that would have made Roland Barthes tremble. To read into that statement anything other than the plain meaning of the text itself, especially in the unambiguous historical and theological context of Adventism in which it was written, is sheer intellectual dishonesty. Which, of course, I find hilariously amusing because the folks who want to distort the text to include evolution are the same ones who proclaim the church isn't being *honest* with the facts derived from science, and that *honesty* demands a rejection of our "fundamentalist" interpretation of Genesis. *Honesty?* Come on. The only folks they're fooling are themselves.

I could go on, but space constrains me. However, I want to explore one final question: *Why are folks who believe themselves to be liberal actually so closed-mind and dogmatic in their opposition to opposing views?* The answer stems partially at least from a cultural variable. Most SDA leftists are lifers, born, raised, and educated in the insular SDA *weltanschauung* with its strong we-have-the-truth mentality (which, by the way, I happen to believe we do). This is a perspective that doesn't exactly allow for the full flourishing of contrary ideas. Hence, once they grew up, and got exposed to new ideas outside the paradigm, they accepted those ideas while retaining their old insular and dogmatic framework. Thus, they're "liberal" in the sense that, well, the Shining Path Maoist guerrillas in Peru are "liberal." No matter how supposedly progressive their thinking is, it comes packaged in intolerance and dogmatism.

But aren't conservatives in the church often the same way? Yes, but we're *conservatives*. We're *supposed* to be that way. We believe in dogmatic truth and absolutes, not in theological pluralism. We can relate to Paul's words: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). Or Christ's: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). To compare the attitude of the church's conservatives with its "liberals" is to miss the whole point of liberalism, which is supposed to be free of the kind of unwavering absolutism that denotes conservatism.

Of course, I know a few exceptions in the church whom I'd feel comfortable calling "liberal." That *Adventist Today* would even publish this article shows progress at least compared to others who though believing they represent a wide, ahem, spectrum of views are narrow-minded and insular, at least when it comes to anything smacking of "traditional Adventism."

It's too bad because if done right, liberalism could help the church, help balance us out in places where we might need it. It was leftists, in fact, who first helped me break away from the mindless verbal-inspirationism I came into the church with. Of course, they've gone way too far with that, off the deep end really, but at least I can credit them with helping me better understand the issues, even if I find their solutions laughable. And, as far as I can tell, to some degree it's been leftists who've helped bring the gospel to the forefront of the SDA church, no small thing in my estimation, for sure.

No, we don't have many liberals among us, not at least in the sense of my dad's liberalism, that of tolerating views which directly challenge the core of your beliefs. What we do have are left-wing crusaders who—though having adopted a few liberal *theological* positions—have missed the heart-and-soul of the best liberalism has to offer: compassion, acceptance, and the sense that, maybe, just maybe, our opponents might be right after all.

Clifford Goldstein edits the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Sabbath School quarterlies in Silver Spring, Maryland.

But aren't conservatives in the church often the same way? *Yes, but we're* conservatives. *We're* supposed *to be that way. We believe in dogmatic truth and absolutes, not in theological pluralism.*

"Let us stop passing judgment on each other. Instead, resolve not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way" *Romans 14:13*.

"Master," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him because he is not one of us." "Do not try to stop him," Jesus said, "for whoever is not against you is for you" *Luke 9:49-50*.

Liberals and Conservatives

Okay, okay. I know they're tricky labels. And labels often obfuscate as much as clarify. But in this case I can't think of any other convenient shorthand. And while "liberal" and "conservative" are notoriously imprecise, they will work for our present purpose.

Think of the church as a house. The conservatives are the builders; the liberals are the decorators. The builders pour concrete and nail two-by-fours. The decorators add flowers and skylights.

Liberals and conservatives are always arguing over the house. Conservatives think of the house as a fortress against evil. They want it sturdy enough to handle a 9.0 earthquake and a Class IV tornado. Conservatives invest huge amounts of time and money in building a strong house, and they want it to stay that way. Understandably they resent anyone messing with it. They fear any change in the structure of the house will make it vulnerable to attack from thieves, termites, tornados, earthquakes or fire.

Leave it alone, they insist. *It's strong. It has served well. Don't fix what ain't broke*.

Then liberals come along and start tinkering. They want skylights and larger windows. They insist on carpet in the living room and Italian tile in the kitchen. They want wallpaper in the entry and bedrooms. They want glass blocks in the exterior wall beside the front door to brighten the entry hall. They order new appliances for the kitchen. And while they're at it, they suggest removing the wall between the kitchen and the family room and another wall between the living room and dining room.

Conservatives watch all this remodeling with growing dread. Those openings in the roof for skylights are sure to leak. The larger windows will be extremely vulnerable during hurricanes. And the wallpaper and carpet are just a waste of money.

If conservatives can keep the liberals out of the house, it will be sturdy for sure. Quake-proof, windproof, fireproof. On the other hand, you may end up with a house the kids won't want to live in. Who wants to walk on concrete floors, sleep on cots and hang blankets over the windows for privacy in the evening?

If the liberals manage to oust the conservatives, we may end up with a gorgeous, comfortable structure that will collapse in a 3.2 quake or blow over in a 50-mile-an-hour gale. The skylights may leak, the carpets will be beautiful and impossible to clean. The bathroom will be attractive, but the plumbing will leak.

In the church, liberals don't build institutions, conservatives do. Colleges, hospitals, publishing houses, summer camps, academies, churches, are all built by conservatives. Conservatives are the people with enough conviction to part with their hard-earned dollars and actually get something going. On the other hand, liberals are the ones flexible enough to bend the original vision to fit the present reality. Liberals are the ones who ask hard questions about efficiency and effectiveness in the light of changes in society.

The Adventist church would have no colleges or medical schools if it weren't for the passionate conviction and drive of conservatives. On the other hand, we would have no colleges sending graduate students to Harvard, Columbia, and Stanford and no world-class medical school if it weren't for the "liberals" in the 1950s who pushed through accreditation.

Conservatives make the best evangelists. They are confident of what they believe. They know what other people need. And their convictions are specific enough to be readily communicated.

Adventist conservatives can point to a church membership in the millions as justification for keeping the house just the way it is. Conservatives have formulated the ideas, gathered the people, and built the institutions which are the targets of liberal remodeling efforts.

But conservatives have children. And when those children grow up, often they need the ministry of liberals. These young people see problems with some aspect or another of their parents' faith or church and are not persuaded by conventional answers. Their spiritual life is characterized as much by questioning as by conviction. They need more than anything to know that someone with status in the church hears them, understands them. And if they cannot bring their unruly minds into conformity with every detail of their parents' religion they need another adult to assure them, this church is still their home. It's okay to live here.

Doubters don't often join self-confident sects, but they are born into them. Homosexuals do not join conservative churches in the same numbers as those they grew up in. Very few geologists or psychiatrists or artists become Adventists. But young people from Adventist homes study geology, psychiatry, and art and end up with questions that are not readily answered using conventional conservative argument.

You don't have to join the Adventist church if you have troublesome, unanswered questions; but what if you've grown up Adventist? What if you treasure grace, the Sabbath, wholism, the Great Controversy theme, vegetarianism, lifelong friends, and several generations' worth of institutional loyalty, and then find yourself wrestling with geochronology or some other Adventist certainty—to whom do you talk?*

At first you might seek out a convinced, articulate conservative in a bid to revive your old certainties. But if you no longer find conventional answers persuasive, and you don't want to move out, then you'll thank God for the ministry of liberals. You will give thanks that someone put in a skylight, took out a wall or two, and put some carpet on the floor.

And if it's your child who was thinking of leaving the church, and their conversations with a liberal keeps them in your church, then you'll really give thanks for the decorators. Liberals are the adults in the church to whom the children of conservatives can talk.

This ministry of liberals should recommend itself to conservatives for another reason: When young adults leave the Adventist church because of some specific difficulty, their children are highly unlikely to ever hear the Adventist message. But if questioning young adults remain in the church, their children will have ample opportunity to become acquainted with Adventism and respond for themselves.

Sometimes it happens that the children of a liberal read Ellen White in high school or college and become radical Adventists. These children want a religion that's sturdy and vigorous, that's aggressively evangelistic, that is impatient with human frailty and bold in its obedience. In other words, they are conservative.

If all Adventists were liberal, sophisticated, and culturally assimilated, where would these "re-born" children of liberals find spiritual mentors? They would have to leave and look to a fundamentalist denomination to find someone who would affirm their spiritual journey. But since our church includes confident, militant conservatives, the born-again, radical children of liberals can remain at home in the church of their parents. Conservatives are the adults in the church whom children of liberals can admire and conspire with.

Conservatives don't have high regard for people who don't fit the system. They don't understand the hard questions of their children. They can't see the sincerity that drives honest dissidents to both love the church and argue with it.

» You don't have to join the Adventist church if you have troublesome, unanswered questions; but what if you've grown up Adventist?

Liberals have a very hard time with the passionate conviction of young zealots. They don't sympathize with the need for corporate discipline and community norms. Yet the children of the church include both the angst-ridden and the zealous. These children need the respective ministries of liberals and conservatives.

Over the years I've heard people on both the left and right of the church talk as if most of our problems would be solved if we could just get rid of or limit the influence of the "other side." If we could eliminate the corrupting influence of the liberals or the hard edge of the conservatives, then we would have a "just right" church.

I don't believe it. Instead, I am persuaded that, as has been said in other contexts: We should stay together for the sake of the children.

*This paragraph is addressed to those who have grown up Adventist. The same principle applies to those who are drawn by God to the Adventist community but find themselves not fully persuaded on every detail of doctrine.

This article originally appeared in the May/June 1998 issue of Adventist Today *and is included as a chapter in* Fifth Generation: Spiritual Treasures of Mature Adventism, *by John Thomas McLarty.*

The Tyranny of Worthy Causes – 2

Millions of "worthy causes" today press their suits. Last issue we studied the concept of *donating to causes related to your own interests and talents*. Our giving should be an extension of our own values.

By following this principle, we can far more easily determine, *"How dedicated and self-sacrificial is this organization?"* "Administrative expense" has a way of consuming an amazing proportion of donated income—and donors should take stock of how much donated money actually reaches its intended purpose.

Empire Building

Donors must also ask, "Does this organization have the internal discipline (usually a function of a probing, independent board neither closely allied nor dependent on the organization's executives) to stay on course and avoid the pitfalls of wasteful empire-building?

Most "nonprofit corporations" that accept donated funds are created by visionaries unaccustomed to handling large sums of money.

For these men and women, the enticement of handling money—anybody's money—to the tune of four, five, six, and even seven figures can lead to intoxication for acquiring land, fine buildings, extravagant equipment, and costly conveyances.

In my 29 years as a writer and journalist, I have found this to be the norm rather than the exception. Yes, we're all human, and waste is a product of human frailty. But feeding the empire-building addictions of nonprofit entrepreneurs is clearly not the best way for donors to create lasting legacies.

Fortunately, the organization known as Adventist Today Foundation was created by—and its president and executive team consists entirely of—*nonemployees, non-salaried* representatives of high educational achievement and considerable money-managing experience—themselves some of its most sacrificial donors.

Adventist Today Foundation, for example, does not need a compound of high-tech computers and presses, private offices, boardrooms, and clustered dwellings. Not only would such a plan isolate it from the "real world" it serves, it would create massive, unnecessary overhead that donors and subscribers would have to bear. And that just wouldn't be right.

Corporate Indebtedness

Another question worth asking is this: Does the organization in question have true freedom to carry forward its stated purpose, or is it beholden to behind-the-scenes forces?

Many organizations become ossified—set in their ways—out of antiquated loyalty to a set of limiting practices laid down by long-retired founders. This may sound like abject heresy, at first gasp. But let's face it, unless organizations adapt constantly to new times and opportunities, they will soon find themselves using most of their resources in repeating an endless ritual of diminishing returns.

What worked great in 1975 or 1985 probably doesn't work very well today—yes, the principles of long ago may be sound, but the application needs to be fine-tuned in a fast-changing world. With time, many nonprofit organizations wax conservative, afraid to weather the discontent of a few prominent donors who may be uncomfortable with any methods they consider risky or new. Symptoms of such organizations include a "dreadful sameness" in their newsletters and programs—a lack of ingenuity and creativity.

At *Adventist Today*, we work very hard to remain on the cutting edge of independent enterprise. We are not "embedded" with the corporate church or any other independent organization about which we report. We have no financial ties whatever with them—nor do we align ourselves with them through cross-pollinated boards. It's the only way we can remain flexible and responsive, while retaining our credibility with those who support us.

That's one reason why we're free to constantly expand our coverage, moving well beyond the confines of North America, holding up a mirror to the Adventist culture, without fear or favor.

Adventist Today is neither fearful of empires, nor building its own. We know that's the way our advisors and donors want us to be.

»Edwin A. Schwisow serves as development director of Adventist Today and is point person on matters related to donations and underwriting for Adventist Today Foundation. Ed retired from 27 years of denominational journalism in 2003, after forming his own publishing firm, LifeScape Publications. He writes, edits, publishes, and serves *Adventist Today* from his home near Portland, Ore. He can be reached by email at easchwisow@hotmail.com; by phone at (503) 668-7956.

Hidden Heresy: Is Spiritualism Invading?

Continued from back cover

It seems that Adventist pastors are able to distinguish between the true and the false and take the true. If this was not the case, if Adventist pastors were going soft on the law as you assert these other churches do, we should find that a number of Adventist churches have been growing to at least megachurch size these last 20 years, but I do not know of even one example.

If the 29 churches you list have grown to their current size primarily because they teach an easy religion, then we should find Adventist churches that have grown by the thousands because of following the same principles.

This means that there are three possible answers to the growth of these other churches and the lack of growth, comparatively speaking, in Adventist churches.

1. These Protestant churches are growing because they are light on law and the religion they teach is easy, without requiring much sacrifice.
2. These Protestant churches are growing because they are NOT light on holiness, they just express it differently, and do call their people to a high standard, and God is leading them in their growth.
3. Adventist churches are NOT growing as we would like because the reverse is true; we are still far more law-centered, sanctification-oriented, than cross- and grace-centered.

While we have emphasized the Sabbath (and rightly so) and the mark of the beast, we have not understood or followed this vision of Ellen White:

"Those who wait for the Bridegroom's coming are to say to the people, 'Behold your God.' The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of **His character of love** (emphasis supplied). The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them" (*Ministry of Healing*, pp 415, 416).

God has given the Adventist church a special message for these times, but we are NOT living that message; and I believe that God will use other religious groups for His purpose, just as Jesus said the stones would cry out if the Jews did not listen and follow God.

George Barna, whom you quote, is America's premier religious researcher. In one of his surveys, reported on the Web, he asked, "Did you pray to God during the last seven days?" He listed twelve religious groups, from Mormon, to Catholic, to Presbyterian and Baptist. Adventists were LAST when it came to prayer. Only 79 percent said they had prayed to God during the previous seven days. The highest was Pentecostal, with 97 percent. Even Lutherans were at 84 percent and Methodists were at 90 percent. This is much better than the results from the worldwide survey of Adventist practice reported on by Mark Finley in the Fifth Business Session of the 2005 General Conference. Only 51 percent had any kind of daily devotions and Bible study.

When it came to church attendance, Adventists were almost at the bottom of the list again. Only 47 percent of Adventists reported attending church during the past seven days, which actually is pretty close to what Mark Finley reported at the same Fifth Business session of the 2005 General Conference concerning attendance worldwide—57 percent. Episcopalians were at 30 percent and Lutherans at 47 percent were the only ones out of the 12 that were lower. The highest were Mormons at 71 percent and Assemblies of God at 69 percent.* Now, it is true that the Adventist sample was not very large; but it was still a random poll and, as I said, the attendance mirrored our own research.

It seems, Tom, that Adventists have a long way to go to be the people that God wants us to be. I believe that one of the reasons Adventist pastors flock to the seminars of these other pastors is from their desire to see their churches grow in a wholesome and God-honoring way.

We say we are the remnant church, but our living and our practice do not reveal that. So maybe you should consider writing another book that brings out what we could learn from these other churches that would reverse the trends I have just listed. Write a book on the implications of John 13:35 and Ellen White's plea for God's character of love to be revealed in His people. Write a book showing why Ellen White totally revised her husband's picture of the Advent movement from a law-centered approach (published in 1876) to a cross- and gospel-centered approach (revised in 1883). In her picture the law has totally disappeared, except as a smoking mountain, presumably Sinai, way in the background; and it is the cross that is now the focus of the picture.

Yes, Tom, you have written a great book warning us of the dangers; but as I have said, Adventists have a very long way to go before we become like those churches, and just maybe these other churches have something still to teach us.

Yours for a vibrant and relevant church,

J. David Newman, D.Min.,
Senior pastor, New Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church

Footnote:

* *http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=93.*

The most helpful principle I have learned is to give to causes related to your own interests and talents. God loves cheerful givers. Nothing makes me happier than giving to a cause that's fighting the same battles I'm fighting—whether against error, disease, poverty, deceit, hypocrisy, or all of the above.

Book Review | By David Newman

Hidden Heresy? Is Spiritualism Invading the Adventist Church?

September 14, 2005

Elder Tom Mostert, President
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Dear Tom:

It has been some years since we last talked, and your book, *Hidden Heresy?*, has prompted this letter and communication.

I applaud you for this book. The Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy are both clear that in the last days Satan is going to bring in deceptions that are so close to the original that many will be deceived. We need to be often reminded of this, and your book does a great job in pulling together the biblical and Spirit of Prophecy warnings.

As I read your book it seems that your central thesis is that the churches following the examples of Willowcreek, Saddleback, and the Crystal Cathedral are heavy on love and light on obedience. You are afraid that Adventist pastors who follow these churches might follow the same trend and no longer lift up obedience to the law as important for Adventists.

I would like to assure you, as a pastor, that you have nothing to fear. This is not happening in Adventist churches! On pages 31-36 you list 29 gigachurches, the smallest of which has 10,000 members. Adventist pastors have been going to Willowcreek and Saddleback conferences for some twenty years now but you will NOT find an Adventist gigachurch or one even approaching that size. Our largest church in North America, I believe, is Loma Linda University church with some 6,000 members, but it has been a large church for 40 years now; and no one would say that it has grown because of following these Protestant pastors.

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