

Folkenberg's
New Deal



Adventist Man
Returns!



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Work on Sabbath?



Adventist *Today*

MARCH-APRIL 2008 • WWW.ATODAY.COM

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options. Is this a good thing?**



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Balancing Sabbath

Andy Nash

I probably shouldn't have said it, but I did.

At the Sabbath school class I was visiting in another town a few years back, the teacher posed this question: "Is it possible for someone to be saved who doesn't keep the Sabbath?"

I raised my hand. "I think it's possible," I said, "for someone to be saved who keeps the Sabbath."

The teacher paused as he processed my word choice. "Well," he said, "that's certainly a different take."

Since the class had gone silent anyway, the teacher graciously let me elaborate. I mentioned that when Jesus was here, the people most concerned about Sabbath keeping couldn't see past the Sabbath to Christ—and there's a real danger the same can happen to us. Sabbath keeping, I said, doesn't save anyone. Neither does prayer or Bible study or helping abused children. We're saved only by accepting the finished work of Christ. The teacher nodded.

I believe that, intellectually, most Adventists would nod as well. We know we can't save ourselves. But because the Sabbath is our "thing"—as though we'd dreamed it up ourselves—we can easily take it too far. That's why, within some Adventist contexts, I can honestly say that I hate the Sabbath. I really do. I hate the Sabbath when it becomes a point of arrogance, or an empty form of spirituality (see Isa. 1:13-14), or the landslide identifier of our community of faith. (What, after all, are Seventh-day Adventists known for? What was Jesus known for?)

A disproportionate fixation on the Sabbath has, without question, pushed many one-time Adventists to dismiss the Sabbath altogether. And that's too bad, not because their salvation is jeopardized but because the Sabbath is part of good biblical living. In fact, resting on Sabbath is so sensible that a loose form of it is built into society: it's called the weekend. When secular journalist A.J. Jacobs recently tried to follow the Bible literally for a year, he particularly enjoyed resting on Sabbath. "There's something I really like," he told *Newsweek*, "about a forced day of rest."

Ironically, as some run away from Sabbath, others run toward it.

What's needed is a balanced approach to Sabbath. Here's my attempt at it.

The Sabbath has nothing to do with our salvation. Period. We can't save ourselves. We're saved only by accepting the the finished work of Christ.

The Sabbath is about rest, not church. No matter what you might have been taught, the simple fact is that the Sabbath commandment is heavily focused on resting from work, not on worship per se. So then, can you rest on Sabbath and go to church on Sunday? Yes, of course you can. I think corporate worship is a natural part of the Sabbath experience, but if you're in a community with no Adventist church (or no Christ-centered Adventist church), I see no problem biblically with the idea of resting on Sabbath and worshipping God on Sunday. The Sabbath is about rest.

The Sabbath is an eternal moral principle. Many former Adventists have been arguing otherwise because they view the Sabbath as an Old Testament ritual only. Here's why Sabbath keeping is moral: because the *opposite* of Sabbath keeping is working seven days a week—or forcing people to work seven days a week. The opposite of Sabbath keeping is not Sunday keeping; it's not resting. Look at the wording of the fourth commandment; it's almost entirely about rest—and letting *others* rest. I doubt that any Christian would argue that working seven days a week is moral. (Talk to children who never see a workaholic parent.) The remaining question then is: Isn't the idea of everyone resting at the same time . . . sort of cool?

The Sabbath is for Israel (see Ex. 31:13). I have no problem with this statement, which is often used to debunk Sabbath keeping for Christians. Actually, the Sabbath *is* for Israel because after the cross, we're *all* Israel. Just as the Sabbath and the spiritual rest of God coexisted before the cross (see Heb. 4:9-10), they continue to coexist after the cross.

Adventists should emphasize Sabbath on par with other spiritual disciplines, such as prayer and Bible study. When the Sabbath is put in its proper place—far below the cross of Christ—many more will love it again.

The opposite of Sabbath keeping is not Sunday keeping; it's not resting.

New Format

I thoroughly enjoyed the new *Adventist Today* magazine. You have set the bar high for all other church publications to follow. Well done.

BILL MANCER
Auckland, New Zealand

Stand up and rock, *Adventist Today*. Finally, an issue I could read all the way through and enjoy. Gone was the undertone of bitterness, gone was the



mockery, gone was the overt unhappiness with those “different” than. Present was humor, goodwill, and love. Articles such as Dennis Hokama’s “Caught in the Middle” represented current thought while Vanessa Sanders’s “Mad About Music” stimulated thought. In fact, thoughtful describes this entire issue. Well done! As a progressive (heading toward new light continually), nontraditional (woman in ministry), traditional (one who savors sundown worship twice a week and guests invited for a Sabbath lunch at home), Seventh-day Adventist (by choice and desire) Christian, I too, along with Steve Chavez, express “my faith in the love, mercy, grace, and justice of Jesus Christ.”

Thank you for your new “candid

and balanced approach to Adventist journalism.” I have now enthusiastically partnered with you and sent subscriptions to my two liberated (faith-filled, grace-oriented, Holy Spirit led) young adult daughters.

CHRISTIE SHINE, CHAPLAIN
Loma Linda University Medical Center
Loma Linda, California

Adventist First or Christian First?

Your question as to whether a Seventh-day Adventist is a Christian first or an Adventist first once again highlights the deep divide within our core identity. To be a member of our church is to suffer from a painful and chronic double-mindedness. This is so because we gladly give equal weight to Jesus and to our own history. Amazingly, we choose to sit squarely on the sharp horns of a dilemma of our own making. We confuse ourselves with a schizophrenia-like self-definition. For example, we are the church but actually also the remnant church. Then we have both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy as authoritative and sometimes conflicting rules of faith and practice. Of course we preach the gospel, but our “unique message” must be given equal emphasis in order to preach “the truth.” Are we Christians or Adventists first? Painful question.

To add insult to injury, we do not merely split our identity down the middle; we also pit the two halves against each other. Incredibly, in our church Christ and his gospel are in competition with our uniqueness. No, we do not reject Jesus outright—we simply compete with him as if the gospel of the kingdom and our uniqueness are on an equal footing. As a result, every 20 years or so civil war breaks out in our denomination, and we shoot or intimidate our gospel leadership in order to preserve our distinctive

identity. How long can this go on?

SMUTS VAN ROOYEN, PASTOR
Vallejo Drive SDA Church
Glendale, California

When once asked the question about being Christian, I replied that I had difficulty with that label and preferred to call myself a “believer in Yeshua ha Mussiah” rather than be included in what nowadays passes for mainstream Christianity.

Christ was his title rather than his name, which wasn’t really “Jesus” anyway. Yeshua ben Yosef was not a Christian. Christians had yet to be invented. Followers of Yeshua were first called Christians (Sons of the Christos) in Antioch long after his earthly ministry had closed. It was a derogatory label promoted by those who persecuted converts of St. Paul.

Historically documented outrageous acts against humanity under the banner of Christianity equal those of radical Islam. Neither group has occasion to boast, and the name “Christian” has alienated half of the world. I’d welcome another term for us who follow the teachings of Yeshua ha Mussiah (Jesus the Messiah). Much of so-called Christianity fails to do so.

VERNON P. WAGNER, M.D.
Bakersfield, California

I have observed the development of Dale Ratzlaff’s anti-Adventist organization from its inception. In my view, they have turned the “investigative judgment” on its head and have made it an investigation of not just Adventist doctrine but of Adventists who make Christ the center of their lives. Yet because we can’t accept their anti-Sabbatarian position, we are hopelessly lost.

While three of our prominent pioneers (Joseph Bates, James White, and Uriah Smith) were Arians who taught that Christ was a created being, that heresy never became a mainstream teaching.

Their false assumption that it is an influence in today's church is absurd.

FRED SPEYER
Paradise, California

I want to thank Dennis Hokama for his sincere, lengthy attempt to faithfully reproduce the argument of my "family altar" article in *Proclamation!* magazine. However, I wish Hokama and Pastor David Newman would have extended the same courteous effort to the scholarly writings of Dale Ratzlaff. Newman accused *Proclamation!* of taking quotes out of context, but Hokama did not give Ratzlaff or his biblical studies so much as one quote. Was I an easier target, I wonder? [A longer reply from Romero will be posted at <http://formeradventistjapan.blogspot.com>]

RAMONE ROMERO
Osaka, Japan

Mad About Music

I enjoyed the new *Adventist Today*. I liked the thought-provoking letters, Andy Nash's editorial, and the rest of the magazine.

I belong to a contemporary church. So Vanessa Sanders' discussion about music ("Mad About Music—What Else Is New?") is familiar. I often think of Mark 9:38-40: "We saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us. Do not stop him, Jesus said. No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us."

If the music doesn't please you, rejoice anyway because our amazing God is being sung about. And receiving glory and praise.

ELLSWORTH WELLMAN
Yakima, Washington

Music styles are an important part of the crisis in Adventist worship. Reverence is often sadly lacking, and the lack of inspiring music is part of this problem. God is high and lifted up, and worship must reflect this, whatever the style of music. A major part of the music problem could be the lack of music education of Adventist students. We have required Bible classes for all students. It just might be time to require music appreciation classes, including church music, for all school students from grade school through college. We can't let the status quo rule in our music and alienate more and more people in our church music experience.

LANCE HODGES
Walla Walla, Washington

Evolution Debate: Goldstein vs. Taylor

I appreciate *Adventist Today* hosting the debate between Clifford Goldstein and Ervin Taylor: "Can You Be an Adventist and an Evolutionist?" Although it gets a bit acerbic, nonetheless it is encouraging to read honest discourse rather than that which is politically correct.

Adventists who are teaching science around the world must have confidence in God's ability to grant discernment and understanding as we continue to study the evidence found in

astronomy, geology, paleontology, anthropology, genetics, and molecular biology. And if we are to be effective in the classroom as we struggle through these issues with our students, we must have the support of our church.

GAIL REDBERG, ASEA PRESIDENT
Walla Walla Valley Academy
College Place, Washington

If a person can't be Adventist while not agreeing with every doctrine of the church, does that mean that our early pioneers, including Ellen White for some time, were not really Seventh-day Adventists because they did not hold to all 28 fundamentals as we have outlined them in fairly recent times?

CAROL SMITH
Maleny, Queensland, Australia

We do like the new format and are pleased *Adventist Today* is growing, but I was stunned when I read Clifford Goldstein's statement: "One can be an Adventist and believe in and do a lot of wrong things. (After all, look at how many voted for George W. Bush—twice!—and for Hitler.)" I find that statement to be totally unacceptable.

JIM SNELLING
Okeechobee, Florida

I was just joking, brother—that's all. Please, give me a little credit. Though I consider Bush a doofus who should not have been elected, it was never my intent to make a moral equation between the two. Remember, too, this is Adventist Today, so we can be a little irreverent, right? —Cliff.

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Folkenberg's New Deal

The former world church president is back with a head-turning and controversial style of evangelism.

By Vanessa Sanders

Robert Folkenberg looked exhausted. His shoes were off; his eyes were red. It was 2 a.m. after 11 straight hours of production for the Truth for Today segment of *ShareHim TV Newsmagazine*, the new ShareHim show on 3ABN that features ShareHim evangelists.

Kimberly Graves, a producer for the show, recalls that night at Folkenberg's home in Virginia.



Robert Folkenberg

"We were just standing there; everything was done," says Graves. "And I said, 'Elder Folkenberg, why are you doing this?' He said, 'It's very real to me. It's as real as seeing my dad again. I'm not going to see my dad until Christ comes back.' And then he referred to an Ellen White quote that said Jesus would have already come if we had carried out the commission."

Folkenberg, 67, founder and director of ShareHim, is a man with a mission. The former president of the world church resigned in 1999 following controversy over his business involvement with James E. Moore, a Sacramento entrepreneur. Although he began developing ShareHim ministries in 2000, Folkenberg says the need for such an organization had been apparent to him for many years. That "need" was to reach people for Christ in the Third World while "helping Seventh-day Adventists in the First World realize

that personal witness is non-negotiable in the life of a Christian."

In fact, Folkenberg says the main mission of ShareHim, a ministry of the Carolina Conference that was formerly known as Global Evangelism, is not to grow the church in the developing Third World, but to impact the preacher.

"Involvement in witnessing activity at home—that's what we're trying to change," he says. "We're affecting the culture of what it means to be a Seventh-day Adventist in the economically developed world."

The American Adventists whom ShareHim aims to affect are not primarily seasoned preachers or ordained pastors, but people with no preaching experience—college students, teachers, social workers, and accountants—by giving them the opportunity to travel to churches in the United States or abroad and preach an evangelistic series. ShareHim makes it easy for anyone to preach by providing all sermons on DVD, complete with notes and graphics so that anyone who can read can lead a sermon in an hour or less.

ShareHim makes it possible for even Adventists as young as 12, like Michael Catarama of Hinsdale, Ill., to preach a series.

Catarama was with his family in Kenya when the scheduled preacher for a ShareHim seminar had a death in the family and was unable to fulfill her commitment. No extra preachers were available, so Catarama stepped up to the pulpit. He wasn't nervous or scared.

"I had seen Mark Finley and others preach, and I was willing to try it out," he says. "I learned what I was capable of doing, and I would do it again."

Catarama sees no problem with inexperienced youth evangelizing to congregations. "It's a good way," he says, "to

get young people involved in the church so they don't leave the church—because they know they can do something."

The Concerns

Other Adventists, however, have expressed discomfort with what they see as a one-size-fits-all approach to evangelism.

Alexander Carpenter, an instructor at Pacific Union College, Angwin, Calif., recently wrote an article for the *Spectrum* Blog titled "This Evangelism Corrupts Adventism." It received more than 170 comments online. Carpenter, who as a teenager enjoyed six summers of colporteur and preached evangelistic sermons in the Philippines and Washington, writes that ShareHim is prepackaged plagiarism.

"The problem lies in the misleading message that the truth about God and humanity can fit onto a DVD and be delivered interchangeably without context, relationships, or the honorable work of personal theologizing," Carpenter says.

"I want my church to grow," he adds. "The problem is not with evangelism, but with this one-size-fits all, get-saved-quick approach. This type of ministry teaches Adventist young people to preach someone else's experience and words. That's a form of spiritual simulation."

Rich Hannon, a computer software engineer from Salt Lake City who commented on the *Spectrum* Blog, compared the type and structure of ShareHim evangelism to that of Mormon evangelism tactics, saying one parallel is to "measure the number of converts but not the collateral damage that might be caused in the 'acquisition' if the missionary has insufficient wisdom or sensitivity to deal with the intensely human (not propositional truth) dimensions of evangelism."

Considering Context

Angela Palmer, a recent college graduate from Hamilton, Ala., also expressed concern that a fixed series of sermons on DVD may not be effective in every evangelism setting. Palmer preached a ShareHim series in India last spring. Although ShareHim advised her team to preach sermons in the order presented on the DVD, the team members made some changes to make it relevant to their foreign audiences.

"You have to set a new foundation because their worldview is completely different," Palmer says. "I think that's a setback with American evangelism in general. The message [people in some Third-World countries] understand as coming from God needs to be presented differently from how we would understand it. You can't always assume the authority of the Bible before jumping into other doctrines. It would take more than one hour one night to convince [American Christians] of the authority of the Quran. There's a need to put ourselves in other people's shoes before we present material."

Carlos Martin, director of the Evangelistic Resource Center (ERC) at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tenn., takes an active role in helping student evangelists study and discuss the material in order to make it relevant for their audiences. He writes: "A typical day during one of these series includes private devotional time, corporate



IN INDIA: At a ShareHim evangelistic event in India last spring, Joel D. Klimkewic, 27, of Birch Run, Mich., speaks.

worship, about one hour of sharing experiences and solving problems with the help of locals, and about two hours of reviewing together the presentation for that night. In the afternoon evangelists spend about two hours in private review, and then we take off by midafternoon for visitation. When we come back by 10 p.m. or later, we usually spend more than one hour sharing what happened during the evening. We preach 15 nights in a row without a break, plus three Sabbath mornings."

Responding to charges of "evangelistic tourism," Martin acknowledges that while some may volunteer to preach for the adventure, many go to do something for God. "We don't go to relax," he said. "We go to participate in the preview of the latter rain. Student preachers come back with a different perspective of their lives and the church."

A Numbers Game?

While a primary purpose of ShareHim is to affect the worldview of American Seventh-day Adventists, some feel that much of the organization's focus is on the number of converts.

Southern's ERC club president, Nardia Leonce of Dallas, Texas, led a ShareHim seminar in Honduras last spring.

TRAINING: Dr. Carlos Martin, director of the Evangelistic Resource Center, trains students to lead ShareHim evangelism seminars in India.

Although Leonce says she had a wonderful experience that allowed her to "experience the joy of preaching in another country," one thing that bothered her, she admitted, was a focus on the number of baptisms.

Carpenter also expresses concern about how individuals are treated as numbers with this type of "get-saved-quick religion."

Folkenberg flatly denies paying inordinate attention to the number of baptisms.

"Whoever said that is lying," he says. "We never talk about baptisms. We do not promote numbers of baptisms, but we do show numbers of speakers who preach so they can be encouraged to make a difference in the economically developed world."

"Visit the ShareHim website," says Carpenter. "The home page features stories like this one, which said: 'For two weeks' study more than 300 people came every night to hear about Jesus and the Bible. At the end of the meetings we had 34 persons who decided to be baptized, and another 64 are studying and preparing for baptism in the near future.' Or visit Folkenberg.net, which includes this paragraph: 'From 2001 through 2004 more than 90,000 evangelistic campaigns are planned with accumulated baptismal objectives in excess of 1 million souls. Success in achieving these objectives is





dependent upon sacrificial giving on the part of interested individuals. You will be interested to know that the projected cost of donated funds per baptism is only \$2.41!”

“Unless I’m missing something,” adds Carpenter, a fifth-generation Adventist, “baptismal numbers are talked about, even monetized. However, there are better ways to grow our church than commodifying souls—social-justice campaigns, speaking prophetically about the connection between the Sabbath and environmental preservation, and just listening instead of preaching. All of these attract interest and build long-term membership.”

Leonce says she can understand a reason for counting: “It shouldn’t be a numbers game,” she says, “but how can

you measure success in these situations?”

Martin says he uses numbers not only to measure success but also as a tool to recruit college students to participate in evangelism. A promotional video commissioned by the ERC, which is aimed at recruiting college students to lead ShareHim evangelism seminars, shows the numbers of baptisms by Southern students at each evangelism site. So far, the number is more than 7,000—something Martin is excited about, not ashamed of.

“If we didn’t have the numbers or success, would you want to participate?” he asks. “The numbers show this isn’t an experiment we started yesterday. The results indicate that students can participate in something that is bigger than reality.”

GHANA CALL: Folkenberg likes to lead his own series from time to time.

Differing Realities

“I’m so sick of all the criticism,” Folkenberg says. “The only people I hear this from are people in the First World who have an anti-evangelism bias. The people criticizing are the ones who are barely doing anything.”

Still, many Adventists continue to ask questions about how Adventist evangelism is being done and should be done—questions like: What about follow-up discipleship? Do participants study and understand what they preach? Is using prepared sermons the best way to evangelize?

While some seek answers and improvement, others believe the program is fine as is. Ben Kochenower, vice president of evangelism for ASI Southern Union, says that ShareHim participants are experiencing evangelism transformation—what Graves calls “evangel-living.”

“I have been transformed,” said an enthusiastic Kochenower, one of the first lay church members to preach a ShareHim series. “I remember when [Elder Folkenberg] asked me to preach in the Philippines. I had never heard a request like that made to a layman.”

Since then, Kochenower has preached in several countries worldwide as well as nationally. Next year he plans to preach in Montana. “All of my life I sat in the stands,” he said. “But one day, someone came up to me in the stands and invited me into the game. I’ve never been the same since.”



SHEEP

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HYBRIDS

ShareHim Ministry. True, there are legitimate questions about the impact of this type of evangelism, but it’s hard to criticize a 67-year-old former world church president who has picked himself off the mat to fight widespread apathy among American Adventists.

GOATS

Univollege? Southern, Oakwood, and Southwestern revere their new “university” status, and all three herald their *U.S. News* “top school” billing on their websites. The problem is, these Adventist universities (unlike Walla Walla University) are rated against other colleges because they don’t offer enough master’s-level degrees to be rated against other universities. Can they have it both ways?

CLARIFICATION: *U.S. News* Rankings

In our piece “Come to Our School—We’re Listed!” (Jan-Feb), we reported on how *U.S. News & World Report* ranked Adventist colleges and universities. While the rankings were accurate, there was some confusion about the term “top school” as well as the terms “first tier,” “second tier,” “third tier,” and “fourth tier.” *U.S. News* considers any school in the upper half to be a “top school.” Schools in the lower half are grouped into a “third tier” and “fourth tier.” In our attempt to help readers understand how Adventist schools specifically fared, we also used the terms “first tier” and “second tier” for schools ranked in the first 25 percent and second 25 percent, respectively. *U.S. News*, however, no longer uses the terms “first tier” and “second tier,” though it does list the “top schools” in order of ranking. Our apologies for any confusion.

ANALYSIS

When the Church Fights

A flare-up in Orlando feels all too familiar.

By David Person

Thanks to the Internet, people all over the world can read two accounts of the controversy that enveloped the Guilgal Seventh-day Adventist Church of Orlando, Fla., last year. Both are on www.haitiansda.com.

The first is sympathetic to the church's former pastor, Ronald Jean Baptiste, the lay leaders who supported him, and the members who broke away from the Guilgal congregation and the Seventh-day Adventist Church to form the End Time Sabbath Worship Center.

The second one rebuts the first, harshly criticizing Baptiste, the lay leaders, and the author of the first account. It acknowledges End Time but doesn't take a position on its creation.

Both postings, however, are very critical of Willie Taylor, president of the Southeastern Conference, and his management of the Guilgal situation. But before I talk about that, here's a brief synopsis of what these accounts say happened to Guilgal.

Some time before 2007—either two or four years prior, depending on the interpretation of the postings—Guilgal began a building project that was to be called the Guilgal Community Center. The project was proposed to Taylor and the Southeastern Conference, but the only response, apparently, was for Taylor to announce that Baptiste was going to be moved to another church.

I say *apparently* because conference officials won't talk on the record about what happened at Guilgal. Hubert Morel, secretary of the conference and a college friend of mine, spoke with me in very broad terms about some of the contextual issues but wouldn't comment beyond that on or off the record, citing

legal considerations.

Baptiste arrived at Guilgal in 1995. From what I've seen through the years, pastors who remain at churches for a decade or more are there because their congregations want them there. This doesn't mean they haven't had any problems or made mistakes, but that they have managed to keep the support of most of their members.

Both postings indicate that Baptiste didn't want to leave. They differ on how he reacted to the prospect, on how his eventual departure impacted Guilgal, and on some of the actions taken after Baptiste left. But based on both accounts and on Morel's refusal to comment about Guilgal, it's clear that some issues related to the church and its plans became legal matters.

The first posting indicates that Southeastern took Guilgal to court in May of 2007 to recover tithe money that had been withheld after Baptiste was removed as pastor. The second asserts that it was the church that took the conference to court, not the other way around.

Scathing indictments of Taylor and the conference come near the end of both accounts. This is where we should pay close attention. Reason one: This is virtually the only point on which both sides agree. Two: Both criticisms are sad and familiar. Three: Conversations I had with a current Southeastern employee and a former one, neither of whom spoke for attribution, generally confirm the criticisms.

Both people, as did the postings, described a president who doesn't communicate well with his colleagues and tends to be autocratic.

When you look at the morale of the conference as a whole, it's not good, the current employee said.

I don't assume that all or even most

conference employees—current or former—will agree with this. But with all I've read and heard about Guilgal, it's not hard for me to believe.

There is still no Guilgal Community Center, as far as I can tell. Sad, since the stated reason for the center was to expand the ministry that Guilgal was delivering to its community.

All of my life, I've seen variations of the Guilgal story played out repeatedly inside and outside of the Adventist Church. A favorite pastime seems to be for pastors, presidents, lay leaders, and unelected congregants to battle over money, power, and position while ministry and the real-life issues of the average church member are forgotten. I've even been in a battle or two myself through the years.

These days I've chosen to remain on the sidelines. No more church business meetings, board meetings, or offices for me. No more machinations and gyrations of church politics.

On Sabbath I go to church, worship, fellowship, and go home.

So what will I do if a Guilgal situation erupts at my church? I'll wait it out. If it gets too hot, I'll do what I need to for my own peace of mind: find another Seventh-day Adventist church to attend.

After 37 years of Adventism, the fight just isn't worth it for me anymore.

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MELANIE EDDLEMON

Allie Chacko and her mom, Janna, say goodbye at Campion Academy.

SHOULD I SEND MY 14-YEAR-OLD TO A Boarding academy?

Academy enrollment is down as Adventist families rethink their options.

BY MELANIE EDDLEMON

CAMPION ACADEMY IS ALIVE ONCE AGAIN. A SOCCER BALL SKIMS ACROSS THE LAWN, DODGING TREES AND FACULTY MEMBERS, WHO ARE INVITED TO JOIN THE PICKUP GAME. LAST YEAR'S CROWD HAS ALREADY RECLAIMED THE SCHOOL LAWN, AND THE NEW KIDS LOOK ON.

The pile of boxes grows just beyond the entrance of the dormitory at the Loveland, Colo., Adventist boarding school. Inside, the hallways are flooded with activity—mostly parents moving suitcases, boxes, and pictures of themselves into their children's new bedrooms. The clamor is hushed when the last family portrait is brought inside. An empty car idles in the parking lot, overstaying its welcome.

A mother holds her daughter close—only for a moment.

When the last car drives away, a sense of newness and freedom rushes over the empty parking lot. The young girl still waving goodbye can feel it, and—ready or not—she turns back to shake hands with independence and responsibility, perhaps for the first time. She's done the first day of school before, but she's never done it alone.

Why They Go

The reasons students go away to Adventist boarding schools are about as varied as the students themselves. Friends lure their friends, and family tradition compels family members. Some

students have been *sent* for spiritual reform, while some have come thirsty for Christianity; still others come to escape a broken family. For many students, boarding academy is the only hope they have of an Adventist education; and for many more, it's the only place with room to spread their wings. With such a diverse mixture of people and mindsets, learning to do laundry isn't the only challenge boarding students face.

Now in the midst of her first year at Campion, Allie Chacko is experiencing a different kind of home than the one her parents provided for her. It's a home where she shares a bedroom and bathroom with other teenage girls. "I guess it's kind of nice to go home and chill by yourself without other people always surrounding you," she says, explaining that her greatest challenge has been living in the dorm with so many other girls.

When Allie turned 14, options for continuing Adventist education in Wichita, Kan., were dwindling. So when her brother told her about the music, sports, and academics offered at Campion, she enrolled for her sophomore year. "Boarding academy—if you get to a good one like Campion—is a great

experience because it is filled with so many Christian kids who are in the same boat as you, and the staff here are so amazing,” Allie says. “They give you what you need.”

Although they no longer share the same house, Allie has seen her parents seven or eight times since they said their goodbyes on her first day at Campion. “I have learned to appreciate them more,” she says. “We are able to talk about things more openly now, and we probably wouldn’t have talked about them before.”

But not every boarding student has reaped rewards by separating from his or her parents. Bret Fenton, now a freshman in college, is disconcerted by his boarding experience as a 14-year-old at Enterprise Academy in Enterprise, Kan.

Bret says that boarding schools no longer meet the needs of today’s society. “When they were established, there were small farm towns and small areas where good education couldn’t be provided,” he says. Bret blames boarding academies for driving a wedge into the home at a time when teenagers need to find direction from their family relationships.

Parenting From a Distance

The stories that transpire from boarding schools have created both loyal fans and bitter opponents. Like Bret, many skeptics question whether the original mission still exists, and whether parents, not institutions, are best suited to guide children through the sometimes tumultuous teenage experience. In a day and age when many families are less fearful of public school’s anti-God

image, the question intensifies: Just how involved should parents be throughout their child’s high-school years? Can the secure connection that comes from living under the same roof really be traded in for a cell phone with a good family plan?

Ron Burkett, father of two boarding students, insists that it can. Burkett sent both of his children to Sunnysdale Adventist Academy in Centralia, Mo., where he had also met his wife as a young boarding student. Most teenage kids are at a point, he says, where they shouldn’t feel “micromanaged” by their parents. For Burkett, spending time apart only strengthened the familial bonds between him and his children. “There were some things that had been taken for granted, and [living apart] makes the time a lot more precious,” he says. “It just seemed to have more impact than it would have if you had just talked to them about things daily.”

Finishing her nineteenth year as girls’ dean of Auburn Adventist Academy, in Auburn, Wash., Kay Sanborn agrees that students appreciate their family connections a lot more when they are placed in an unfamiliar environment and can’t run to their parents. When kids are eating cafeteria food and living in the dorm, Mom’s cooking suddenly isn’t so bad, Sanborn says. Rather than growing apart, Sanborn has seen family ties get tighter. In fact, the evolution of cell phones has encouraged many students to talk with parents *more* than if they were living in the same house.

She reasons that boarding school makes sense because adolescence is already pulling parents and children apart.

The State of Boarding Academies

As their student populations shrink, boarding academies are struggling to make ends meet.

With declining enrollment and the closing of boarding schools, Adventists are left wondering what happened to the booming boarding school scene of the ‘60s. “The trend overall is for the reduction of boarding schools across the country,” says Dennis Plubell, associate director of education for the North American Division. Plubell, who spent eight years as a boarding school principal, says that the demand for smaller day academies has seen continual growth, while the size and number of boarding schools continues to diminish.

Plubell cites a number of reasons for the diminishing enrollment figures, including parental openness to public schools and local Christian schools—and the bitterness many alumni still feel after their experience in strict schools during the ‘60s and ‘70s.

“Baby boomers wanted to be more involved in their children’s education, perhaps, and weren’t as willing to send their kids away at a young age—or at all,” says Plubell. “The bad news is that too often the parents are already immersed in a very hectic life in modern society, and the local church may not be able to meet young people where they are.”

With enrollment on the decline, boarding schools

are left to foot a hefty bill without the needed revenue, Plubell says. Insufficient funds is the number one reason boarding schools shut down, and it is the reason Broadview Academy in Lafox, Ill., closed last year.

Because boarding schools are funded by the conference in which they operate, Plubell says conferences with universities and hospitals can often afford to operate boarding schools, while smaller rural conferences cannot afford to maintain their academy. “It’s very provincial in that respect,” Plubell says. “This keeps us from strategic planning.”

A case in point is the Kansas-Nebraska Conference, which recently decided to continue operating a boarding school despite major financial losses. Great Plains Academy, which was formed by merging Enterprise Academy in Kansas and Platte Valley Academy in Nebraska, was created last year when the conference consolidated these two boarding academies in order to cut the costs of funding multiple schools. The merger was hotly debated by some who claimed that their identity would be lost if their local boarding school was “taken away from them.” After a rocky transition, Great Plains opened

its doors on the campus of the former Enterprise Academy—but to only 43 students, 14 of which could not afford to pay tuition.

Merging the schools did not alleviate the conference’s growing debt from academy losses as intended. With an operating budget of nearly \$2 million, Great Plains will end the year with an

Boarding Academies Closed in the Last 50 Years

1967	Plainview, South Dakota*
1980	Oak Park, Iowa
1983	Pioneer Valley, Massachusetts
1985	Grand Ledge, Michigan*
1985	Laurelwood, Oregon
1987	Adelphian, Michigan*
1997	San Pasqual, California
2005	Garden State, New Jersey
2007	Broadview, Illinois
2007	Platte Valley, Nebraska*

*Note that these schools were not officially closed, but rather closed their campuses and merged with another boarding school under a new name.

Sheyenne River Academy in North Dakota and Plainview Academy in South Dakota merged on the campus of Sheyenne River Academy and selected the name Dakota Academy. Grand Ledge Academy and Adelphian Academy both merged with Cedar Lake Academy in Michigan, and the new school, Great Lakes Academy, was opened on the campus of Cedar Lake. Platte Valley Academy in Nebraska merged with Enterprise Academy in Kansas, and the new school, Great Plains Academy, was opened on the campus of Enterprise.

“Think of it as broadening their world and giving them a chance to blossom in a different environment,” she says, adding that boarding school helps high schoolers start over when they need to. “It gives them a chance to show the face they want to show.”

But Bret insists that the occasional weekend visit or cell phone conversation isn’t the same thing as daily interaction, pointing out that teenagers can be selective about how they present themselves on the phone. “Boarding school tears apart your relationship with your parents,” he says, insisting the teenage years are when parents are most needed. “If my kid was pushing me away, I wouldn’t want to be like ‘Hey, take him; he’s pushing me away.’” Parents, he says, need to observe what’s going on and make themselves available to their kids.

Dealing With the Tough Stuff

While no teenager likes to be micromanaged, most agree that a level of structure needs to be maintained. The question is whether that structure should be provided by an institution or a parent.

Although schools offer structure, they don’t guarantee that a child will be able to mature. Some students openly admit they are in boarding school because their parents sent them for reform. Burkett has seen parents do this over and over, but he believes that boarding school isn’t a place to straighten out “problem kids.”

“I think a lot of parents do it to deal with that frustration. But in the end it leads others to mischief,” Burkett says. He points out that parents create a bigger problem for boarding academies

because of the negative influence their children bring into the dorms. Although Burkett wishes more students would experience an academy like Sunnysdale, he maintains that kids don’t change because of the school they’re at, and rebellious kids should be kept at home. “A kid who is a freshman in high school is already going down the road he’s going to follow for awhile. I don’t remember ever seeing anyone do a 180 because they were away from their folks,” he says. “Whatever direction they’re heading, that’s the way they’ll go.”

Many proponents of boarding school feel that if parents engrain discipline and values early on, 14-year-olds will take the reins of independence without detriment. Others challenge this view, claiming that it is the parents’ responsibility to bring children safely through adolescence unscathed. So the question persists: Are well-behaved kids more a product of good parenting during childhood—or good supervision during adolescence?

In the experience of Bret Fenton, “problem kids” were created by putting a dorm full of untamed 14-year-old minds into a poorly supervised environment. Bret names boredom as the active ingredient in the mix, claiming that there weren’t enough faculty members to plan and supervise good activities every day of the week. He recounts stories of long Sabbath afternoons on a campus that was “shut down.”

“The more you gather teens together with nothing to do, the more they’re going to come up with ‘things’ to do,” he says. “[On Sabbath] we would be shut in the dorm all afternoon. Every now

estimated loss of \$386,000. Although a private institution has offered the school a \$1 million grant to be spent over the next three years, Great Plains will still fall short by \$50,000 this year alone. Don Stricker, vice president of finance for the Kansas-Nebraska Conference, says that even

with the grant money, the school will still need to come up with about \$400,000 per year to make ends meet. Stricker hopes to cover this deficiency by letter-writing efforts; but if the funds are not raised, the conference would be forced to cut spending elsewhere.

The gloomy economic state of Great Plains was recently debated at a meeting in January. A vote was taken in favor of closing the school, but the decision was not carried because the majority fell just short of the two-thirds requirement. Steve Kinser, a constituent at the nearly seven-hour meeting, says that many people resisted closing Great Plains because the school reported making big strides in the past year, and the campus has seen an upturn in attitude.

“The problem is with society—we have changed,” Kinser says. “Parents are no longer willing to send their children away to be raised by someone else at such a young age. There is still a need and a place for boarding academies, but not one in every

conference. And definitely not two or three.”

Stricker agrees that the needs of society are changing, and we must be willing to make the necessary adjustments. “As demographics change, so will the way we do secondary education,” Stricker says, referencing other boarding schools in “serious trouble.”

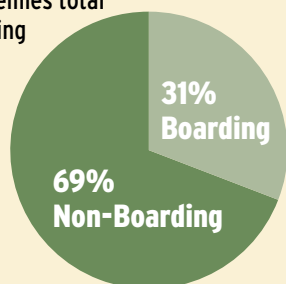
But while leaders continue to brainstorm a new economic model under which academies can flourish, many supporters of boarding school want to leave things as they’ve been. Plubell calls this the “we want it in our backyard mentality” and says it prevents collaboration and creates an imbalance in the quality of education offered in different conferences.

“We could save the whole church a lot of money. But at the end of the day, we don’t own it—it’s the people in the pew,” Plubell says. “And at the end of the day, that keeps us from streamlining the programs.”

—by Melanie Eddlemon

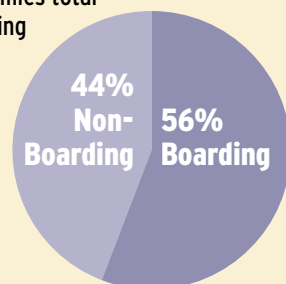
2008

109 academies total
32 boarding



1965

80 academies total
45 boarding



Secondary Enrollment Changes (junior and senior academies)

Years	1955	1965	1975	1985	1995	2005
Student Enrollment	13,913	18,878	22,534	17,769	15,873	15,218
Percent Change		+35.7	+19.4	-21.1	-10.7	-4.1

Enrollment in academies suffered the greatest drop between 1975 and 1985.

Enrollment has continued to drop in the last decade, but only by half a percent each year.



FRESH START: Sophomores Caleb Michalski and Sean Swayze and freshman Marc Burkett on registration day at Sunnydale Adventist Academy.

and then, we'd go to a nursing home . . . I mean, there were fun times, but mainly all of those times were just getting into mischief."

Allie relates, explaining that kids experience a lot of pressure coming from all directions. "Kids do have a lot of influence over each other, and sometimes it's not so good," she admits. But Allie believes that kids feel pressure no matter where they enroll for high school. It's not a matter of being a boarding student, she says; it's a matter of being a teenager. "I think [Campion's] discipline is pretty balanced," she says. "I mean, they're not watching your every move, but they step in when they need to."

Most boarding schools go to great lengths to keep things under control. Of course, the level of strictness varies from school to school. At Auburn Adventist Academy, freshmen cannot have computers in their rooms, the filtered Internet is turned off by 11 p.m., and study hall is mandatory for students with Ds or Fs. But even with strict rules, certain behaviors are bound to fall through the cracks, and deans need to be prepared. The Internet, gaming, porn, drugs, alcohol, sex—these are the tough issues that boarding academies must be prepared to deal with.

Relationships

Sexual temptation in particular can be a great struggle for teenagers, especially when they are in a romantic relationship.

Critics of boarding schools often target this issue as *the* major problem with supervision at boarding academies. "It's just too easy," Bret explains. "You have a whole dorm of girls to think about . . . and the temptation is there 24/7." Bret feels that temptation becomes more persuasive when boys and girls live on the same campus. "When you go home, there aren't girls to sneak out with. I mean, there are, but your parents are there. . . . People just get really sneaky in academy."

Many kids have felt that teachers treat the topic of relationships almost sarcastically, without adequately addressing the reality of the emotional and physical bonds that grow in a relationship. Bret says that parents have greater sway in this area than teachers do, and boarding schools disconnect kids from this guidance.

Bret also points out that homesickness accelerates the emotional and physical ties of a romantic relationship. "You miss the connection with your family," he says, "but a girlfriend is not the one to turn to—not at age 14." He says that he wasn't able to escape the constant pull of being in a relationship until he left boarding academy and put those pressures out of sight. "I had my family, and for me, that was very important."

How Young Is Too Young?

Perhaps boarding life would have been a different story for Bret Fenton if he had enrolled as a junior or senior rather than as a freshman. Perhaps homesickness, peer pressure, and boredom are better left to the older crowd of students preparing for college life. In fact, several faculty members at boarding academies feel it is not a question of *why?* but *when?*

Sherie Taylor has been a girls' dean for nine years, and she is currently the head dean at Rio Lindo Adventist Academy in Healdsburg, Calif. Taylor feels that maturity is a key issue when deciding whether a student is ready for boarding school. She says it's also important to consider the rate at which boys and girls mature. She says she would never have even considered sending her son to boarding school at age 14. While she wants all high schoolers to experience boarding academy, she thinks most boys do best waiting until their junior year.

Some circumstances, however, dictate that kids attend whether or not they are ready, just to get out of "horrible" family situations. "Sometimes, it's best to send them here at age 14 because we have structure," Taylor says. "Many families don't have structure."

Burkett suggests that even young kids may need boarding school to grow them out of their childish ways; it was Sunnydale that enabled his son to take a step up in maturity. "He was allowed to go away to school," Burkett says, "and it was a huge boost of confidence—a noticeable change in a short time for him. He took on a more adult air."

As a girls' dean, Sanborn sees kids unable to advance into adulthood because well-meaning yet controlling parents sometimes rob them of their ability to make decisions. Sanborn recalls one freshman who wasn't able to dress in the morning because she needed a parent to lay out clothes for her. Learning

CATHI WILSON

personal independence and the ability to trust their own decisions are just a few of the qualities kids take away from boarding school, Sanborn says.

A Place to Learn Independence—or Be Shielded From It?

In the dorm, no one tells kids when to do homework or laundry. No one tells them what time to get up in the morning, who to befriend, where to sit for dinner, or how to fold their clothes or make their beds. In the dorm, freedom takes on new meaning as boarding students learn that life is actually a result of their own decisions. Taylor says the level of independence is just right for the high-school years. She says the dorm affords students “a little space from their parents;” yet responsibility is expected, and structure regulates their freedoms.

It’s this kind of independence that Allie speaks of at Campion. “You learn to get stuff done without having people to tell you to do it,” she says. On the other hand, she no longer enjoys certain freedoms her parents gave to her, such as going places after school or on weekends. In a sense, she gains certain freedoms by giving up others.

Bret says he gained the most independence when he had the keys to a car and the freedom to drive anywhere he wanted. He says boarding academy lends a false sense of independence to students because they aren’t around their parents. “Sure, I did my laundry sooner than I would have, but staying at home prepared me for college way more,” Bret says. “I had to pay for a car, I had to pay for insurance, and I had to hold a job.”

Examining the Options

Now a college professor, Jud Lake became an Adventist in public school and transferred to Bass Memorial Academy soon afterward. Lake calls the experience “life altering” and says his years at Bass were his reason for later teaching at Broadview Academy in Lafox, Ill. “It’s a totally different world from the inside looking out,” he says, emphasizing the importance of a strong, unified, committed faculty driven by a visionary leader. “When it works, it’s wonderful; when it doesn’t, it’s far from ideal.”

As a student, the positive influence of faculty at Bass Memorial Academy in Lumberton, Miss., transformed Lake’s life. “It’s in the ball field, it’s in the dorms, it’s in the cafeteria.” Lake says that boarding faculty can have a “profound” effect in molding the minds of their students. Unfortunately, influence can be negative or positive, and parents should look at the quality of teachers before committing to a boarding school. “There are telltale signs,” he warns. “I have seen the negative influence of unconsecrated faculty—students can be scarred for life.”

Even with the opportunities boarding school provides, many families still choose to shop outside the Adventist market for a good high school that challenges their children. “There are not as many Seventh-day Adventist Christians that value an Adventist education anymore,” says Taylor, who went to public school as a child.

Having experienced both, Bret reports finding negative influences at boarding school just as easily as finding Christian



MELANIE EDDLEMON

INDIVIDUALIZED EXPERIENCE: Gaby Rivas, 15, is in her first year at Campion Academy. Of the many academy students (and former students) *Adventist Today* interviewed for this story, the girls reported having a more positive experience than the guys did. Many guys said that they enjoyed boarding at academies—but that they wouldn’t send their own kids there.

influences at public school. “I would put [my kids] in public school and work on being a better parent,” Bret says. Though Bret says public school was a mostly positive experience for him, he believes day academies are the best option for Adventist families.

Lake, who also attended both public and boarding schools, says he can understand why some parents choose public school over boarding academy. After all, he says, not all boarding schools are created equal. But he generally encourages children who are raised in a Christian home to find a Christian school.

The holistic philosophy of Adventist education—the training of the mind *and* soul—is something Lake believes in and supports. “If you can compensate for spirituality at a public school, you can compensate for academics in a boarding school,” he says.

Lake encourages parents to evaluate everything: teachers, students, facilities, leadership, policies, environment, and reputation. Parents, he says, should focus on the quality of the academy’s program, not just the Adventist name.

“Schools must be examined on a case-by-case basis,” he says. “One should be idealistic in striving for Adventist education, but realistic in deciding where to attend school. I don’t think parents should send their children to a boarding school just because it’s there. [But] when it works, it’s a superior approach.”

STEVE APPROACHED ME AFTER AN AMERICAN GOVERNMENT CLASS IN WHICH MY STUDENTS AND I HAD DISCUSSED RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AND SABBATH ISSUES.

His uncle, he reported, had joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church not long before. He was a policeman in a small Southern town. The job required some weekend work, but that wouldn't be a

and shaped Adventist culture.

A state of affairs we can feel good about, right? Yes, but with troubling reservations.

We've allowed into our church an inequity of large proportions. We've made assumptions about Sabbath labor, which has led to the burden of Sabbath work issues falling upon certain groups disproportionately, while other favored

Who Should Work

Our current policy seems to place an unfair burden on blue-collar workers.

BY BEN McARTHUR

problem, Steve's uncle assumed, because it was necessary public service. Asking for an exception would inconvenience other workers. God and the church would understand.

But his new church family saw things differently. They insisted he seek accommodation. If necessary, the Seventh-day Adventist Office of General Counsel could be called upon to intervene. It is how we do things in the Adventist Church, he was told. To Steve's regret, his uncle soon left his church home.

New church members often discover at work an early test of faith. Longtime members encounter unexpected Sabbath job problems as well. The problem is common enough that the General Conference retains a legal staff ready to intercede—free of charge to members—on such occasions. Stories of hard-won religious liberty victories have inspired

groups escape almost completely. The latter, not coincidentally, happen to be among the most privileged individuals in the church: medical workers of all types, pastors, and many other institutional workers. On the other hand, the people we read about in church publications who put their jobs on the line are generally blue-collar or hourly workers. A subtle class bias has emerged.

How can it be any other way? Pastors must do their heavy lifting on Sabbath mornings. Our educational institutions require food preparers, desk clerks, and security people seven days a week. And as for medical workers, we have not only the several examples of Christ's Sabbath healings but also his clear admonition that it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:12).

But do we have warrant to restrict Christ's statement about doing good on Sabbath to the above categories? Why are only Adventist institutions or the healing arts worthy of Sabbath exemption? The

traditional Adventist answers are rooted in our nineteenth-century experience. Early Adventists were largely farmers, self-employed artisans, or small businessmen. Our church made limited headway among America's growing industrial working class. In short, during our formative age we were a people largely exempt from Sabbath job requirements. This is not to say that Adventist farmers didn't face temptations to labor through the week during times of harvest. But our membership faced few employer demands for Sabbath work.

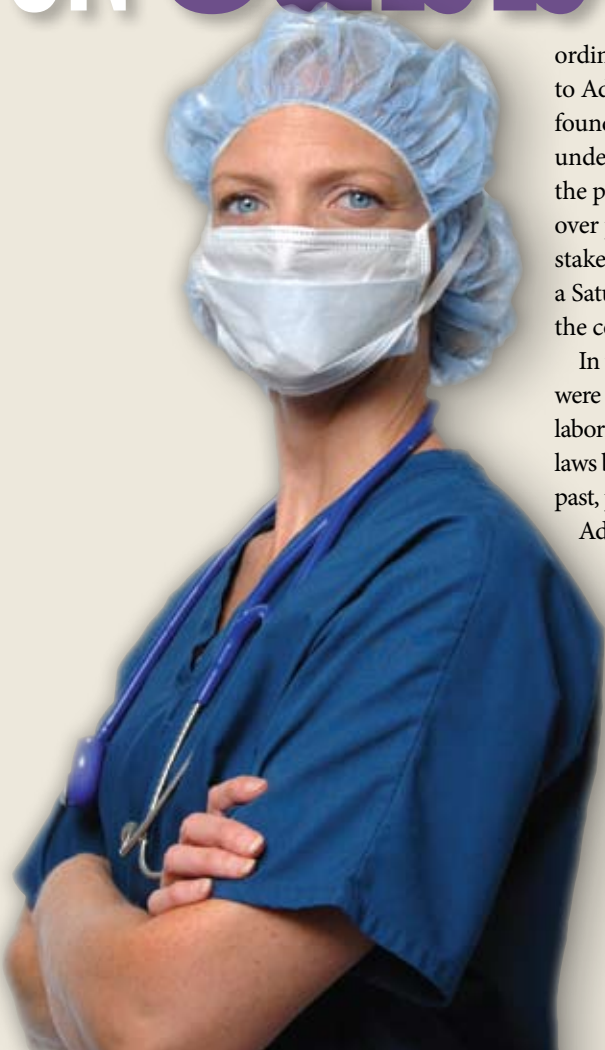
Theologically, our stringent Sabbath requirements are directly tied to our early

eschatology. After Rachel Oakes and Joseph Bates succeeded in persuading other Adventists of the Sabbath truth, the doctrine was embraced as the crucial, final test of loyalty for God's people. Faithful observance of the Sabbath defined one's readiness for translation. No compromise would be brooked.

Complicating our resolve were several proposals in Congress in the late 1880s for Sunday restrictions and statements by a member of the Supreme Court that proclaimed America a Christian nation. Although no national Sunday law appeared, local Sunday



ON Sabbath?



ordinances sometimes proved nettlesome to Adventists. The church responded by founding its religious liberty organization under A.T. Jones's able leadership. More to the point, the heightened national interest over proper Sunday observance raised the stakes for Adventists in their adherence to a Saturday Sabbath. Our sense of witness to the correct Sabbath gained a new urgency.

In these early days, our Sabbath martyrs were those who were jailed or fined for laboring on Sunday. But later, with Sunday laws becoming nearly a thing of the past, problems almost always concerned

Adventists refusing to work on Saturday.

Individuals who put their jobs on the line for sake of Sabbath conscience have become Adventist heroes, often written up in the *Review*, *Liberty*, or union conference papers. We admire these people for their willingness to lay it all on the line, for exhibiting a muscular faith and in a sense, for giving us a vicarious thrill of

persecution. Sometimes the stories have had a happy ending, with jobs restored; in other cases, they have not. Either way, the episodes reinforce our self-image as a people whose devotion to the Sabbath will stand among the final testimonies to God's law.

But we are left with the uncomfortable fact that our church community tends to ask this nobility of people less professionally privileged than many of us. It is true that our Office of General Counsel has intervened in Sabbath accommodations cases for white-collar workers. But it deals much more regularly with workers who have few bargaining chips—those with less education and less ability to negotiate their hours. Particularly affected are workers in transportation and other time-sensitive industries who work on tight schedules. Fire, police, and even hospital work (for those who object to any Sabbath work) are other often-challenging occupations for Sabbatharians.

Secular Employment and Trade as Related to the Sabbath

An excerpt from the Adventist Church's Guidelines for Sabbath Observance

1) STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE.

The Biblical view of the Sabbath includes both a divine and a human dimension (Matt 12:7). From the divine perspective the Sabbath invites the believer to renew his commitment to God by desisting from the daily work in order to worship God more freely and more fully (Ex 20:8-10; 31:15,16; Isa 58:13,14). From the human perspective, the Sabbath summons the believer to celebrate God's creative and redemptive love by showing mercy and concern toward others (Deut 5:12-15; Matt 12:12; Luke 13:12; John 5:17). Thus the Sabbath encompasses both cessation from secular work for the purpose of honoring God and performing deeds of love and kindness toward fellow beings.

2) ESSENTIAL AND EMERGENCY WORK.

In order to uphold the sanctity of the Sabbath, Seventh-day Adventists must make wise choices in matters of employment, guided by a conscience enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Experience has shown that there are hazards in choosing vocations that will not allow them to worship their Creator on the Sabbath day free from involvement in secular labor. This means that they will avoid types of employment which, although essential for the function of a technologically advanced society, may offer problems in Sabbath observance.

The Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy are explicit about our duties as Christians to our fellowman, even on the Sabbath day. In the modern context, many employed in occupations involved with the saving of life and property are called upon to deal with emergencies. Arranging for regular weekend work requiring the use of the Sabbath hours for gainful emergency employment or accepting work only on weekends in emergency occupations to augment the family budget is out of harmony with Sabbath-keeping principles given by Christ. Responding to emergency situations where life and safety are at stake is quite different from earning one's livelihood by routinely engaging in such occupations on the Sabbath that are often accompanied by commercial, secular, or routine activities. (See Christ's comments on rescuing oxen or sheep from ditches and helping people in need. Matt 12:11; Luke 13:16.) Absenting one's self from God's house and being denied fellowship with

the believers on the Sabbath can have a chilling effect on one's spiritual life.

Many employers in so-called essential service areas willingly make accommodations for Sabbath keepers. Where such is not granted, members should review carefully Biblical principles of Sabbath keeping and in that light examine the type of activity, environment, requirements of the job, and personal motives before committing themselves to working on the Sabbath. They should ask of the Lord as did Paul on the Damascus road, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" When this attitude of faith prevails, we are persuaded that the Lord will lead the believer to discern His will and supply strength and wisdom to follow it.

3) MORAL DECISION REGARDING SABBATH OBSERVANCE.

Sabbath privileges are sometimes curtailed or denied by military, educational, political, or other organizations. To prevent and/or alleviate these regrettable situations, the following suggestions should be considered:

A competent church official, preferably the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director, should be appointed to keep abreast of developments that could undermine freedom of worship on the Sabbath. When necessary, this official will approach responsible authorities to intercede when an adverse impact upon Seventh-day Adventists is present in any contemplated measure or legislation. This course of action may prevent enactment of laws that could curtail or deny Sabbath privileges.

Adventist members should be encouraged to stand by faith for the principle of Sabbath keeping regardless of circumstances, resting in the assurance that God will honor their commitment to Him.

Church members should offer spiritual, moral, and, if needed, temporal help to other members experiencing Sabbath problems. Such support will serve to strengthen the commitment to the Lord not only of the individual member facing Sabbath problems but also of the church as a whole.

One might be tempted to conclude that, well, there will never be fairness in life. Those in at-risk jobs will simply need to plead their cause with the boss or seek help from the church. Lacking that, they may need to find different work or a different church.

But must it come to that? How might we rethink the issue?

We would begin by reaffirming the Sabbath. It's not the pillar of our faith, but it is certainly our primary distinctive. God established it, and we observe it. We uphold the Sabbath not as a means of pleasing God or earning merit, but because we honor his request and rejoice in the rest it affords.

Second, we would acknowledge that in an imperfect world, Sabbath observance will remain imperfect. The Adventist Church makes necessary Sabbath work demands on some of its workers. Further, we would acknowledge that we've unconsciously created a hierarchy of jobs that grant an exemption to broad categories of favored workers while informally expecting others to endure conflict. We would also admit that none of us can know the heart of another in these very personal decisions.

In sum, the Adventist Church, while not altering its doctrinal stance, should seek to foster a less prescriptive definition of Sabbath keeping. It should acknowledge that a number of service occupations are essential for society, that Adventist workers may not be able to avoid assignment every Sabbath, and that every such demand upon them should not mean they must resign, be fired, or seek assistance from the General Conference.

This will require some new flexibility on our part. The General Conference's Guidelines for Sabbath Observance (found at the GC website: http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/other_documents/other_doc6.html) is thoughtful and well stated. It avoids highly prescriptive directives even as it reinforces our traditional position on avoiding Sabbath work. It quite nicely describes the blessings of a hallowed Sabbath. But underlying it is the unspoken

yet unmistakable Adventist penchant for viewing the Sabbath as an obligation. If we reflect on our collective self with complete candor, we must acknowledge the works orientation that has too often shaped our approach to the Sabbath. Conversely, the entire thrust of Christ's teaching of the Sabbath was against manmade restrictions. Nowhere in the Gospels or in Paul's letters do we find admonition to avoid all Sabbath work.

What I'm suggesting here is indeed a difficult thing. Bright lines of behavior are

simpler. But as it now stands, our Sabbath teaching is unfair to some and has little societal impact. Our difficulties with the issue partly reflect a tension embedded in scripture. The Old Testament seems to require prescribed obedience, while the New seeks principles of action. Finding a balance is our challenge. Without undermining one of our church's defining features or taking away the opportunity for faith-building sacrifice, we must also cease conveying to all of our non-institutional, non-health-related workers

that Sabbath labor is an unvarying violation of God's commands. The degree to which we accomplish this is the degree to which we can proclaim, "the Sabbath was made for man."

Ben McArthur teaches American history at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee. For a biography about A.G. Daniells, he's currently soliciting information about letters or other documents from his life. Email bmcarthr@southern.edu

No Work? No Play?

The Adventist view of Sabbath draws from both Jews and Puritans.

By Angela Baerg

The Adventist view of Sabbath combines a Jewish and Puritan heritage, says an Old Testament scholar.

Donn Leatherman, professor of Old Testament and Biblical Languages at Southern Adventist University, says the Adventist understanding of the Sabbath had its immediate roots in the Puritan mentality. For the Puritans, who trekked across the Atlantic and into North America starting in the early 1600s, deprivation and self-restraint were counted as reverence. They had seen Isaiah 58's command to reject their own pleasure on the Sabbath day (Sunday in their eyes), and they were determined to do their best to honor God, even if it meant that one-seventh of their week was spent in sanctified misery.

Puritan Sabbath keepers barred themselves from any activities that smacked of play, such as whistling, laughing, or smiling. According to Alice Earle's *The Sabbath in Puritan New England*, any conduct even slightly tainted with sexual attraction was also condemned. Two lovers, for example, came under harsh community criticism when they were caught "[sitting] together on the Lord's day under an apple tree." Another man received two hours in the stocks when he was caught kissing his wife in public (that is, on his front step) after returning home from an absence of three years.

Many North American churches inherited Puritan Sabbath traditions—among them the Baptists, the Congregationalists, and the Seventh-day Adventists. Although the Adventist Church adopted many reforms, transforming the way the Sabbath day was kept was not at the top of the agenda. "We figured out the right day, but we didn't make any other changes," observes Leatherman.

Jewish Roots Embraced, Ignored

In reinstating the seventh-day Sabbath, Adventists were cooking up a very Jewish tradition; unfortunately, they seasoned it with Puritan leanings rather than Jewish ones. "Unlike the Puritans, the Jews actually put quite a bit of emphasis on having a good time on Sabbath," Leatherman says.

It was true that the Jews had strict regulations limiting what work they could do on Sabbath—including writing, weaving, hunting, and building/extinguishing fires. In the realm of fun, though, they had free rein. "They did not have any restrictions on play," Leatherman explains. "Something like tossing a ball around in your yard couldn't be challenged because it wasn't work."

On the contrary, joyful work-free activities like eating a large meal (prepared the day before, of course) and spending time in lively fellowship were encouraged. As far as sex was concerned, the Jewish understanding could not have been more different from that of the Puritans. According to the book *Heavenly Sex: Sexuality in the Jewish Tradition*, by Dr. Ruth K. Westheimer and Jonathan Mark, not only did the Jews sanction marital Sabbath smooching, but for them Sabbath intercourse within marriage was almost a given.

A Muddy Inheritance

There's no denying that today's church has a greater emphasis on enjoying the Sabbath than did that of our founding fathers. But Leatherman feels it would be false to argue that our church has thoughtfully navigated away from Puritan solemnity and toward Jewish joy. "The change has been gradual," he says. "Some of it has been in the right direction, but the problem is that it has not been intentional and deliberate."

He believes that North American Sunday-keeping churches were the first to hearken in the acceptability of joy in the Sabbath day. While that was a good development in itself, it fell short in failing to



clarify that things that brought men joy on Sabbath should also bring pleasure to God. "Because people became less religious, they became less observant of Sunday," Leatherman says. "Now you might say that the Sunday observance practices of 150 years ago weren't very good, but the reasons why they've changed aren't because Sunday keepers have studied this out and said, 'Hey, God wants us to have a good time on this day and change what we're doing.' Instead, the shift has been largely spurred by secularism, commercialism, and materialism."

As much as he would like to say that Adventists have gained a more comprehensive understanding of what constitutes proper Sabbath pleasure by taking a more thoughtful route, Leatherman doesn't believe that they have. Instead, he believes that just as they emulated Puritan Sabbath mistakes, Seventh-day Adventists today continue to play follow the leader. "Our change hasn't been intentional and deliberate either," Leatherman says. "We have simply drifted along with what other people were doing and into the culture that surrounds us."

"We should talk it over collectively," he suggests. "We should think collectively about how Sabbath observance is changing."

AFTER MEETING WITH SOME OF THE MOST PROMINENT LEADERS OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, JOHN HARVEY KELLOGG WALKED OFF TO HIS OFFICE AND BEGAN PILING ROCKS, ONE ON TOP OF THE OTHER, IN THE CORNER OF ROOM.¹

While the director of the Battle Creek Sanitarium busied himself with the rocks, a young man entered his office and asked, “What are all of those rocks for?”

Seventh-day Adventist Church, in the years after the Civil War piling up rocks in their offices, came from the mind of Ellen G. White. One evening in 1880 she had a dream in which she saw her husband, James, and the young Kellogg as bitter enemies. Like a nightmare, these images awakened and disturbed her.

Even though John Harvey Kellogg and James White never built the rock pyramids Ellen saw in her dream, this was not a

Why ELLEN WHITE and LEA

Kellogg turned and answered: “These are the mistakes of Elder James White. I am going to stone him with them, stone him to death.”

The young man tried to reason with Kellogg, but the director of the Battle Creek Sanitarium continued—determined and defiant—to gather the rocks. He added, “Elder White is trying to tear us to pieces. He is working against us, and to save our reputation and life, we must work against him. I shall use every stone, to the last pebble, here upon this floor to kill him. This is only self-defense, a disagreeable necessity.”

After that encounter, the young man walked into a nearby office and found James White also piling rocks in a corner of the room. The young man asked, “What are you doing?”

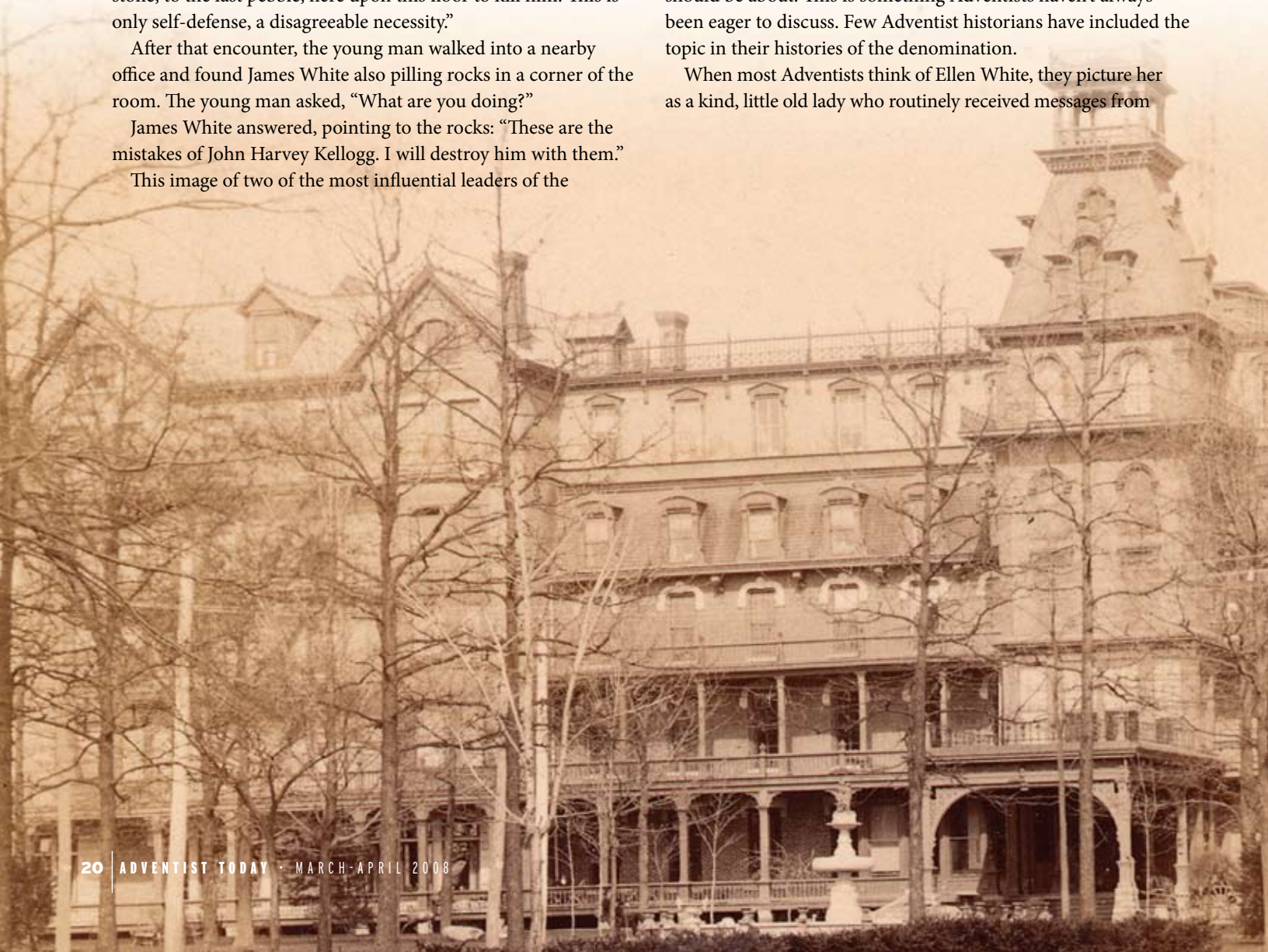
James White answered, pointing to the rocks: “These are the mistakes of John Harvey Kellogg. I will destroy him with them.”

This image of two of the most influential leaders of the

pretty picture. Here were two of the most powerful figures in the Adventist Church, working so unyieldingly in the interest of their organizations that they began plotting to destroy each other.

The dream not only points to the state of mind of Ellen White a short time before her husband passed away, but it also indicates a rift emerging between her and the leaders of the church. It is the struggle between two vastly different visions of what the church should be about. This is something Adventists haven’t always been eager to discuss. Few Adventist historians have included the topic in their histories of the denomination.

When most Adventists think of Ellen White, they picture her as a kind, little old lady who routinely received messages from



God and passed them on to the General Conference. Many stories are repeated in Adventist literature that depict church leaders in situations where they were unsure what to do, until they got a letter from or spoke to Ellen White. She has been painted as the person who led the Seventh-day Adventist Church through many major decisions. And the leaders of the church have been characterized as persons eager to hear from her and obey her every word.

in the 1850s.² However, in the summer of 1874 the couple had a parting of the ways. James White remained in California, where the family had their residence, while Ellen White got on the traditional camp-meeting trail alone. Tension between the couple appeared in a letter written to James the 21st of June:

“I feel sorry for you and feel deep sympathy for you and your affliction. I mean to help you in what I can, but don’t let the enemy

LEADERSHIP *didn't* GET ALONG

The crevasse over how to best reach the world **BY CIRO SEPULVEDA**

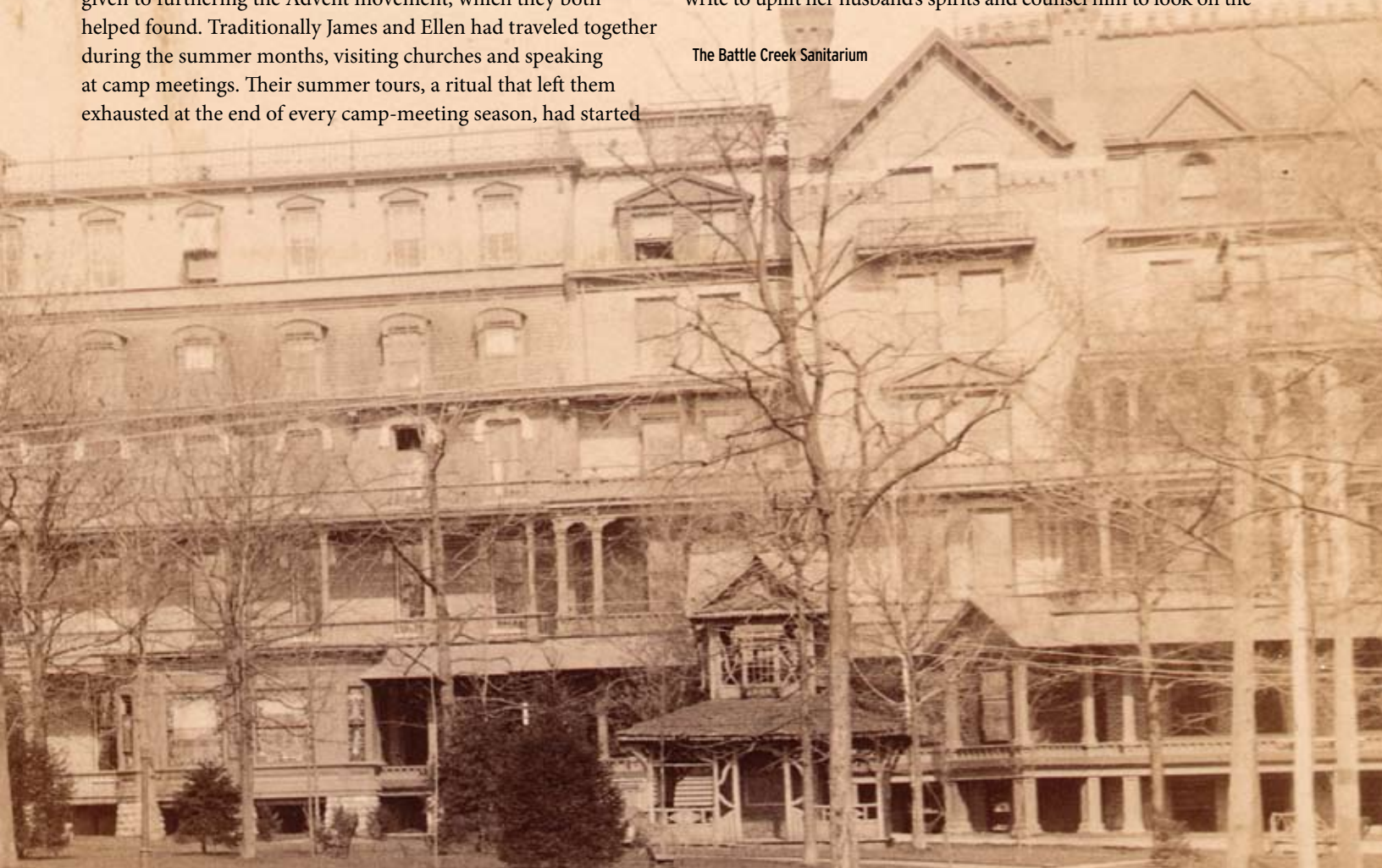
In fact, however, a more complete history of the Adventist past reveals that the apparent harmony between the leadership of the church and Ellen White was not as sweet as commonly painted. Often the two were diametrically in opposition on important matters. And there were many instances when her requests were ignored or pushed aside. The tension between two value systems that sought to shape the Seventh-day Adventist Church became apparent only a few years after it was founded, and a power struggle persisted until Ellen White died in 1915.

The rift in question became obvious in the marriage of James and Ellen White in the summer of 1874. Their lives had been given to furthering the Advent movement, which they both helped found. Traditionally James and Ellen had traveled together during the summer months, visiting churches and speaking at camp meetings. Their summer tours, a ritual that left them exhausted at the end of every camp-meeting season, had started

make you think only of my deficiencies which are, you think, so apparent, for in trying to fix me over, you may destroy my usefulness, my freedom and bring me into a position of restraint, or embarrassment, that will unfit me for the work of God.”³

During that summer Ellen was trying to write to James every day. Most of the letters were very cordial, but once in a while they would touch on the friction that had surfaced in their marriage. She had been feeling depressed and saddened because of this situation. She wanted on the one hand to be loyal to her husband because she loved him deeply, but on the other hand she felt bound to the agenda she felt God had given her. She would constantly write to uplift her husband’s spirits and counsel him to look on the

The Battle Creek Sanitarium



bright side of life. But she had taken a firm position that she would not be dependent on his points of view. In July she wrote:

"I do not forget you. I feel deeply sorry that you have things in your mind just as they are in regard to me. I can say I know you view things in a perverted light..." and added, "I long for perfect union, but I cannot purchase it at the expense of my conscience."⁴

On the other side of the relationship, James White was equally set on his views. He had the task of leading the Adventist Church and was confident that his points of view were correct. As president of the General Conference, he did not always agree with many of the positions Ellen took. One gets a glimpse of this in a letter he wrote to his son Willie on July 5, 1874. In the letter, he asks his son to take good care of his mother and then adds at the end of the letter, "do not consent to her economical ideas, leading you to pinch along."⁵

At times James could get very irritated with Ellen. The following letter, written in May of 1876, illustrates:

"I shall use the good old head God gave me until He reveals that I am wrong. Your head won't fit my shoulders. Keep it where it belongs, and I will try to honor God in using my own. I shall be glad to hear from you, but don't waste your precious time and strength in lecturing me on matters of mere opinion."⁶

Many of the problems that James and Ellen White encountered stemmed from their opinions on how the Adventist Church should be run. In a letter to D.M. Canright, who had been trained for the ministry by James White, written a few months before his death, James expressed strong reservations about the influence George I. Butler and Stephen N. Haskell were having on his wife. He stated that these men had influenced her to a point that "has nearly ruined her."⁷

Disagreements between the Whites were not the differences of opinion that are common in most family quarrels, rising out of issues related to child rearing or the family budget. The White home had an added burden placed on it, which stemmed from the roles Ellen and James played in the development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Frequently these differences mirrored the kind of tension that flowered between the Old Testament prophets and the leaders of the Jewish nation. That tension, which can clearly be documented between James and Ellen White before his death, continued to flourish after Ellen became a widow.

As the Adventist Church grew, institutions to facilitate its work surfaced and prospered. The Battle Creek Sanitarium became a prominent health care facility in Michigan. Battle Creek College attracted students from all over the world. By 1881, the *Review and Herald* Publishing Association employed more than 70 workers in Battle Creek. And the General Conference was busy trying to resolve problems that emerged in the many conferences sprouting into existence.

On the surface, all appeared to be well in the Adventist community. But Ellen White was not content, nor did she wholly approve of what she saw. For several years she had been trying to get her husband to leave Battle Creek. She did not believe that the concentration of Adventist institutions in one locality was in the best interest of the church. Consequently James, at the persistent

pleading of Ellen, planned to purchase a home in Colorado. There, they reasoned, they would have more time to write and do things important rather than pressing. The intense schedules forced on them in Battle Creek kept them from important matters and in the process destroyed James's health.⁸

James White was not as confident as Ellen that leaving Battle Creek was the best solution. One afternoon in the summer of 1881, as James and Ellen spoke in the privacy of their home, James tearfully stated: "I have given my life to build these institutions. Leaving them feels like dying. They are like my children. I cannot separate my interest from them. These institutions are the instrument of God to do His work."⁹

A few weeks after this conversation, James White passed away and Ellen became a widow.

After the funeral, the rift between Ellen White and the leaders of the Adventist Church continued to widen. President George I. Butler, who continued in the General Conference after James White's death, constantly had to change his ways and alter decisions because he ran contrary to the desires of Ellen White. In 1888 she wrote that Elder Butler had been in office too long and thought that because he was the president of the General Conference, "his voice is infallible."¹⁰ All of the General Conference presidents, until her death, had to face her censure at one time or another.

Even years after his term as General Conference president, pioneer missionary John N. Andrews also felt the sting of Ellen White's pen. In a letter written to him just a few months before he died, she accused him of having an inflated ego, wanting to do everything himself, needing everyone's approval before acting, surrounding himself with yes men, permitting himself to wallow in puddles of tears, living in a fantasy world, cultivating bad friendships, being an overpowering father, spending too much time thinking about doing great things, reproducing problems, and stunting the work of fellow workers. She was relentless in her condemnation of his style of work, leadership methods, and habits of thought.¹¹

Ellen White's continued confrontation with the leadership had become so distressing that in 1891 the leaders of the church pressured her to move to Australia.¹² Through Willie, her youngest son who was also secretary of the G.C. Committee, the General Conference leadership convinced her that she should move there to help the Australians start a college. Although she did not want to go, Willie was able to get her to say yes. But the fact that Ellen White was exiled to Australia for nine years did not diminish her impulse to confront the leaders of the General Conference, even though it was through letters that took weeks to arrive at their destination.

A letter to G.A. Irwin in 1900 clearly illustrates her continued effort to challenge the actions of the leaders of the Adventist Church. In 1899 through articles in the *Review and Herald*, she solicited funds for the work of the church in the Southern States; a little more than \$14,000 was collected. However, once in hand, the General Conference diverted the money to Pacific Press to pay off some of its bills. As president of the General Conference, Irwin felt that the needs were greater and more pressing elsewhere. When Ellen White found out about the actions taken by the General Conference, she sat down and penned the following words:

“Again I will tell you frankly that there is no use in my continually writing to the brethren in responsible position in Battle Creek... In reference to your position, you have not done that which the president of the General Conference should do to set this matter in order, and God will not remove His censure from the conference until clean work is made and everything has been done that can be done to make full restitution. ... God is dishonored and the work has languished for years because of selfishness and robbery of the Southern field... and you do not act in this matter, considering all the light given, as the position you occupy demands you should act... In humility and armed with the spirit of God you should long ago have set things in order, for there were those who would have worked with you.”¹³

In 1909 she went after the Adventist leaders because they would not utilize the funds and resources of the church to advance the cause of city missions in the large cities of the nation. She believed that the immigrant and poor communities of the United States needed to be warned. She also felt that church administrators were spending too much time administrating and very little time proclaiming the gospel.

When General Conference President A.G. Daniells traveled to her home in St. Helena in 1910 to tell her that he had set up a committee that would study the work of the Adventist Church in the cities, she was not impressed. In fact, she would not even see him. Daniells stood at the door of the house and was told that Ellen White would not talk to him till he began to work the cities.¹⁴

Why was Ellen White so often at odds with the leaders of the church? Was she a contrarian by nature? Were the Adventist leaders ungodly men?

The heart of the problem grew out of the agendas that each side of the rift embraced. On the one side, as soon as the church leaders were elected to their positions, they often became consumed with the task of building and maintaining institutions. They felt that being good stewards meant they could not lose control of the institutions or let them fall into ineffectiveness. To accomplish this goal, leaders needed money, influence, alliances, and resources. But inherent in the desire to accumulate these things was a preoccupation with image, public opinion, order, and control.

As church leaders became more and more capable and resourceful in managing the agenda set before them, their values and behavior changed. Institutions that had been entrusted to the man in charge of them were beginning to mold his behavior.

Ellen White watched such transformations take place in her husband and in other administrators of the Adventist Church, and she did not like what she saw. The agenda of church leadership persistently clashed with the agenda that Ellen White nurtured throughout her life. Her passion to help and to educate the poor and the oppressed fueled a desire to establish city missions, small sanitariums, one-room schoolhouses, bakeries, and vegetarian restaurants in all parts of the nation and the world.

Many of the clashes Ellen White had with Adventist leadership were over how the funds of the church were being spent. For example, she did not envision one large and powerful sanitarium, but rather hundreds of small clinics and dispensaries scattered all

over the world. She was not impressed with powerful publishing empires, but instead favored small printing houses that could make inexpensive booklets and documents the poor could buy. She did not want one Oakwood College, but rather dozens of training schools for African-Americans.

Ellen White wanted small schools—missionary schools—that would train people to serve. She was never impressed with Battle Creek College and asked the leaders of the General Conference not to send anyone trained at Battle Creek College to the college she was helping to found in Australia. When she dedicated her time and energy to purchase the Loma Linda property, Ellen White was envisioning a well-run school, with the latest equipment and knowledge, to train medical doctors that would dedicate their lives to the service of the poor and those in need.

As Ellen White increased in age and decreased in strength, she tried to infuse the agenda she held dearly into the decision-making process. She had some victories; however, they became fewer and fewer with the passage of time. In the end, she could only sit and watch as what she considered the real work of the church was sacrificed in the name of institution building.

Ciro Sepulveda is chair of the History Department at Oakwood University in Huntsville, Ala., and is past president of the Association of Seventh-day Adventist Historians.

¹The details from this dream come from Manuscript 2 1880, quoted in Arthur L. White, *Ellen White: The Lonely Years 1876-1891* Vol. III, Washington D.C.: 1984, pp. 161-163. The dream took place sometime in 1880. James White died in the fall of 1881. James White had been the undisputed leader of the Seventh-day Adventist Church since its official organization in 1863. He had declined the presidency when the church elected its first president, but that action only enhanced his authority. Probably the only reason he did not continue as president term after term, till the day of his death, was due to an illness that left him paralyzed and unable to work for several years. John Harvey Kellogg was 12 years of age when he started working as an office boy in the Review and Herald Publishing House under the mentorship of James White. John Harvey Kellogg also lived in the White home in his adolescent years. The Whites, both Ellen and James, admired his talents and diligence and had helped to finance his education while he was in medical school. His natural ability led him to be an editor of the *Health Reformer* at a very young age, and later he became the director of the sanitarium.

²To get a sense of the camp-meeting tour that the Whites joined every summer, look at the summer issues of the *Review and Herald* starting in the 1850s. At the beginning of the summer, the list of camp meetings and the dates were usually published. In the last pages of the *Review and Herald*, you will also find reports of what happened at the camp meetings and usually someone mentioning the visit of James and Ellen White.

³Ellen G. White. Letter 34, 1874.

⁴Ellen G. White. Letter 40, 1874.

⁵James White. Letter to Willie White, July 5, 1874.

⁶James White. Letter 66, 1876.

⁷James White. Letter to D.M. Canright, May 24, 1881.

⁸Ciro Sepulveda. *Ellen White: Troubles and Triumphs of an American Prophet*. Huntsville, Ala.: Oakwood College Press, 2002, 149-154.

⁹Manuscript 6, 1881.

¹⁰Ellen White to MW, November 4, 1888.

¹¹Ellen G. White. Letter to J.N. Andrews, 1883.

¹²The General Conference minutes of August 7, 1891, record that Ellen White was brought into the meeting for a special session to see if she was going to go to Australia. When she expressed that it was very unlikely, the idea of writing for all of the Adventist publications was suggested and she was offered a stenographer who would go to Australia with her to help her put together her writings.

¹³Ellen G. White. Letter to G.A. Irwin. Letter E-170-1900.

¹⁴See the chapter on Ellen White and the Cities in *Ciro Sepulveda, Ellen White: The Trial and Triumphs of an American Prophet*. Huntsville, Ala.: Oakwood College Press, 2002.

IT'S CALLED A FREE THROW FOR A REASON: It's a free shot—just you and the basket. As the game ended, I was fouled and sent to the line with three opportunities to break the tie. I had no doubt I would make at least one.

"Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!" The crowd clamored when my first attempt missed. Quickly, doubt crept in. The noise was deafening when my second attempt had the same outcome. Fear replaced doubt as I realized I was only one (unsuccessful) shot away from letting down my team. It never had a chance. That night I tossed and turned, restless and embarrassed. *That is all people will ever remember me for.* My legacy was sealed.

Angry and frustrated, I berated my brother who sat quietly in the passenger's seat.

"I told you 1 o'clock, and when did you show up? 1:20! Now we're going to be late, and my date with Jenny is going to be pushed back. Because of you, I'm going to have to make her wait!"

My brother sat silent and solemn. Only after I calmed down did he give his explanation: He had picked up his roommate, who had unexpectedly gotten a flat tire. Now I was silent.

I hadn't noticed it. Heat, thirst, and hunger were the only things on my mind.

"Hey Alex, you're bleeding...there on

Where could it be? My room was in shambles. I had investigated every inch of carpet and furniture. My new iPod had been missing for two days, and not finding it would mean I had wasted \$400! My patience was short and my temper quick. People noticed a difference. "What's wrong?" they'd ask.

I was never denied a meal, a shower, or a roof over my head, but if you had pointed this out, I would have retorted, "What's that got to do with anything?!"

The landscape's beauty awed me as I walked through the village of Moroba. Church had just finished, and one of the elders asked for volunteers to walk through

★ AMERICAN GUY ★ *Gets Perspective* By Alex King

BRITNI BRANNON



Nothing can prepare you for your first time in a Third-World country. Our 10-passenger riverboat sped down one of Guyana's waterways. The whiskey-brown water seemed anything but inviting. I wondered if there was an SPF strong enough to duel with the intense force beating down on my back. My attention was quickly captivated by small huts, all with similar features: battered walls, caved-in roofs, and a laundry line holding dirty clothes that would cause the Madonnas of our world to faint. Children constantly poured from each house, offering waves and smiles. Their battle for survival was great; their hope and jovial spirit was greater.

Screeching around a sharp bend in the road, my Honda sped with a feral rage usually accompanied by ambulances.

"Hello, Pro Shop? Can I push my tee time back 20 minutes? . . . Oh, you're really busy? . . . I understand. Okay, no, no. . . . I'll be there in a few minutes."

your left hand."

Roal, a resident of Bethany village, was the first to notice the blood and point it out. "Better take care of that. Don't want it to get infected."

Roal was right. It was many hours to the nearest hospital.

By the third day of our mission trip in Guyana, I was getting used to working with locals while building a girls' dormitory for Bethany Missionary College.

Roal was short, noticeably short. His frame was solid but not bulky. His eyes showed experience, local wisdom, and, most importantly, peace. Roal had six children. He walked 45 minutes to work every day in worn-out sandals. His yearly income amounted to less than \$10,000, though he worked 40 hours a week doing physical labor.

"Hey Roal, pass me the drill, would you? I wanna finish these last couple of floorboards before lunch."

"Sure thing, boss."

the village and pray with the locals. At each hut, we talked with the family and prayed for God's guidance. After an hour and a half, the elder told us we had only one left. The hut itself was no different than the previous ones. Three small children played tag while another boy just watched from the porch.

"Happy Sabbath. How are you?"

He smiled and nodded his head but didn't speak.

"Pretty hot out here, isn't it?"

Still no response. I was about to give up when the elder joined us.

"He was born mute," he explained. "But since you've introduced yourself, let's pray with him."

I don't recall a word of the prayer I offered, but I do remember the smile of approval he gave when we opened our eyes and said goodbye. I've never seen a more beautiful one—a smile of unadulterated happiness. My intentions had been to help him, but I walked away helped.



A Brief Moment When God's People Actually Had Their Act Together

By Alden Thompson

On October 24-27, 2007, an amazing event took place at Andrews University: the Questions on Doctrine Conference, where a picture was taken of three Adventists standing side-by-side at a communion table: Angel Rodriguez, head of the General Conference Biblical Research Institute; Adventist historian George Knight; and Colin Standish, president of Hartland Institute, an independent Adventist organization noted for its sharp critique of the organized church.

For two reasons that picture is amazing: First, that these men were side-by-side at all; second, that they were standing together at a communion table.

Organized by three young scholars, Julius Nam, Jerry Moon, and Michael Campbell, the conference marked the 50th anniversary of the 1957 book *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*, the culmination of conversations between leading Adventists and prominent Evangelicals in America. The Adventists were eager to identify more fully with the Evangelical understanding of the nature of Christ and his saving work. But that meant taking a fresh look at our history, not a happy task for some.

The event raises crucial questions: Can our understanding of “truth” and of the Bible change? Is there more than one way of looking at “truth”? How should we relate to the surrounding culture? On what basis can we work with those we once opposed?

Three points, each deserving fuller treatment—but this isn’t a book; it’s *Adventist Today*.

First, we have solid grounds for shifting our emphasis from confrontation to cooperation, preserving confrontation as an option when needed. Jesus points the way. While claiming the Old Testament God as his own, indeed claiming to be the Old Testament God, Jesus nevertheless demonstrated that when God took human flesh he dramatically shifted away from the violent confrontational methods that mark so much of

God’s activity in the Old Testament. Jesus never killed anyone, never struck anyone. He could get angry, but his anger was against evil; and when he attacked evil, the children and the weak came running to him. Check out Jesus’ cleansing of the temple in Matthew 21:12-16. It’s amazing.

Second, a positive approach inspires hope and courage in people who might otherwise sink into oblivion. “Neither do I condemn you,” Jesus told the adulteress. “Go and sin no more.”

In Adventist history, Ellen White could urge a brother heading to Africa to speak with other Christians on “points of doctrine on which you can agree.” To the contentious A.T. Jones she declared: “The Lord wants His people to follow other methods than that of condemning wrong, even though the condemnation be just.” Treat every person as “honest,” she urged. “Speak no word, do no deed, that will confirm any in unbelief.”¹

Once, after I had shared that last quote in class, a student wrote me a note at the end of the term. “My sister and I were on the outs,” she said. “But now we’re the best of buddies just because I decided to treat her as honest. Thank you for the quote.”

My final point is that an opportunity like that provided by the QoD conference is rare. Such moments usually last no more than a few minutes. The quarreling of Acts 5 too easily overwhelms the Pentecostal beauty of Acts 2. We must work quickly while the window is open. Adventists who have used strong language against the church and against all efforts to work with Evangelicals have become friends with their opponents. “New friends,” said one, “even one whose paper appalled me.” “Excellent fellowship with evangelical presenters,” he commented.

That’s the kind of stuff of which the kingdom is made. And it happened because some young Adventist scholars decided that we really should treat each other as honest.

¹*Gospel Workers*, 119-120; 6T 121-22.

**On what basis
can we work with
those we once
opposed?**

7 QUESTIONS for...Ed Dickerson

By Marcel Schwantes



Grounds for Belief author Ed Dickerson has worked with young people since age 19, teaching at every level from grade school to grad school—both in the United States and abroad. His writing and speaking are peppered with

references to science, psychology, literature, movies—even pop culture. He is the creator of Grounds for Belief Café, an outreach idea that took shape during his first church plant years ago and continues to grow through his online ministry. Anyone interested in getting involved can contact Pastor Dickerson at pastored@groundsforbelief.com.

You've immersed yourself in the ethos of postmodern and secular young adults to research and write this book. What has surprised you the most about their faith and how they view the world?

The single most surprising thing to me is how eager they are to believe, how hungry they are for the truth—if only we present them with a faith they can believe in, in language that makes sense to them. Oh, yes. And no pious posturing. They spot hypocrisy in two minutes, and then they're gone. God bless 'em. I wish more of us were like that.

Do the book's young characters exist, or are they purely fictional?

In a strict sense, the book is fiction, since no one named David did all of those things at our café. In another sense it's true, because it mirrors real people in real relationships. Every one of the young characters is based on a real person.

Like the apostle Paul, you have a way of speaking or writing "present truth in the present tense," as you put it, to your

target audience. What are the challenges in expressing the gospel in their language?

When I see a movie or a TV show, or read a modern novel, I am always asking myself, *What is the underlying message here? What does the audience see?* How does this relate to eternal truth? So I'm always looking for things in the popular culture that express these eternal truths. And I keep going back to the Word, studying it, reading about the culture in which it was written, and seeing how God does it. Because God was always reaching the people in language they understood. When we realize that and see how he does it, it literally inspires our own efforts.

You have received an overwhelming response to this book. Can you share some of the praises and criticisms?

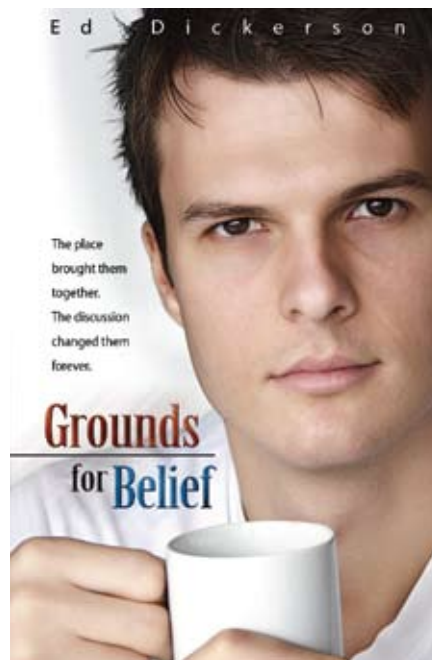
So far the critics haven't written or spoken to me. I'm guessing the cover and the title have kept them away. Like one fellow who wasn't sure if he should display my book until he knew what was in the cup.

Tell us about your plans to actually turn the book's theme into a reality. Will we see future GfB cafés spring up across the country? What will it take to make this a reality?

Several pastors and lay people have inquired about starting a Grounds for Belief Café in their areas. The first thing that's necessary for establishing a successful café is identifying and preparing mentors. As I said earlier, young people desperately want mentors who will share without preaching, advise without judging. So we're preparing training materials for mentors.

Do you intend for GfB cafés to replace "church"?

No, absolutely not. Grounds for Belief Café is primarily aimed at *retention*. It was Florida Conference President Michael Cauley who said at his 2006 camp meeting that "after students graduate,



there's only a 50 percent chance we'll ever see them again." And that's describing young people who attend our schools in the first place! Something like three out of four of our young adults leave the church. We can't afford to keep hemorrhaging talent like that. Imagine if we could keep three out of four instead of losing them.

What's the greatest obstacle to reaching Generations X&Y?

Many Adventists have been so concerned with the soon coming of Jesus that they treated the Advent Movement as if it was a sprint to the finish—hurry, hurry, hurry. Others have treated it as a marathon—keep going, keep going, keep going. We have failed to see it as a multigenerational relay. And relay teams practice passing the baton more than any other part of the race, because it is impossible to finish the race if you fail to pass the baton.

You Can Do It

Up to a Challenge That Will Reinvigorate Your Life?

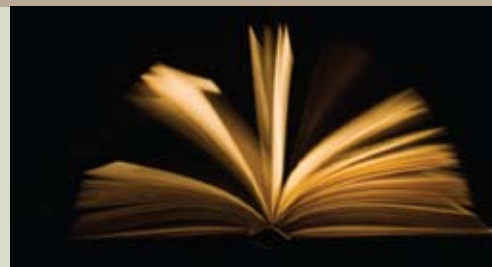
On our website in January, we invited Adventist author Gary Krause to share his custom of reading through the entire Bible—in a month.

It's an ambitious task that might seem daunting at first: 40 to 60 pages of reading a day (for most Bibles). But the rewards are great as you fly over the windswept mountaintops of Scripture and

witness the unfolding plan of salvation: the heart-breaking failures of a chosen people . . . and the desperate need for a Messiah.

During this Easter season we invite you to take the challenge. And share your personal experiences with us at atoday@atoday.com

—Adventist Today Editors



Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes

Heard or read a memorable statement from an Adventist? Got one yourself? Email it to "Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes" at atoday@atoday.com.

It is true that a growing church, with more new people coming on board than the number being lost out the back door, is simply more exciting for people. It generates feelings of success and momentum. But the real issue is with the individual. Is she serious about following Jesus? If one is serious about following Jesus, this means making long-term commitments to key relationships.

The thing that I am most concerned about is a dilettante style of religion where people spend a short time in a group and then, when the shine wears off, they try some other group. Or their Christian fellowship is so secondary to their career or travel interests that it is always being disrupted because they are moving to a new job, taking months off at a time for various projects or interests.

This is one of the reasons why so many sincere contemporary Christians never really gain a mature faith. They don't experience the connection between faith and community.

—**Monte Sahlin**, director of research and special projects, Ohio Conference, in a *Bloggerpotluck* discussion

It is found in Revelation 2:17. "And I will give to each one a white stone, and on the stone will be engraved a new name that no one understands except the one who receives it" (NLT).

Imagine sitting next to Christ up in heaven. You have just arrived. . . . It is a private meeting, just you and him. He reaches into the pocket of his big, white robe and pulls out your glistening white stone and holds it in front of you. You can't see the inscription yet. It is on the other side of the stone, pressed against Jesus' palm.

"Are you ready?" he asks you.

"Yes!" you blurt uncontrollably.

"All right," he says and slowly turns it over in his hand, revealing your new name. It is a secret name that only he will call you for all eternity. It is not simply a beautiful combination of sounds. Your new name has a very precise meaning. . . .

What do you think your new name is? Maybe it's "the one who loves the unlovable" or "the family saver" or "the bear hugger." Who knows?

—*Pacific Union College chaplain Roy Ice*, from his book *12 Things to Try While You're Still Mortal*

Adventist Man

Pets in Heaven, Movies, and Sex

Will my dog, Ralphie, who just died, be in heaven?

Was Ralphie a yapper? Because if he was, then his future is bleak. Along with the sorcerers and idolaters, God will not abide yappers on the new earth. Can you imagine living next to a yapper for eternity?

"Will someone please shut that dog up?"

Adventist Man recognizes the problems associated with pets in paradise. If they are going to be there, they will need to behave themselves. They will have to conform to a vegetarian diet and stop their rear ends from moving so vigorously. This includes all exotic pets—iguanas, cockatiels, guinea pigs, lions, tapirs, goldfish, boa constrictors, and ant farms.

Paradise is, after all, a solemn place. No messy licking and squirmy hugs and wild, carefree romps in meadows. If a church sanctuary is sacred, then surely heaven is sacred. And since no one is allowed to manifest the two Vs (volume and velocity) in church, everyone in heaven, including pets, will live sedately, with great restraint. Probably much like Jesus was at "parties," which we all know were actually evangelistic "gatherings" with leaflets placed judiciously next to the grape leaves, detailing the health message and the 2300-day prophecy.

If God really wanted exuberance and movement and noise from his redeemed children, those characteristics would be seen in his natural creation, wouldn't they?

Do you ever go to movies, Adventist Man?

For the record, Adventist Man has never "gone to" a movie, or "checked out" or "purchased" a movie from a video retailer, or "watched" a movie on television, or "downloaded" or "burned" a movie to a DVD, or "glanced at" an airplane movie when he didn't "pay" the \$3 and had to "sit there" without hearing the audio and wonder why people were "laughing convulsively." No. Adventist Man has virtuously protected his eyes and ears every second of his entire life, including his future life.

And here's why: Movies are bad. Demeaning. Corrupting. Degrading. Every last one of them.

Adventist Man believes that films, on the other hand, can be encouraging and educational. Adventist Man has watched hundreds of these



films. Adventist Man studies reviews. When Adventist Man reads about a cinematic release containing hackneyed dialogue, filled with gratuitous violence and sex, lacking verisimilitude and redemptive content, pandering to humanity's basest instincts, affirming stereotypical viewpoints with little effort to create round, multi-dimensional characters, he knows it is a "movie." He then avoids watching it as carefully as he avoids eating buttered popcorn from a sticky floor. Adventist Man has better taste.

It's quite simple.

"Films" are good. "Movies" are bad.

Adventist Man, what was Ellen White's view on sex? It seems like she was probably against it.

Ellen White was once asked by a gentleman whether married couples should have sexual relations only for the purpose of procreation. She responded that his ideas were in error. She added: "Go home and be a man!" This, of course, is a precursor of the contemporary expression "You da man!"

Do you have a tough question? Adventist Man has "the answer." As a former member of "the remnant of the remnant," Adventist Man was ranked 8,391 of the 144,000—and working his way up. Now he relies solely on grace and friendship with Jesus. You can email him at atoday@atoday.com

