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NEWS • ANALYSIS • OPINION

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# ADVENTIST TODAY

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**FOLKENBERG AND HIS  
BUSINESS DEALINGS:  
MORE DETAILS  
REVEALED**

**INSTITUTIONAL  
MEMORY AND  
DISSENT IN  
ADVENTISM**



## **ADVENTISTS IN BUSINESS A LEGACY**

**IS ROBERT FOLKENBERG JUST THE LATEST IN  
A LONG LINE OF ADVENTIST ENTREPRENEURS?**

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## Resource for a More Humane Society

Leaders make a difference. Martin Luther, the champion of grace, became an influential shaper of culture who advocated execution for Jews and Anabaptists. You have to wonder what role his defects played in the German slaughter of the Jews. And then there's King David. After he had Uriah murdered in a futile attempt to cover up an affair, David stayed on the throne. Many cite this as a shining illustration of God's grace. Perhaps. But I think it serves better as an illustration of the blight caused by a leader continuing in office after an egregious misdeed.

David's son Amnon raped his half-sister Tamar, but David took no disciplinary action. So Tamar's full brother Absalom had Amnon killed.

David did take action against Absalom. (The execution of a son mattered more than the rape of a daughter.) Absalom was banished from the kingdom, but returned home after a few years and very shortly had built a large following. Why? Because David had allowed the administration of justice to deteriorate. Absalom promised to fix it. If the justice system had been working properly, Absalom's promise of a quick fix wouldn't have been so seductive. The eventual civil war left twenty thousand dead. It happened because David stayed on the throne after his wrong-doing came to light.

A few years later, another of David's sons, Adonijah, made a grab for the throne. This time even two of David's closest long-time supporters joined the movement. Why? The nation was falling apart. David's immorality and subsequent nonperformance devastated the nation. His story highlights the risk of leaving a leader in office after a serious misdeed becomes public knowledge.

When leaders fail, we should not be astonished. But neither should we act as though nothing serious has happened. When leaders make serious errors in judgment or commit grave moral breaches or become incompetent or exhibit ethical defects, they must be held accountable. The church chooses leaders and bears the responsibility for their supervision.

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### When leaders make serious errors in judgment ...they must be held accountable.

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In clearing the temple courts and addressing the hypocrisies of scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 21 and 23), Jesus created a clear precedent for vigorous action against those who misuse a spiritual office. If we discipline leaders appropriately, we are following the example of Jesus.

Such disciplinary action does not negate grace. (We can be saved out of office perhaps easier than in.) Rather it affirms the commitment of the church to be a welcoming place for all people. Such an environment can be maintained only if the church holds its leaders to extraordinarily high standards of conduct.

In the case of Robert Folkenberg there are many details still unknown. But for the leadership core of the General Conference to confront one of its own suggests to me that our church is healthier than many of us are accustomed to acknowledging.

Like all of us, Elder Folkenberg is a flawed human being. As with many leaders, his virtues and faults are both remarkable. He, like all of us, needs the balance and correction that comes from other believers. That is why we have the church. Being connected to ten million other Adventists in a church organization sometimes keeps us from advancing as fast as we should ethically and morally. (Note our failure to take bold, courageous stands in favor of the ordination of women and against casual abortion.) But these connections can also limit the impact of individuals' defects.

In this case, the church organization has disciplined its highest officer. This is a significant step toward virtue. And in his decision to resign Robert Folkenberg himself made a move toward integrity and nobility.

Leaders will fail. Of course. But leaders are not the church. They are replaceable, (and, in my opinion, should be replaced regularly). If the church has the courage to hold its leaders accountable to high ethical and moral standards, the unfortunate blunders and sins of its leaders will have limited impact. Then the church will be worthy of its real Leader.

John McLarty, editor



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Cover by Richard Tinker

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**PUBLISHER:**  
James Walters

**EDITOR EMERITUS:**  
Raymond Cottrell

**EDITOR:**  
John McLarty

**MANAGING EDITOR/  
NEWS EDITOR:**  
Colleen Moore Tinker

**ART DIRECTION AND DESIGN:**  
Richard Tinker

**ASSISTANT EDITORS:**  
Gayle Foster  
Cherie Rouse  
James H. Stirling  
Susan G. Walters

**EDITORIAL ADVISOR:**  
Steve Daily

**OFFICE MANAGER:**  
Hanan Sadek

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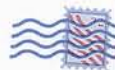
Telephone: (800) 236-3641  
Fax: (909) 785-1595  
E-mail: AToday@aol.com  
Web site: www.atoday.com

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# FIRST CLASS

A.T. Reader  
777 My Home St.  
Hometown, CA



Letters to the Editor  
Adventist Today  
P.O. Box 8026  
Riverside, CA 92575-8026

## Congratulations

This is to congratulate everyone at *Adventist Today*, past and present, for the excellent work you have done in [covering] the activities of the Folkenberg Brothers, Global Mission, ADRA, and now, Moore, WorldComm/MCI, one of the largest telecommunications companies in the world. The latest news, that RSF wishes to be reinstated as President of the General Conference, is a true shocker.

SYDNEY ALLEN  
VIA E-MAIL

## Cultic Doctrine Review

A few weeks ago I happened to be given the March-April [1998] edition...reviewing Alan (sic) Ratzlaff's book *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists* and responses to that book. Firstly, I am not in favour of books attacking any group... If you have a concern about the doctrinal foundation of your Church the best way is to state your case and to fight your corner... You stay until you are, like Luther, thrown out.

Secondly, from your review it is clear that I would agree with much, if not all, of what Ratzlaff is trying to say. However... I can tell him that despite years of debate and clearly and correctly articulated arguments against the 1844 package and the hegemony of Ellen White within American Adventism, nothing officially is going to change, except perhaps the language to justify the same position in another guise. Such was the lesson of the aftermath of Glacier View.

However, reading through the responses, what astonished me was how an Assistant Professor of Hebrew Bible at Andrews... could fail to understand what any intelligent layman, unfettered by the confusion of the Adventist inter-

pretative tradition, could discover by reading an English Bible where our Lord's teaching on the atonement and judgement is concerned....

As for Theodore S. Lewis, he should stay firm with his liberated faith in Christ and not let anybody take it away from him, whatever the church teaches. Without Christ and His Gospel there is no Church. Whatever name it calls itself, to link a denomination's very existence to a date in the 19th century and a dubious set of teachings around that date for the sake of being distinctive is utter folly.

J. ROSIER  
HEDNESFORD, STAFFORDSHIRE,  
ENGLAND

## Employee Faithfulness Survey

The challenges of running a large organization are certainly clear to any one of us who perform a part of that role....But that should not stop us from pointing out the serious flaws that a management team may make, and Dennis [de Leon] has performed a superb effort to that end in this missive (*AT* November/December, 1988). How incredibly foolish of the GC to undertake this type of mixed messaging! This type of behavior would cause a rebellion in the industry I work and manage in (software consulting). And how well Dennis points that out....And how fortunate we are to have *Adventist Today* in its function as the only serious, true newspaper for those of us who can handle both the uplifting and depressing aspects of... any organization—including our church.

DALE LAMPSON  
VIA E-MAIL

## Sabbath Keeping

Just wanted to say how much we appreciated your Jan-Feb issue. All the Adventist Sabbath Keeping articles were

thought provoking. A good mix of addressing the issue. Glad you threw in the "ethereal" one on the Grand Canyon. You've certainly done a thought-provoking job of presenting the complexity of Sabbath keeping. We grew up in a simpler time—before dishwashers and other labor-saving devices. Moms who cooked everything on Friday and Friday baths, etc. all done before sundown. Dishes not washed on Sabbath and truly a day of "rest." As adults we do things quite differently in the way we approach Sabbath observance, and our Baby Boomer kids (2 out of 3 still Sabbath observers) look at it even more differently. The bottom line for us is that it needs to be an individual decision, and if our weekly time spent with the Lord is adequate and we are listening to the Holy Spirit's voice, we'll "keep" the Sabbath in whatever situation arises with the help of Holy Spirit guidance. That may seem too simplistic for some, but it works for us most of the time. We serve a loving God.

DON AND BARBARA BEGLAU  
VIA E-MAIL

Thanks for a wonderful issue (Jan/Feb 1999)! I have just read it cover to cover. The reporting was well done and the articles on the Sabbath so challenging. McLarty's article, "A Park in Time," expressed so clearly the beauty of the Sabbath. The balance between limiting commercial activities in National Parks, yet providing roads for easy access to the beauty speaks powerfully of the balance that the conscientious Sabbath keeper must constantly struggle with. I wish John McLarty could receive wider publication. Others should be blessed with his Yancy-esque style of writing.

RYAN BELL  
VIA E-MAIL  
BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN

## Science and Faith

I enjoyed the honesty and observations in the letter to the editor in the Jan/Feb 1999 issue of the *Adventist Today* by Ben Clausen. Decisions regarding the past, in terms of Bible doctrine and science, are sometimes clouded by history. In certain areas it is best to leave the conclusion undone—subject to better research and more reliable information. In ancient times the truth was determined by what they called, “the consensus of most notable and learned men.” But, in many areas of science they were still wrong.

It is good to identify someone like this writer who is concerned for unity and still looking for accuracy. In my opinion, the diversity of concepts is caused by some people running ahead of others with partial information and obscure interpretations until they find themselves standing alone with their ideas. Or, perhaps, they have just compromised their principles for convenience, grades, or position. We all started our studies with a blank slate and it is up to the individual to carefully analyze and for the teacher to objectively present accurate information. We don't need people who modify or withhold information or make decisions based on politics or financial gain. We need unbiased accurate information so we can make the best informed conclusions.

We are all together in this mess created by sin and should be helping each other to a better understanding. Some people seem to enhance their egos by seeing how many people they can get to agree with them. That's not the proper goal—we need to work together in our walk to eternity to better understand the will of God by seeing how He cares for His people. We need to keep theories as theories, to separate what we know from what we think we know. This is

not a game to see how many people we can manipulate and control. But, unfortunately, we do have to consider the motives of others and beware of those who have misled us in the past. This is not easy since we must still contend with the modern day version of the money changers and the principal effect of the “riddle of the Sphinx.”

We need more people who will, as observed in the Psalms and suggested by

feature article. I agreed to the interview with the understanding that nothing would be printed without my reviewing and editing it first. Ms. Tinker extracted information for her article from a detailed phone conversation with me, as well as from phone interviews with several others.

Prior to the press date of the article, I received a call to accept a one year teaching appointment at Walla Walla College and had moved from Virginia to College Place, Washington. I had just arrived in Washington, was literally living out of a suitcase (several actually), and trying to prepare to teach three college classes which I had never taught previously, when I received the *Adventist Today* article for my review and editing. Any time one person tells another person's story, there is some interpretation and selection of data and

facts. This is particularly the case when a writer is selecting material from a lengthy conversation to fit into the confines of a brief article. When I read the *Adventist Today* article prior to its going to press, I felt that it needed to be rewritten to accurately express the story as I would have wanted it in print. There were numerous errors and a negative attitude towards Potomac Conference that I would not have endorsed. Several things were stated that I would not have wanted in print. Incidents were reported inaccurately. Some things that I would have wanted said, were left unsaid. I fully intended to rewrite the article and get it back to AT; however, with the daily demands of my teaching schedule, combined with adjusting to a new locale, and trying to find housing, I just couldn't find time to address the rewriting of the article. I understood that the article wouldn't be printed without my corrections. Therefore, I was extremely dismayed when I was told by a colleague that the article was printed and in AT.

*...how fortunate we are to have Adventist*

*Today in its function as the only serious, true*

*newspaper for those of us who can handle both*

*the uplifting and depressing aspects of any*

*organization—including our church.*

Desmond Ford, speak the truth in their hearts and be honest to God.

CHARLES GRAY  
VIA E-MAIL

### Resignation

Robert Folkenberg's resignation was a sad happening. Your bifurcation of his person (January-February cover) in my view was inappropriate and beneath your stated “good taste” editorial policy.

LOWELL BOCK

### Salli Hand Responds

I was both surprised and dismayed when I learned that *Adventist Today* had printed an article about me and my working relationship with Potomac Conference last Fall. The previous June Colleen Tinker with *Adventist Today* had called me and asked if she could interview me over the phone. She had heard some things concerning my ministry and position as Conference Youth Director for Potomac which she thought would make a good

I do not believe that there was any malicious or negligent intent on the part of AT in the "premature" printing of this story. Ms. Tinker sent me the article for my review and correction. She attempted to contact me by phone several times, and when she hadn't heard back from me, she assumed that the article was "printable" as it was.

At this point in time, it does not seem productive or important to attempt to go back and rewrite or correct every detail of the article. What I do want to clarify is that I did not endorse the article as it was printed. There were numerous mistakes that AT was not aware of because they did not get my corrected copy in time for their press date. I was not terminated by Potomac Conference. I left Potomac Conference on very good terms with both the lay people and Conference workers.

The history of the Christian church shows that workers do not always agree on matters of ministry. Paul and Timothy had a falling out. Paul and Peter did not always agree. I think that what is most important when these areas of disagreement arise is to remember Paul's counsel that without love, charity, and good will, nothing else matters much. As long as we are human, differences and difficulties will continue to arise in circles of ministry. These afford us opportunities to exercise kindness, humility, compassion and forgiveness.

In my work with and for Potomac Conference for the four years that I served as Director of Youth, Pathfinder, and Young Adult Ministries, I experienced many wonderful times in ministry. I successfully shared the Gospel with hundreds of young people during weeks of prayer and Pathfinder events, trained hundreds of lay youth leaders in doing more effective youth ministry, and established a Youth Council and a conference-wide supportive network of lay youth ministry which continues to function since my departure. I am extremely grateful to have had the privilege to have served in Potomac

Conference as the Youth Director. There were some times of misunderstanding between me and the administrators. This is a part of ministry. What I want to remember and to be remembered for are the positive opportunities for ministry, the successes that God gave, and the compassion and forgiveness that we all need and deserve as we work together to advance the Kingdom of God on earth and hasten the coming of our Lord.

SALLI HAND  
WALLA WALLA, WASHINGTON

*Editor's Response: We did not get our information for this article solely from Ms. Hand. When we did not hear back from Ms. Hand we believed that the story was accurate. We apologize for any errors or misunderstandings.*

#### **More on FER**

This letter is a response to the article entitled "Four SDA News Reports Compared," which was published in the May-June 1998 issue of *Adventist Today*. We were intrigued by the observation that the Pacific Union, which invested the most money in Family Enrichment Resources (FER), had the least to say to its members about the debacle. We would like to raise a number of serious questions, which none of the four publications addressed.

Recall that FER was established as a new corporation, which employed Harold Otis Jr. as president. The FER Board of Directors consisted of twelve members, including: Ralph Martin, Columbia Union president, chair, Harold Otis Jr., FER president, secretary, Tom Mostert, Pacific Union president, and Ted Jones, Atlantic Union president. The Blue Duck was a "marketing consultant" firm. The Blue Duck was contracted by FER as the "marketing firm" to produce and market videos! After spending \$370,000 FER had one video script, but no videos.

During the first two years, 1992 and 1993, FER's operating losses totaled more than \$1.4 million. In 1994, FER reported a \$735 gain, and in 1995 a

\$38,241 gain. It was subsequently discovered that the General Conference auditors had erred by \$1.6 million for 1994 and 1995, bringing the losses to over \$3 million. On January 5, 1996, the Blue Duck presented to FER the plan to raise capital by placing \$2.4-2.6 million on a "no risk" hold in a bank in order to generate \$15 million, through a complex international banking investment! This plan was to be implemented by a Canadian investor in Toronto, Canada, at the Bank of Nova Scotia. Fortunately, that transaction was never consummated. However, the investor was "very upset," but he believed in the project enough to recruit private investors who would allow the profits from the investment to go to the video project!

There was a cost for this recruitment. On April 24, 1996, Harold Otis Jr., without FER Board approval, asked Ralph Martin, the Columbia Union president, and Don Russell, the Columbia Union secretary, for an immediate advance on FER's subsidy to cover the payments the investor was requesting. Without authorization from the Columbia Union executive committee, \$50,000 of Columbia Union funds was electronically transferred to the Canadian investor. Several days later, Harold Lee, Columbia Union secretary, became involved. Otis told the officers that any money sent to Canada would be returned by the end of June, 1996, and would eventually result in millions of dollars of profits. The investor also promised to give FER a donation of \$25 million. Between April 24 and June 11, 1996, the three Columbia Union officers, again without executive committee approval, electronically transferred a total of \$264,000 to the Canadian investor. "The investor has promised the return of the money many times." Harold Otis was told frequently that "the check is in the mail."

When asked why FER's financial situation was not presented to the October 24, 1996 constituency session, Ralph Martin said: "By October 24, we

did have some indications of financial and management problems with FER. We were certainly not trying to hide anything; however, I did not fully understand how serious the instability of the company was until the November 8 meeting."

How could Ralph Martin, Chairman of the FER Board of Directors and President of the Columbia Union be so misinformed? It is amazing that the chairman of the board did not fully understand how serious the instability of the company was after 4 consecutive years of negative cash flow! No one who is serious about running a business is unaware of the financial state of his company, and auditors are not needed to make that determination. Further, in April 1996, he was party to the electronic transfer of church funds, in order to raise capital!

On January 30, 1997, Ralph Martin read a prepared response of the FER Study Taskforce report to the Columbia Union Conference Executive Committee, chaired by Alfred McClure, president of the North American Division. Martin stated that, "We knew that the money was going to the Canadian investor... But we were told by Harold Otis that the money was for the purpose of FER expenses... we relied on Otis's representation of what the money was going for. The Columbia Union was never involved with the businessman in Canada. No Columbia Union money was invested." The FER board (Martin was chairman) refused to assume responsibility for the electronically transferred funds, even though they were debited to the FER's books. Martin's statement is puzzling given the fact that the money came out of the Columbia Union treasury as an advance for FER, a company that

was buried in red ink and since dissolved. In the final analysis, the Columbia Union lost \$264,500 to an investor in Canada! The Columbia Union Conference Executive Committee had reviewed the FER Study Taskforce report and considered Martin's presentation. The Columbia Union Conference Executive Committee then voted to reaffirm Martin's position as president of the union, and "declares its commitment to support his leadership."

*The Union Committee voted to reaffirm  
Martin's position as president of the union,  
and 'declares its commitment to support his  
leadership' ...despite the fact that there was  
documented misuse of church funds, not one  
involved church official was fired!*

Inexplicably, despite the fact that there was documented misuse of church funds, not one involved church official was fired! How many auditors were involved in the \$1.6 million error? Were the auditors fired? Did the Director of the General Conference Auditing Service resign?...

It is peculiar that a marketing firm was contracted to produce videos! Even more peculiar is the fact that the Blue Duck presented to FER the plan....The multifaceted involvement of the Blue Duck with FER as marketing consultant, video producer, and financial adviser, certainly raises the suspicion that there was an unhealthy relationship between the church and the Blue Duck. Other questionable relationships

may have existed between the Blue Duck and the Canadian investor, and between the Canadian investor and the church. Thus, church members deserve answers to a number of agonizing questions: Who were the owners of the Blue Duck and who were their consultants? What is their business address? Were any of them related to the Canadian investor? Were any of them members, or former members, of the church? Were any of them related to any church official or church member?

What is the name of Canadian investor? What is his address? Was he a member, or a former member, of the church? Was he related to any church official or church member?

General Conference officials have been asked these questions, in writing, but have not responded.

STEWART W. SHANKEL, MD  
RICHARD SHELDON, M.D.  
GEORGE M. GRAMES, M.D.  
REDLANDS, CALIFORNIA  
GLEN FOSTER, M.D.  
LOMA LINDA, CALIFORNIA

### **Enjoy the Magazine**

I enjoy reading your magazine, especially the editorial and the news report on the General Conference president's resignation and the election of Jan Paulsen as our new president.

Irvine Kuhn's article on Sabbath keeping is well written and helpful for me. It helps me to reconcile my status as a Sabbath keeping physician. I am glad that he articulates so well the concerns that I and so many physicians have had for so many years.

KELVIN LOH  
VIA E-MAIL

### **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

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

## In the Name of the People

TIHOMIR KUKOLJA, EXPATRIAT CROATIAN

**F**ifty years ago seven Adventist pastors were accused of collaboration with the Fascist enemy and sentenced to several years' imprisonment for the crimes they never committed.

Croatia still celebrates the recent beatification of Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac, which many attribute to a moral rehabilitation and compensation for the politically motivated trial in 1946 staged against the cardinal by the post-war Yugoslavian Communist regime. But there was another mock trial in those days we should remember.

At the beginning of May, 1947, following three months of interrogation and solitary confinement, seven Adventist pastors were each sentenced to several years of imprisonment by Okruzni narodni sud (District People's Court) in Zagreb. FNRJ—the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia, as it was called then—accused Mirko Golubic, Siegfried Vitomir Ludevik, Stjepan Manestar, Pavao Brechelmacher, Milan Sarcanski, George Kalezic and Hinko Reth of "collaboration with the Fascist enemy during the People's Revolution", a stereotyped and deadly Bolshevik cliché used whenever the system decided to destroy someone. The beginning of World War II found the seven pastors serving the church under the Ustashi regime in NDH, the so called Independent State of Croatia, a newly created puppet state of the Third Reich, that had seceded from the Kingdom of Yugoslavia at the outbreak of war in April, 1941.

Despite the war, for a period of time under the new regime, the church enjoyed a scope of freedom. It ran its own theological seminary as well as a publishing house. Church members worshiped in their churches. However, by the end of 1942 the Ustashi regime, prodded by the religious establishment close to the regime, outlawed the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Denominational premises were turned into refugee centers; publications were confiscat-

ed, and schools were closed. The church went underground, publicly performing only as a humanitarian agency, while its members continued to meet secretly in private homes.

Dr Mirko Golubic, one of those sentenced in 1947, was the denominational publishing and school director in Croatia at the time and remained a productive Adventist writer and educator until his death in 1998. In an interview he vividly described the suffering of the Adventist church under the Ustashi regime: "From the very beginning of the war, religious circles close to the regime were spreading a malicious rumor that we were Communists. They were saying that we were a dangerous sect, out of tune with the national interests and the history of the Croatian nation. Also at the time a communique was in circulation, which stated that Adventists were

**...a communique was in circulation, which stated that Adventists were harmful people for the newly found state.**

harmful people for the newly found state. It called for the strongest measures against Adventists. This was all meant to create a climate of distrust against the church among government circles."

In an attempt to protect the church from the masterminded climate of hate, a group of church representatives paid a visit to the regime's leadership. According to Dr. Golubic, at the meeting the group, which included the seven pastors and a few lay members, spoke about the ministry and vision of the church. "We said that the Adventist faith was not a violent religion. We talked about its nonpolitical orientation. We said that we loved God and his Word and taught our church members to live in peace with others. We also said that it was against our Christian principles to

bring harm to anyone. With our visit we wanted to counteract false and malicious accusations against us," said Dr Golubic, adding that the visit did help to create a more tolerant attitude towards Adventists despite the ban.

At the end of the World War II in May, 1945, the Ustashi regime shared the same fate of its more powerful allies and the quasi-independent state ceased to exist. But the arrival of a new Yugoslavian Communist regime did not offer any better prospects for Adventists. Even until the late fifties OZNA, the infamous Yugoslavian secret police later known as Udba, ransacked the church premises, confiscated property, infiltrated the church with officially appointed converts, invited pastors to appear at "informative talks" at a police station, even sent some to prison. Once the Communist government even attempted to set up a regime-appointed man as the Union Conference president.

At that time the new regime, which in its fanatical fever was more than eager to use anything it could against an organized religion, used the 1942 visit as a pretext for sentencing almost the entire Croatian Adventist church leadership to years of imprisonment. The regime declared the seven pastors "enemies of the people" and "imperialist agitators." While throughout the four-year war the previous Ustashi regime suspected Adventists for being Communists, the Communists now labeled

them as sinister Fascist collaborators.

Vjesnik (Herald) and Narodne novine (People Magazine), the main daily newspapers published in Zagreb, the Croatian capital, faithfully reproduced the spirit of paranoia nourishing a legal system that "in the name of the people" made mockery of justice. On May 2, 1947, the papers reported the epilogue of a trial staged from the outset to humiliate the church and destroy its vibrancy. False charges, which led to a guilty verdict, stated, "From the very beginning of aggression on our land the leaders of the Adventist sect had committed themselves to the service of the aggressor. Directly and indirectly they took part in the decision-making process concerning the cooperation of political and military forces with the Ustashi government."



The church was also accused of being a financially supported "agency of the foreign imperialists." "The reactionary leadership used religion as a cover-up for its paid anti-national work," stated the charges. They proceeded with statements aimed at loading the church with crimes of international significance. "The sect entered into a close collaboration with the aggressor, according to the advice and directive of Hans Struwe, a prominent Hitlerian and the mission secretary for the South-European Division, and Luigio Beer, a secretary of the Adventist church in Italy and a Fascist." The charges then culminated with the sins committed against the new "people's, democratic, socialist" state, at the time modeled according to the vision of the Stalinist USSR.

This is how the government counter-interpreted the Adventist belief regarding the soon Second Coming and other eschatological events: "Pastors were promoting a false propaganda about soon coming events that would change the order of things in the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia and about the re-occurrence of war. They have also tried to distract the attention of the masses from cooperation with organizations such as People's Front, People's Youth and the people's government, and from the involvement in the restoration and rebuilding of the land in order to disrupt and obstruct the industrialization and electrification of the land."

The charges designed to ruin the church brought the expected verdict, even generous in the eyes of the regime. "In the name of the people" the seven pastors were sentenced to several years imprisonment with forced labor, loss of all citizen's rights, and... seven years in prison, followed by pastors Siegfried Vitomir Ludevik and Mirko Golubic, both sentenced to five years imprisonment.

Those war and post-war years in the forties were probing and challenging times for the survival of Adventists in Croatia. To the church neither of the two regimes was friendly. Whatever "freedoms" or "benefits" they claimed to have brought to the people, they were not meant for

Adventists. Also, Adventists were neither Communists during the Ustashi regime, nor Fascists during the early Communist dictatorship. At the time "mixing with politics" was a forbidden concept for simple and practical Christians, unaccustomed to political intrigues and committed to the gospel and to the survival of their church.

They committed no crime against any of the two regimes. In both instances, with no other reason but sectarian arrogance, utopian paranoia, and ideological jealousy, the enemies of the church labeled Adventists with whichever derogatory name they believed would insinuate hatred and resentment among "the masses" or within the circles in power.

Since then better times have dawned. With the Yugoslavian divorce from the USSR in 1948 the regime became more flexible towards the people of faith. In

**...the seven pastors were sentenced to several years imprisonment with forced labor, loss of all citizen's rights, and confiscation of property.**

1949 the jailed pastors were released and continued to minister in the church for a number of years. In the seventies and eighties the Yugoslavian regime was probably the most liberal one of all the existing Communist regimes. As a result the church once again ran its own school and a publishing house. Then, with Croatia becoming an independent state in 1991, the Adventist church along with others began to enjoy a spectrum of religious freedom never before experienced in the region.

With large evangelistic projects, an expanding radio ministry, new publishing enterprises, and a developed humanitarian initiative they moved decisively into the public domains which had never been reached before. However, no one ever

apologized to the church or to the seven pastors for the falsely constructed charges and undue suffering imposed "in the name of the people" and ideology upon innocent church leaders. They were pardoned in 1949 but never rehabilitated.

On the other hand, neither have the seven pastors ever sought an apology. To them the imposed suffering was their cross which they carried with dignity knowing that "whoever wanted to live a goodly life would be persecuted." Rather than hating the oppressors they prayed Jesus' prayer of forgiveness: "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing!"

Nevertheless, forgiving and forgetting are two different things. Especially since one can hear again—in Croatia, Serbia, Russia, Bulgaria, Rumania, Poland, and many other new democracies—resurrected invocations to the almost forgotten prejudices and discriminatory concepts.

However, this time they are not coming from the atheists or communists, but from the milieus whose political future depends on the electoral power of—as they like to be called—majority religions, religions with history inscribed into the identity of a nation, churches with a deep-rooted national pedigree.

Speaking recently about religious equality in Croatia, Dr. Nedjeljko Mihanovic, the newly appointed Religious Affairs Minister, said that there would be equality for

all except those "religious sects which are not rooted within the Croatian culture and civilization". In the statement which causes a concern he stated: "We cannot allow the flooding of sects which would go against the interests of those religious communities that are rooted in the Croatian people and which have been active for centuries within the European multicultural circle."

It is not at all difficult to see how far would such generosity go if implemented! The seven pastors forgave their persecutors a long time ago. But it is necessary to remember and remind others in case someone decides again to label, pursue injustice, and discriminate "in the name of the people" against those whom they like to call sects.

## Bob Bretsch Defrocked

COLLEEN MOORE TINKER

**B**ob Bretsch was fired in 1997 from his position as senior pastor of the Sunnyside Seventh-day Adventist Church in Portland, Oregon. (See *Adventist Today*, May/June, 1997.) Shortly after his termination he accepted the position of co-pastor of the newly formed, independent congregation called Bridge City in the same city.

By the fall of 1998, however, Bretsch and Duff Gorle, the other co-pastor, realized that the co-pastorate was cumbersome. They finally appealed to the church's board of trustees to choose one of them as senior pastor. After the board voted unanimously to keep them both, Bretsch spoke to the board again. He admitted that he pushed the issue, and that when the board voted to ask Gorle to remain as pastor, they made the right choice.

Gorle and Bretsch agree that Bretsch is the more traditional Adventist. Since Bridge City has a large percentage of members from non-sabbatarian backgrounds, says one member, Gorle had a slight edge when they evaluated the congregation's needs.

In December, 1998, the Oregon Conference notified Bretsch it was recommending that his ordination be rescinded because of his involvement with Bridge City. (Gorle had previously resigned his conference employment.) On February 24, 1999, the North Pacific Union officially revoked Bretsch's ministerial credentials.

Meanwhile, the Sunnyside Church board met to vote on Bretsch's church membership. On April 18, 1999, the board voted to table the motion to disfellowship him and his wife.

Bretsch currently is pastoring a new, non-denominational congregation called Christian Growth Center in Portland, Oregon. It has about 150 members.

## Reflections of a Parishioner at Christian Growth Center

ANITA JANE CAFFERKY

**W**hile the little group bowed its head in prayer, I pondered the path that had brought my family here. Sunnyside had been our home church, but a series of events had taken a vibrant and growing body into a spiral of fear and anger. My husband, four children and I had been at ground zero as active and involved church members. We could see what was happening, but we did not understand.

That confusion led us to withdraw. My joke to any who asked where we had gone was to claim to have rediscovered the Old Adventist Elijah Message—"Go find a Brook Cherith and hide there." We hid by worshiping at home, venturing back to Sunnyside on occasion, only to suffer political overload as we were button-holed and lobbied to take sides. People we respected were demonized. The complex issues of church interaction were simplified into a demand to prove loyalty. We loved people on all sides of this battlefield and were determined to stay neutral. Couldn't we just worship together in peace?

When my children asked about what was happening, I advised them just to hang on. It will all be made clear in the end. We will know who was behind all this when we see who is left standing. Needing to understand for myself and to explain to my children, I started attending the church board meetings at Sunnyside. There I witnessed the desire of some dear people to straighten up a church they felt was in disarray and make it look like themselves. It was an unpleasant task,

but if that is what the board wanted, then certainly they had that right.

My concern then became what would happen to those who did not fit into the template dictated by that board—my children in particular. I had taught my children to stand for the right though the heavens fall, and now

they were challenging me. Why was I enabling behavior they viewed as unacceptable? Where was my integrity, they asked. How has it happened

*Here are Seventh-day Adventists who have taken ownership in a local spiritual home.*

that I am forced to choose between my beloved Adventist Church and Christian behavior?

It was a choice I could not make. Yet there was a growing hunger for worship with others. I missed the companionship of other Adventists on Sabbath morning.

The "clarifying event" for me was the Christmastime effort to disfellowship church members for perceived disloyalty. In January when the board hastily voted 18-3 to accept the resignation of church membership of the former pastor [Bob Bretsch] and his wife, it seemed vindictive.

Sunnyside pushed and my children pulled, and here I am sitting this Sabbath with precious Adventists worshipping in peace in an independent congregation with Bob Bretsch as pastor. This isn't where I started out to be, but I am grateful to be together with my family. Here are Seventh-day Adventists who have taken ownership in a local spiritual home. I enjoy seeing the row of teenagers in the back and old friends in the next pew.

This feels like home.

# Sligo Church In Turmoil

COLLEEN MOORE TINKER

**T**he story of the Sligo church's crisis began in the spring of 1997 when senior pastor Arthur (Rudy) Torres resigned and moved with his wife to Arizona. A search committee representing the Potomac Conference and the Sligo church worked for months to find a new pastor, and later that year Mike Oxentenکو accepted the position and moved with his family to Takoma Park, Maryland, from his much smaller church in Detroit, Michigan.

Sligo is a multicultural church with between 3,000 and 3,200 members. While the largest ethnic group is white, there is a significant group of Southern Asian members representing people from Pakistan, India, and neighboring regions. There is also a large number of African-Americans as well as many Hispanics and other nationalities.

When Oxentenکو arrived and began preaching, according to one long-term member of the Sligo church, most of the congregation were enthusiastic about his sermons. He was "Christ centered and biblically oriented," this person stated.

Another member said he was "conservative" in his preaching and in his view of scripture. In contrast to most of the previous senior pastors, Oxentenکو rarely referred to "psychological theory or secular literature." He was animated, and as he presented his scriptural sermons, he often projected the texts onto a screen at the front of the church so everyone could follow.

In addition to delivering vibrant sermons, he also transformed the Wednesday evening service from a gathering of a handful of people to a popular, well-attended meeting. Furthermore, according to one member, Oxentenکو felt no apprehension at dealing with the multicultural congregation.

Meanwhile, tensions developed between Oxentenکو and the large associate pastoral staff. At first these conflicts were

not known to the congregation. There were also some complaints, according to the Columbia Union public relations director Denise Valenzuela, that Oxentenکو wasn't "inclusive" enough. He cared more, they claimed, for building up prayer meeting than he did for other programs in which other people were more interested.

The conflicts with the pastoral staff intensified throughout 1998, and the Potomac Conference eventually became involved in trying to mediate between Oxentenکو and the others. Oxentenکو, according to both members and union officials, did not respond to the advice of

**The City of Takoma Park heard of the threat and sent plainclothes police to sit through the church service.**

his conference administrators. In addition, several outspoken members in the congregation were polarizing over feelings for Oxentenکو. Some were highly critical, others were loyal and actively supportive of him.

Meanwhile, Garret Caldwell, associate pastor for administration and ministry development, accepted a call to pastor a smaller church nearby, and he preached his farewell sermon on December 26, 1998.

A month later, another long-time associate left. Andy McRae had been on the staff for seven or eight years, and, according to one member, he had been a "solidifying influence" in the church. Early in his tenure he had had an affair, but he and the conference had dealt with it, and the incident had not been widely known. As the conflict between Mike and the pastoral staff and the conference intensified and became more public, someone brought up

the issue of McRae's moral lapse.

By the end of January rumors were flying that the conference was going to deal with Oxentenکو at a board meeting called for February 1, 1999. Many from the congregation attended the board meeting, but to nearly everyone's amazement, the conference fired McRae because of his infidelity, and did not address the complaints about Oxentenکو. McRae's firing was sudden and without notice, and the congregation, as one member observed, was left without two experienced pastors as the internal conflicts increased.

On February 13 the mounting tensions became public. On that day the church service featured the annual performance of the Columbia Union academies' choral festival massed choir. As the congregation and the visiting teenagers left the church, several of Oxentenکو's strong supporters were outside the building handing out two documents: one was an anonymous page referring to the crisis at the Sligo church, and the other was a letter from the church's Southern Asian members stating that their senior pastor was going to be fired.

On February 16 the church staff receive a letter from the conference stating that the conference was appointing a "conciliation committee." On February 20 a brochure in the church bulletins carried the first report from the committee. The committee members included 10 church members, Potomac Conference president Herb Broeckel, Potomac secretary Roger Weiss, six church members appointed as "observers," and Columbia Union secretary Ed Motschliedier as chairman.

They were, the bulletin insert stated, supposed to work over a period of several months. They recognized the pain and confusion the congregation was feeling, and they stated that they wanted "to work with the Holy Spirit to bring healing and reconciliation" to the church. They also acknowledged that they had three main issues to address: Andy McRae's termination (later changed to a resignation), Oxentenکو's situation with the conference and the Sligo church, and the conflict among the pastoral staff.

During the week between February 13 and 20 an anonymous letter went out to the congregation accusing the staff of "skinning the senior pastor alive" and stating that the letter's authors felt like not giving their tithes and offerings to the church anymore.

Another anonymous letter went out the same week accusing Pastor McRae of having ongoing indiscretions and of trying to become the senior pastor. It also accused one of the women pastors, Norma Osborn, of being in rebellion against Oxentenکو.

The conciliation committee began meeting in February, but they soon came to an impasse. Oxentenکو was reportedly "belligerent" with the committee, and after three meetings the group no longer convened.

By the end of February word spread that the group responsible for most of the anonymous letters would disrupt the church service on March 1. Norma Osborn was told she was at risk. The City of Takoma Park heard of the threat and sent plainclothes police to sit through the church service. Local radio station WGTS, which always broadcasts Sligo's services live, ran pre-recorded sermons for a couple of weeks in order to avoid broadcasting a possible disruption. The disruption never materialized.

On March 11 the Potomac Administrative Committee put Mike Oxentenکو on administrative leave and relieved him of his assignment as senior pastor of the Sligo church. The committee also asked William Johnsson, editor of the *Adventist Review*, to preach on March 13. The title of his sermon was, "My Dream for Sligo." It was also announced that there would be an open board meeting on March 16 at which the conference officers would be present.

Since Oxentenکو was on administrative leave, he could not chair the March 16 meeting. A lay member substituted, called the meeting to order, and then announced he'd received word that the conference executive committee was still in session officially voting on Oxentenکو's termination. The committee requested that the board meeting be rescheduled for March 18.

Two days later about 300 people convened again at the church. Past Sligo member Bert Beach chaired the meeting, and

Roy Adams, Sligo member and *Adventist Review* associate editor, gave a devotional. Youth pastor Terry Johnson presented a group of academy youth who announced that they would be in the basement of the church praying throughout the meeting. They invited anyone present to join them at any time if they wished. According to Johnson, 60 people from upstairs cycled in and out during the meeting.

The ensuing meeting, which commenced at 7:30 P.M., continued until after midnight and was, in the words of one experienced churchman, "the most disruptive meeting of any I've attended in my career." Catcalls and whistles filled the air, and most speeches requested the reinstatement of Oxentenکو. According to one eyewitness, the conference officials did not clearly state the reason for Oxentenکو's dismissal. They did, however, announce that William Johnsson would be the interim administrative pastor.

Co-P.R. director Denise Valenzuela states that Oxentenکو's termination was primarily because of his relationship with the conference office and his rejection of his administrators' advice. She further says that his inability to bring healing to the Sligo church figured into his dismissal as did his inability to work harmoniously with the church, the staff, and the administration.

On March 23 Potomac Conference president Herb Broeckel and interim pastor William Johnsson sent a mailing to every Sligo church member. Broeckel stated that the conference had spent much time counseling with Oxentenکو, but despite their efforts, the situation had reached a crisis level by the second week in March.

He said, "I hope you'll understand that for reasons of confidentiality and Christian ethics, we cannot, and should not, share with you details of the evidence that led to the committee's decision. We affirm Pastor Oxentenکو's biblical approach to preaching and earnestly desire that he will find a ministry where his gifts can be fully realized to the glory of God and the advancement of the Adventist church."

Johnsson's letter expressed his surprise and shock at receiving the request to be interim pastor. But he said, Sligo's bleeding, and "if I can provide a band aid or bandage I must." He also stated that the conference was looking for a retired senior pastor to

step in for several months until they could find a regular pastor. He further said he felt a need to reaffirm two groups in the congregation: members whose roots are in Southern Asia who felt branded as rabble rousers, and the pastoral team. He apologized for whatever was said that offended the Southern Asians, and he noted that the pastoral team felt attacked and slandered. They are not perfect, he continued, but they are good people.

Shortly after March 31 members received two more documents. One was from "The Sligo Voice for Fairness and Justice" and was signed by several church members including an elder, Sabbath school superintendents, doctors, and deacons. The essence of this document was a call for Oxentenکو's reinstatement and a suggestion that a diversion of tithes and offerings might help to emphasize this request.

The second document was from "Concerned Women of Sligo—A Statement of Principle." It demanded the return of Mike Oxentenکو as senior pastor.

On April 17 Johnsson announced to the Sligo members that Elder Walter Scragg, past president of the South Pacific Division and of the Trans-European Division, will come out of his retirement in Australia and assume the interim pastorship of the Sligo church as soon as he gets his visa.

Those strongly supporting Oxentenکو's return met together for Sabbath services on April 10 and April 24 in a Presbyterian church in the town of Greenbelt. These two meetings were not a move away from Sligo nor a move to form a new congregation. Rather they were designed to be a time of preparing "for the return of God's anointed minister, Mike Oxentenکو." Additionally, those attending received four suggestions for possible "storehouses" for tithes and offerings if people wished to divert funds from Sligo church.

Oxentenکو will not be rehired, states Valenzuela.

Meanwhile, Oxentenکو's next position is uncertain. There are persistent rumors that he may go to India in an unofficial capacity and conduct evangelism for a time, but the conference and the union do not know what he will actually do.

Meanwhile, a new chapter will begin for the Sligo church with the imminent arrival of Walter Scragg.

# IN DEFENSE OF BROTHER **B**

STEVEN HADLEY

“**W**hat made you think you could do that?” shouted the young mother clutching her kindergartner by the wrist. Junior had been jumping off the two-foot-high retaining wall bordering the parking lot at the Grand Canyon! Just the week before another mother and father had watched helplessly as their child had tumbled into the Canyon. “What on earth made you think you could do that?” his mother continued. Junior responded with that aggravating “duh” look. The answer was obvious. He thought he could do it, because...he was doing it!

Like the mother at the Grand Canyon, many Adventists are asking of Brother B, “What on earth made you think you could advance the finances of the church through a person convicted of felony grand theft?” The answer is the same as Junior’s. Brother B thought he could do it, because...he was doing it.

Successful risk-taking entrepreneurs are historically the sort of people we like to have leading our church. Even biblically, the good and faithful servant who doubled the five talents entrusted to him was obviously the most capable servant, and eventually made head steward of the whole estate.



Steven Hadley pastored for seventeen years, has an M.A. in church history, and is currently a law student writing on due process in church organizations. He, his wife Vicky, and their son Sheldon love the San Diego beaches.

Stories about the founders of our church abound. The once-prosperous sea captain, Joseph Bates, was sitting at home in early 1846 preparing a tract on the new Sabbath truth while his family’s funds dwindled to twelve and a half cents. The morning finally came when he had to admit to his wife that he had just purchased four pounds of flour with their last half cent. Bates then spent considerable time consoling his sobbing wife. Upon returning to his writing, he was impressed to go to the post office, where a letter containing ten dollars was miraculously waiting for him. Bates returned to the store, ordered more food, and had it delivered to his home with a warning to the drayman that Mrs. Bates would probably be shocked and refuse the delivery. He arrived home to find his distraught and disbelieving wife standing in contrast to his visionary faith. (Arthur W. Spalding, *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists*, Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1961, Vol 1, 123-25.)

**S**imilarly, at the visionary direction of his wife, James White quit providing for his family by working as a reaper in the fields, and began preparing publication of the *Present Truth* for the masses. Like most early Advent leaders, the Whites were living from paycheck to paycheck, and certainly did not have enough money for James to quit his day job and start a publishing business. But, miraculously, money came in from readers in response to the first few tracts, and the printing continued. (Ibid, 197-99.)

The first-person accounts of our early founders tell of the miraculous provision of God in response to their stepping out in faith.

The grandchildren of those founders tell the story differently—they give credit to God but also pay tribute to the entrepreneurial acumen of the founders.

At the forefront of the Millerite entrepreneurial leaders was Joshua V. Himes, “a born promoter,” who “without a subscriber, or any promise of assistance” began to publish the *Signs of the Times*, in order to advertise the message of the movement more effectively. (Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry*, Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1944, 74.)

Later, James White’s legally carrying the publishing work in his own name until the denomination was incorporated in 1863 is recorded as visionary courage. His financial risk taking to have good equipment and skilled workers was rewarded as the church operated the largest and best publishing house in Michigan at the time. (*Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 2nd rev ed, “James Springer White.”)

**A** quick trip through the Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia reveals that one of the notable characteristics about our General Conference presidents has been their enterprising management of the church’s finances and property. We survived the Great Depression largely because Charles H. Watson, a former Australian businessman with “financial integrity and business acumen,” was at the helm. The first president, John Byington, personally contributed substantially to the cause. George Butler actively raised funds to help Battle Creek College get started; John Nevins Andrews developed a theology of tithing; and Arthur G. Daniells ably met financial problems. George Irwin was a former conference treasurer, and Robert H. Pierson was keenly interested in and encouraged entrepreneurial self-supporting work.

Traditionally, conference and union presidents have spent a great deal of time with hospital, academy, college, campground, and school-related industry committees. These men were required to have some ability to manage finances, and the most successful were visionaries who took risks with meager resources and increased the church’s assets.

Space does not permit us to tell all the entrepreneurial stories of Jasper Wayne and Harvest Ingathering, John Harvey Kellogg’s inventions and the Battle Creek Sanitarium, the missionary Stahls, radio Richardses, television Fagals, evangelistic Detamores, and a host of other laypeople who have “done well.” We have admired the sisters and brothers among us with business savvy who knew how to take a little and turn it into a lot, and we owe much to their vision, hard work, and generous spirit.

But what do the experiences of these entrepreneurs have to do with Brother B’s debacle? Actually, these visionaries were often viewed as misguided or worse. James White’s efforts to legally incorporate the church, as well as his doing commercial printing to fund the Review’s equipment and payroll created a huge debate. (Richard W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant*, Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1979, 263, and Jay E. Prall, “Insurance, Legal Organization, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” *Concern*, March/April 1980, 9-15.)

Jasper Wayne’s first Ingathering dollars were returned to him from the local conference with a letter advising that “it was not in keeping with the Seventh-day Adventist Church to ‘beg for money from Gentiles.’” (Richard G. Bowes, “Jasper Wayne—Adventist Innovator,” *Adventist Review*, October 27, 1983, and November 3, 1983.)

The Sanitarium Food Board thought Kellogg was too expansive when he wanted to produce more than granola, crackers and bread. He moved ahead producing cereal with a new company of his own, but not fast enough for his brother Will, who wanted more sugar and advertising added to the new breakfast flakes. The entrepreneur’s life dilemma was that he was too fast for the church, but too slow for the world. He eventually lost fellowship with the church as well as his brother. (Richard W. Schwarz, *John Harvey Kellogg, M.D.*, Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1970, 209-19.)

But weren’t these saints simply misunderstood by people of lesser faith? They never were really in any trouble, right? Well, that depends on how you define trouble.

When Ellen White died in 1915 she left a debt of \$86,923.70, which critics claimed was “incurred as the result of reckless spending,” and the General Conference was obliged to pay. In 1933 the White Estate distributed a twelve page paper explaining how the debt had been created and finally paid off. The paper went on to recount stories of Sister White’s personal generosity to others, and concluded on the offensive with such statements as, “It is right to borrow money to carry forward a work that we know God desires to have accomplished.” (W. C. White and D. E. Robinson, “Mrs. White’s Indebtedness,” statement prepared at the “Elmshaven” Office, St. Helena, CA, February 13, 1933.)

During his third tenure as General Conference president, James White bought a sawmill for \$2,000 in Nederland, Colorado, during his 1876 vacation to the Rockies. He left the mill under the management of a relative, William Walling, who had operated several sawmills in the area for years. James returned in 1879 to find that the mill had been mismanaged by Walling, and four lawsuits against him as owner. He got out of the lawsuits, but lost money on the mill, selling it for \$300. (Delmer A. Johnson, “Rocky Mountain Summers With the Whites: A Preliminary Tour Guide,” July 1986.)

**B**ut isn’t Brother B the first to be accused of more than bad business judgment regarding the Lord’s funds? No. Joshua V. Himes and other Millerite leaders allegedly took money from the poor, and kept some of it for themselves instead of using all of it for printing. Himes was even reported to have been arrested for this fraud. (Nichol, 252-3.)

However, isn’t Brother B the first to actually be involved in some type of fraud, illegality, or conflict of interest? Again, sadly, the answer is “No.” In the 1970s, some administrators received a higher rate of interest from their personal investments than the church entities’ money also invested with Donald J. Davenport. (Neal C. Wilson, “A Report to the Church,” *Adventist Review*, August 19, 1982, 4-6, 22, 23.)

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# Institutional Memory and **Dissent** in Adventism

Since their beginnings, *Adventist Today* and *Spectrum* have caused anxiety among many denominational leaders and church members. A major role of both of these journals is to promote discussion of major problems and disputes in the church, not only in theology and ideas but also polity and practice. A closely related role for these publications is to help the Seventh-day Adventist Church retain its institutional memory.

MICHAEL SCOFIELD

**I**nstitutionalism is an essential and natural part of Adventism. The development of institutions to carry out the goals of primitive Adventism was a very natural result of the imperatives which the early doctrines created. Teaching, preaching, and especially healing can be done to only a limited extent by amateur volunteers. To train professionals, and to provide them an institutional setting to accomplish the mission of the church, is a rational extension of the Adventist message. Institutionalism may have negative consequences, but it is a reasonable part of Adventism's mission.

North American Adventism remains an intensely institutional church. Adventism maintains a higher percentage of members in church employment than just about any other denomination, Christian or otherwise. It is a measure of how important the mission of the church is viewed by the members—how strongly mem-

bers embrace the activity of the denomination that they devote their personal careers to its service. Adventist members tend to identify strongly with their church. Adventism makes more demands upon its members than many other religions, and thus elicits greater loyalty and personal identity. Thus, members and leaders are particularly sensitive to bad press and media scrutiny. The Adventist education system teaches, among other things, the value of committing one's career to service to the church. Many youth follow that "call."

## Increasing Complexity

Everything the church does now is more complex than it was during the 19th century. The management of the church (from the local congregation on up to the General Conference and its major institutions) involves operating in more complex competitive, regulatory, and legal environments. It is no more an enterprise for amateurs. Before 1960, the administration of institutions was often given to ministers who showed some informal skills in management; many of these men matured by the "seat of their pants" experience. And an ethic prevailed that ministerial ordination was sufficient to make one an "expert" in any field. No more! To its credit, the SDA denomination has professionalized a number of disciplines, including accounting and the administration of education and healthcare institutions.



Michael Scofield is a vice president of a large financial institution in California. A 6th generation Adventist, he is a popular author and speaker in topics of data warehousing and enterprise information architecture. His email address is [NMScofield@aol.com](mailto:NMScofield@aol.com).

## Adventism maintains a higher percentage of members in church employment than just about any other denomination, Christian or otherwise.

The church needs an institutional memory. Since institutions don't have brains, such a memory must be maintained in the minds of its members and leaders and passed along through appropriate media (generally documents, books, journals, and occasional magnetic media). What sorts of things should be remembered? Certainly the positive accomplishments of the church and its institutions are adequately told in church-published journals. Most of this communication is directed at the membership and constituencies, rather than the non-Adventist public. These journals seldom discuss the changes over time, noticeable only when one takes a sweeping view of church history.

The institutional memory of the church legitimately includes many topics, like the following:

- The current nature of the church, its doctrines, values, institutions, and resources;
- The history of theological debate, and how doctrines were established;
- How the institutions were developed and how they evolved;
- What actions, policies, and techniques have worked in the institutional church, and what have not worked, and why;
- The sacrifices made by individuals to make the church successful;
- Knowledge about people (workers and potential workers), their skills, strengths and weaknesses, maturity and judgement.

### Memory Must Be Available

Institutional memory is more than just archives. It must be available, at the right time and place, to facilitate good decision-making. And it must be available in the form of "wisdom," not mere facts and raw data. The General Conference maintains a central archival function (as well as a statistical collection and dissemination function) where documents and records are maintained for institutions and noteworthy workers. Most of these letters, minutes, policies, and other documents are catalogued and indexed to some extent. But the more complex analysis of identifying patterns and drawing conclusions and new values from these individual facts is beyond the scope or budget of the office of G.C. archives.

Memory of "lessons learned" is essential to institutional decision-making to avoid repeating mistakes. Many of these lessons have led to improved policy and rules. Beyond constitutions and bylaws, the General Conference and many lower institutions have codified policies. These are updated at Annual Councils and attempt to bring both equity, consistency, and order to the administration of the institutions and their employees. Yet, many knowledgeable observers feel the G.C. lags behind American society at large in the quality of its personnel administration practices and policies.

The dangers and costs of making mistakes in complex environments are growing faster than the church's protective policy measures. This is particularly so because of the modern tendency in the United States to litigate perceived wrongs and grievances. The tendency of members to seek relief from the courts for mistakes or

inadequacies of policy (such as equal pay for women) began, probably, with the Pacific Press equal pay case in the 1970's. Since then, members have not been shy in using the courts to seek remedies of wrongs committed by inept denominational administration.

For many reasons, decision-making in institutional Adventism has recently been distributed to include many more lay members. This is both because conference constitutions mandate lay representation on major boards and committees, and because some ordained leaders recognize that the complexities of managing large institutions (particularly in health care) require broader experience and input in decision-making. By and large, the inclusion of more lay members in decision-making can be a good thing if such people genuinely add value, experience, and wisdom to the deliberative process. Unfortunately, in spite of perceived piety, not all lay board members have the judgment, the critical thinking skills, or the understanding of the values and history of Adventism to contribute positively in such committee membership roles.

### Embarrassing Information Also Necessary

The institutional memory of the church cannot be the private preserve of ordained administrators. "Freedom of information" is a popular value in America. Yet, Adventism has been traditionally closed and paranoid about releasing information which could in any way be embarrassing or damaging. Indeed, until the flexing of lay muscles to gain additional influence in the decision-making of the denomination, the knowledge of past and present activities of the denomination was very closely held, known only to ordained administrators and a few trusted lay persons who served, often in a token role, on administrative boards. And, until 1965 or so, there was little or no independent press casting light on denominational issues.

A fair and complete history of institutional actions would include failures as well as successes. Both have lessons to teach future decision-makers. While the church might be embarrassed at the exposure of failures, they may have valuable lessons to teach. Some of them may be considered scandalous. Some major problems in North America over the past 20 years include:

- The 1981 post office investment scandal including gross conflicts of interest by conference presidents.
- The bankruptcy of Harris Pine Mills.
- Corruption in certain AHS entities in letting contracts.
- Schools which were built and closed within 10 years, unable to continue financially.
- Hundreds of individual cases of financial loss in local congregations.
- Numerous failures and gross abuses and inequities in the treatment of individual workers.

Such failures are embarrassing to the institution and to those members whose personal identity is closely tied to the institution. These difficulties may not be as embarrassing to the committee members who participated in the errant decisions, however, as the committee process dilutes any sense of personal responsibility.



It is important to distinguish between personal tragedies and collective institutional and systemic failures when considering how they should be remembered, publicized, and discussed. Personal tragedies should be common knowledge only to the extent that we need to protect the church from further injury caused by the errant individual.

### Management Needs More Than Miracles

Rational management does not rely solely upon miraculous, divine intervention. Many members in the SDA church believe that God is miraculously leading the institutional church. That view has been reinforced by sermons and other church communication for years. Rather, I would argue that a wide variety of secular skills and judgment are essential for successful institutional leadership. They include knowledge of accounting, finance, law, and a host of general business disciplines. Most of these, interestingly enough, are not taught in the theological seminary.

Spirituality and piety are not enough for good management. Yet the temptation to give up secular solutions in decision-making, and to “throw it into the hands of God” appears attractive far too often for board members and decision makers overwhelmed with the complexity of some modern situations.

Rational management also benefits from wisdom gleaned from understanding of past failures. Guiding complex institutions often requires anticipating disasters and avoiding their risks. Knowing where the problems lurk is part of business acumen and judgment. Part of the learning about potential problems in church governance comes from understanding the problems in the past and their causes. One who dismisses previous problems as caused by “lack of faith” is immature and irrational.

## ...we cannot reasonably expect the editors of denominationally-owned journals to provide candid analysis of problems for...loyal but concerned members...

Discussion of institutional inadequacies (policy shortcomings) or failures (and scandals), is an essential part of church governance. Granted, such discussions cause considerable discomfort, both for leaders and members. This may be particularly so for members whose personal identity and self-esteem are derived primarily from their association with a church which they assume is correct, successful, and inerrant. These people are severely threatened by bad press, and thus react strongly to negative events. Those members who will have no influence upon institutional decisions, now or in the future, can indulge in the luxury of denial—of shutting these problems out of their mind. For many of them, it would indeed “weaken their faith” (as they often assert), albeit such faith includes, in my opinion, an unreasonable expectation of perfection in institutions and human leaders.

### Independent Press Needed

Discussion of problems is a legitimate role of an independent press in Adventism. Given the political realities of an imperfect denominational structure, we cannot reasonably expect the editors of denominationally owned journals to provide candid analysis of

problems for a readership which includes loyal but concerned members and potential denominational decision makers. Thus, a responsible, independent journal can make a useful contribution to institutional memory.

The stress caused by criticism of institutional church actions is to be expected. This stress is quite understandable. And the backlash to such criticism is to be expected, although it is not necessarily rational, reasonable, or appropriate.

In light of all this, it is useful to reflect on Robert Folkenberg's recent essay in the *Adventist Review* attacking critics of the denomination. Consider two additional facts of life about modern Adventism.

First, most church members expect their leaders to be competent and honest and thus are not going to say much to reinforce the good behavior they already expect. By comparison, therefore, dissent becomes more conspicuous. Dissent can be threatening to anyone who clings to an illusion of a uniform membership in happy agreement about every institutional decision. The reality is that the church's membership is quite diverse, with a great variety of expectations and values.

Second, because church members and leaders tend to be hypersensitive to any press, particularly bad press, errors (of individuals or boards) tend to be covered up (sometimes at great expense). Yet most members endorse such silence, as they don't want to hear negative information about their leaders; they don't want to hear that their trust may have been betrayed.

Given these two conditions, the SDA denomination as a political and management system tends not to learn from its mistakes. There is little process of growth through a collective or institutional memory. New leaders and lay board members often take office

quite ignorant of previous debacles. So they tend to make the same kind of mistakes over again. And the cost of litigation and damages can be substantial. And that cost, also, is concealed.

It is easy for insecure administrators to attack their critics—to impugn their character or motives for articulating their concerns about the church. It is easy to say, “They are trying to tear down God's church.” But is that what most critics are really trying to do? I think not. The irony is that the vast majority of members who are alienated or dissatisfied with the Adventist church simply walk away quietly. A few write or utter criticisms, and those are generally because they care about the church and want it to reform or change. A very, very small minority appear belligerent and strident in their criticism. Perhaps they don't know how to express things in a gentler manner.

Therefore, I first encourage church leaders to maintain dialogue with their critics and try to learn from them. Don't attack their motives or character. Further, I encourage the editors of journals such as *Adventist Today* and *Spectrum* to continue their brave scrutiny of the institutional church and its policies and actions. As I have explained above, they perform a noble service to the institutional church which they actually love.

# What If I'd Been a

# Friend

THOMAS AMI

**E**lder Augsberger had been removed from a major administrative position in the denomination. Oh sure, the church had camouflaged his ouster with its own kind of golden parachute—a specially created position at the national headquarters. But we all knew he had been booted. He hadn't cleaned out his desk yet, but he was working on it.

Now I was sitting in his office, trying to do the pastoral thing. Not that I thought his removal had been a bad idea. If I'd had any say in the matter, he would have been gone months earlier. Still I figured even big shots are persons and need ministry. If people talked about me the way they were talking about him, it would hurt. If I were forced out of a position of influence and promoted "upstairs" after pouring everything I had into my work, I'd feel it.

So this evening after hours, I stopped by his office when no one else was around. He was there. And, yes, I could come in and talk.

We had a curious relationship. I worked in a cubicle. He had an office about three times the size of the other offices, not to mention cubicles. I had no authority; people complained he got his way, no matter what. We had no direct working relationship except for his periodic attendance at the one committee of which I was a member.

Shortly after I began working here, he invited me to go for a Sabbath afternoon hike. The invitation surprised me. But I like to hike, and hanging out

with people with status can be interesting. We power-walked for three or four hours in the mountains, talking nonstop the entire afternoon. Talked a little theology and a lot about philosophy of mission and ministry. I enjoyed it immensely. I was my usual direct self, asking questions that could be construed as challenges to one in authority, probing his motives for what he did.

As we parted, he declared, "I hope we can get together again sometime. And by the way, my door is always open. If you think there's something I need to hear, I hope you'll let me know."

## Memos and Prayers

I did periodically. I occasionally sent memos criticizing actions of the governing committees or some bit of Augsberger's public communication. I also sent memos expressing affirmation and promising to pray for him regularly. When he gave a good worship talk I mentioned it. Once or twice in the first couple of years I was there, I interrupted him early in the morning and prayed with him. Once or twice I invited him to go hiking, but he wasn't available, and I didn't persist. I figured he was the one in control of the relationship. If he wanted more time with me, he would arrange it; he would invite me. He didn't.

The institution had a history of strained personnel relationships. People, especially those low on the

totem pole, had been terminated with less than generous notice. There were intense rivalries between departments.

One of the more public controversies on campus centered in the alienation between the head of the division I worked for and Elder Augsberger. They went round and round, in private, in committee, and even, at a veiled level, in public. Emotionally, I was in the middle. I liked Elder Augsberger, but my institutional loyalties went to the head of our division. I saw our division as a distinct ministry, and it was that ministry which claimed my primary loyalty. On the other hand, I shared some of Augsberger's reservations about my boss's performance.

### Discontent Festers

Over time discontent throughout the organization became increasingly focused on Augsberger. People did not like him, did not respect him, did not trust him. At times I'd hear things he had supposedly done or said and just shake my head. Was he really that heedless of other people? The common complaint was that he simply didn't hear advice. He'd get an idea, and no matter what anyone said, no matter what criticism the idea received, he'd push it through committee or sneak it around the committee. He'd get his way.

Not long before he was removed, he formed a group of creative people from throughout the institution to explore ways to improve its public relations program. The plan backfired. The group reported back that PR was pointless until fundamental changes were made in the corporate culture.

I was part of that group. And when the group met with Augsberger, I was the one assigned to deliver a statement that included a line that went something like this: "We're not calling for your resignation, but we mention it so you'll know how serious we believe the problems are...."

We insisted we wanted to help him improve his relations with the employees. We were disciples of hope, we said. But we saw the status quo as untenable.

I, more than most of the others involved in the committee, was profoundly puzzled. My personal interactions with Augsberger had always suggested openness and directness. True, I hadn't sat on the committees these other folks had. But I had written very blunt memos, as a preacher had even publicly addressed some of the spiritual failures I perceived in the administration of the institution.

Augsberger did not hesitate to tell me he thought I was wrong. He'd stopped by my desk after my public rebuke of the administration in a worship talk. But our disagreements had always been courteous and characterized by mutual respect (or so it seemed to me).

I often wondered if the reason others found him overbearing and unresponsive was because they were unwilling to be direct and blunt with him. They were simply so concerned with keeping their jobs that they did all of their disagreeing with the president behind his back, outside committee.

Was Augsberger the problem or was he a victim of dysfunctional corporate culture?

A few months after our PR committee confronted Augsberger, he was removed. Promoted, officially. Now I was sitting across the table from him. I wondered what to say, especially after he told me that he was really disappointed to hear that I had been very much a part of the celebration in our department when it was announced he was leaving.

I winced at his reference to our "celebration." I wasn't proud of that. And I had whooped and hollered with the best (or worst).

### A Farewell Visit

"I'm sorry," I told him. "I can't deny our differences. You know about my work on the committee. During this past year, I came to have grave reservations about what was happening under your administration, though I've always worried that the truth was getting buried somewhere in all the personality conflicts. But Doug, I'm sorry about my jubilation at the news of your departure. I shouldn't have done that.

"Being let go the way you have been, with the concomitant negative evaluation of your work, has to hurt. I can't imagine how I'd feel if suddenly all the people I work with told me that what I had been doing for the last six years was all wrong, was beyond fixing. It would hurt me as a man.

"And Doug, I'm here to talk to you as a man, as a human being. I can't undo what I've done or what others have done. And God alone knows everything. But I wanted to let you know that I care."

Augsberger insisted he wasn't particularly upset. God was in charge, and while Augsberger might disagree with what had happened, it was okay. As a church administrator you have to be prepared for these things. He insisted he was fine. He wasn't hurting.

Why should he? His voice and expression matched his words. He showed no emotion. Which matched perfectly his public image. In his interaction with employees, he was perpetually smiling except when announcing layoffs. Then he was properly grave in his expressions of regret. He was one of the most unflappable, controlled men I've known.

I asked him who he had that he could talk to. Did he have any friends?

He used to, he said. In Arizona, he had enjoyed a truly special friendship with another pastor. But

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then he had moved away from there, and they hadn't really stayed in touch. Just too busy. Then there had been a family in one of the churches he pastored early in his career. They had really been close. But again, time and distance had separated them. And as he had moved up into denominational administration he found himself increasingly distant from the people around him. There just weren't that many people he could be open with and close to.

I told him about my friendship with George. George and I had gone to seminary together. We hadn't been particularly close, but we were friends. Then after seminary, we visited occasionally when I was in town to see my mother-in-law. I enjoyed talking to him. But I had been much, much closer to another seminarian. We had been like brothers. Roomed together for a year and a half during college. Got together again in seminary, when I finally arrived after some detours. Traveled overseas together, jogged together, hurt together through the traumas of dating and losing. After seminary we stayed in touch, crossing the miles by phone. Then seven years later, he died.

I was amazed at the hole he left in my life. I realized I had to have someone. Someone I could be honest with, someone who could be my pastor. Bill was gone, so I picked the next most likely person, someone with whom I had a long history.

I very deliberately pursued a friendship with George. And over the years through visits and regular phone calls we built a priceless friendship. I couldn't survive without it.

I waxed eloquent as I described the benefits I received from this kind of friendship. I became a little preachy as I urged Augsburg to make sure that his life included that kind of friendship. The higher up in the church structure a person was, the more he needed the ballast a real friend could provide.

#### **From Preaching to Meddling**

Augsberger listened. His body language and face clearly indicated our conversation had gone beyond his famous professional "cool." In admitting the hole in his life left by the friendships which had withered, he had opened his soul far more than was his custom. A couple of times I was amazed to see his eyes moisten. Still I was totally unprepared for his next words.

"Do you remember our hike just after you got here?"

"Sure, I really enjoyed it."

"Well, Tom, I did, too. And I went home that evening excited. I thought we really connected. I

thought you would be my friend. But it never happened.

"What you've been saying about the importance of friendships is true. We do need those kinds of special connections. I've needed a friend. And I had hoped it would be you."

You could have knocked me over with a feather. If I had been more persistent in pursuing a friendship with this man, could I have saved dozens of people needless pain? Could I have helped him see himself? Could I have been a safe mirror? I don't know. I could have tried.

After a long pause, I said, "Doug, I can't undo anything. We can't go back in time. I'm sorry I failed you. But let me push you just a little bit. Not for your sake, but for the sake of someone else I may encounter in the future. What should I have done?"

"My sense is that someone in your position is in the driver's seat. I'm a nobody. If there was going to be a relationship, I figured you should take the initiative. The invitations needed to come from you. You're the boss. I figured if you wanted me around, you'd call me. Did I get it wrong? Should I have pushed?"

"Should I be more forward in the future if I see someone in a prominent church position who needs friendship I might be able to provide?"

"Well, Tom," Augsburg responded, "I don't want to say you got it wrong. I could have called you. And I can't speak for anyone else. But there is a certain reticence built into this kind of job. It is lonely. And you don't know if you're imposing on someone else. What right do I have to impose on your private time with my own personal agenda? The authority that goes with the office introduces all kinds of restraints when it comes to reaching out to someone who isn't a peer as far as the organization goes.

"All I can say is, if you have a sense of being called to reach out to someone in an administrative position, go for it. They can always close the door."

*Author's note: It is appropriate to work to safeguard the church from the abuse of power through carefully written constitutions, vigorous political action and the function of an independent press. But I'm convinced the most potent antidote to ill-used power rests in the affection and truth-speaking of genuine friendship. Some of us who are "nobodies" in the church could have a powerful impact on the spiritual and emotional health of those in visible leadership.*

THOMAS AMI IS A PSEUDONYM.

# The Adventist Ethos and Forgiveness

JIM WALTERS

**T**he resignation of a General Conference president is unprecedented, but the fact that it occurred under a moral cloud makes it shocking. The dissonance between Robert Folkenberg's traditional Adventist talk and the man's questionable business walk is spiritually grating. However, he should not be seen as merely a bad apple in a peck just picked from the tree. The ethos of traditional Adventism at least conditioned the ground from which the Folkenberg apple more likely might grow.

What do I mean by the Adventist "ethos"? I mean the distinguishing sentiment or moral nature of our church. A window that illuminates our church's moral nature is our view of "truth." On the one hand, we Adventists are totally committed to "the truth," as we have long put it. Growing up Adventist I recall a relevant, oft-repeated passage from Ellen White about being "...as true to duty as the needle to the pole."

However, the question of whether truth and duty are primarily societal rules or religious ideas has never been clear. An earlier Adventism did not encourage ethical reflection on these matters. Thus a largely unreflective Adventist ethos arose over the years. Part of that ethos is that Adventist doctrine is truth, and advancing Adventist mission is one's highest duty. Additionally, the means used to advance Adventist ends is of secondary importance. Of course, not just any means is justified, but cutting a few of society's moral corners is perfectly legitimate. Didn't Jesus say we should be a "wise as serpents, as harmless as doves"?

When I was a student literature evangelist, I memorized a prepared presentation that pulled on the heartstrings. Sometimes a housewife would purchase my books, at my urging, before her husband returned from work. I was taught to rush to the local bank and cash the check before it could be canceled. Some of the sales I made 35

*A 40-page manuscript, "The Ethos of Adventism," by Ray Cottrell, is available on our web site AToday.com.*

years ago are now illegal, given the customary 3-day "cooling-off" period current law gives buyers. Not long ago I mentioned this to a General Conference attorney, and he told me of a union conference publishing leader who recently requested his help in regard to law governing door-to-door sales practices. When the attorney affirmed the importance of the law, the publishing leader abruptly stated that he knew the law; he wanted to find a way around it.

Other examples of how we Adventists have chosen to advance our church's mission, even when it means bending—if not breaking—societal norms could be elaborated—Ellen White's refusal to admit her literary borrowing practices, evangelists giving misleading information about the sponsorship of their public meetings, bribery of customs officials for efficient advancement of church mission in the developing world.


I am not saying that societal norms should always be upheld. They shouldn't be. Some laws are bad and should be changed. Short of changing them, prophetic citizens can engage in open civil disobedience, courageously taking the consequences (Martin Luther King, Jr., comes to mind). But the vast majority of laws and regulations are for the good of society, and out of respect for our fellow and sister citizens we—as individuals and as a church—abide by them.

As one who has worked in Adventist institutions for 30 years, I believe that the Adventist ethos I have described is appropriately yielding to standard laws and regulations. It seems that the larger and more publicly involved the Adventist institution, the more standard are its business practices (e.g., our medical centers). Conversely, the smaller and more socially

isolated the church entity, the more likely the old Adventist ethos will prevail.

My hunch—and I have checked it out with colleagues who are more knowledgeable—is that in Central America, where Elder Folkenberg was born and cut his church teeth, the traditional Adventist ethos was strong. If this is so, the former president isn't absolved of wrongdoing, but his actions are more understandable. While in Central America he became involved with questionable business deals that were for the benefit of the church. It isn't a giant step from that to blurring the ethical boundaries separating personal and church interests and using one's office for personal gain.

Church leaders have told me that Elder Folkenberg still does not think he did anything grievously wrong and shouldn't have been forced to resign. At another time, and in another locality, he may be correct. Secondary ethical standards (we aren't talking about murder) do change with the times and do depend on a group's ethos. But today in the modern world, conflict of interest and clandestine business dealings are below the norm; the General Conference committee was right to select a new head pastor for our church.

However, I feel pity for Brother Folkenberg. In part he was only pushing the envelope—albeit at the highest level and on a grand scale—that I was taught to push as a literature evangelist. The traditional Adventist ethos may harbor some chinks, but the Christian doctrine of grace knows no bounds. When there is acknowledgment of wrongdoing, there is abundant forgiveness for one and all. 

**Jim Walters** is an ethicist at Loma Linda University and is co-founder and publisher of *Adventist Today*.



## In Defense of Brother B

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

In the fall of 1893 General Conference Treasurer W. H. Edwards reported to O. A. Olsen that the denomination's finances were down partly because of an economic depression, but also because "brethren of means" were upset with the waste of church finances on "long trips abroad by men from headquarters." He was probably referring to L. C. Chadwick, president of the International Tract Society, who had taken an extended trip through South America and the Caribbean, made some questionable financial transactions costing the church \$4,000, and was fired in the spring of 1893. (Schwarz, *Light Bearers*, 257.)

Brother B was able to do what he did because our organization has historically struggled to develop an appropriate system of checks and balances. For instance, "From the time the General Conference was organized in 1863, provision was made by the G. C. Executive Committee for the

appointment of an auditing committee annually to audit the books of accounts." For over a hundred years each conference and union provided its own audit of its own institutions. (*SDA Encyclopedia*, 2nd rev ed, "Auditing Service.")

In 1976 all auditing above the local church and school level was finally brought under the direction of the General Conference Auditing Service (*Ibid*). The result was more professional, uniform, and independent auditing for the conferences and unions; but there continues to be no independent audit for the General Conference itself. When the Service's auditors review the books and accounts of the General Conference entities they are still checking on and reporting to the very people who hire them!

Even when auditors complete their work for a conference or union and report to the appropriate committee it is wholly up to the local leadership as to whether any recommendations are adopted. In his

August 19, 1982 report to the church on the Davenport affair, Neal Wilson lamented that though policies may be in place, "organizationally and constitutionally, conferences and unions have a recognized operational independence..." and policies are not always followed. (Wilson, "Report," 4.)

A church that audits itself, reports to itself, and possesses only persuasive power to enforce its policies and recommendations will occasionally find itself losing a few million dollars, whether it is one or 136 years old; has 3,500 or ten million members; and resides in Battle Creek or encompasses the globe.

So, what made Brother B think he could do what he was doing? In part, because he was a risk-taking entrepreneur in an organization that attracts that kind of leader, which also has inadequate auditing procedures. This does not exculpate him or blame the church for his indiscretions. Rather, history can provide a stabilizing perspective for those who are dismayed, and useful coordinates for those who are strong enough to suggest change in times like these.

## Folkenberg Business

CONTINUED FROM BACK PAGE

until next fall. He is on "something similar to a leave of absence," this source says.

Ray Dabrowski of the General Conference Communications Department confirms this information. He states that Folkenberg has been given until September to work on personal concerns. He also confirms that Folkenberg is receiving a General Conference salary in the meantime.

### Settlement Details

According to one reliable source who has seen a copy of the preliminary settlement between James Moore and Robert Folkenberg, the document contains some interesting details. Since the document is only the preliminary settlement, however, it may not reflect all of the contents of the final settlement.

According to the preliminary agreement, Moore would give to Folkenberg all

of the 27 hours of taped telephone conversations between the two men which Moore threatened to make public if Folkenberg refused to settle the lawsuit.

The preliminary document also suggests that the settlement amount is about \$800,000. It is to be paid to Moore over a period of two years, and payments are to be wired to address(es) which Moore will provide.

### Significant Fear

In the process of conducting interviews for the ongoing coverage of the

Folkenberg story, *Adventist Today* has talked to many people who had personal dealings with Folkenberg and Moore. In these interviews we've encountered high levels of fear, and most of these sources have asked us not to reveal their names and professions. We believe that the fear and distrust of Folkenberg and of Moore we've encountered is a significant element in the overall picture of convoluted transactions and questionable motives which the Moore vs. Folkenberg et al. lawsuit has uncovered.

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# The Word

COLLEEN MOORE TINKER

**I**n the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. (John 1:13, NIV)

Jesus is not just called the Word; he's not just compared to the Word—Jesus is the Word!

The Word was seminal. It brought about The Beginning. It created everything that was made; galaxies, solar systems, the laws of physics which govern black holes, the speed of light, gravity, anti-matter, and the nuclear fusion in the hearts of suns.

The Word created the mysteries of life: the genomes coding each pair of chromosomes; mysterious mitochondria which power cells and which contain their own DNA; consciousness.

And most mysterious of all, the Word created us to be able to share in the very essence of itself—the Word created us to love.

As readers and writers and speakers, we have been called to be true to the Word. Written words have not always been accessible. In medieval times the written word was hand copied and rare. Manuscripts with their tracings of truth were beyond price. Today the written word is so common we take it for granted. In fact, to many who are addicted to the adrenaline rush of television and video games, words seems insignificant and boring.

But Gameboys and TV cannot replace truth and creativity. The source of those is still the Word.

Just in case you ever doubt the power of the Word, remember the story of the Tower of Babel. After the flood men and women were trying to recreate the world they remembered from before the devastation. The small family on the ark carried the memory of technology, agriculture and science, but the physical reality of those things had been destroyed along with the world as they knew it.

Within a few generations of nearly total devastation, however, people forgot how vulnerable they were. They determined to immortalize them-

selves, and this time God responded to their arrogance with decisiveness and finality. Genesis 11:5-7 (NIV) says:

“But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The Lord said, ‘If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.’ ”

With their language confused, people lost their ability to collaborate. Instead of sharing, each language group hoarded its fractured bits of knowledge. The people of Babel experienced the most paralyzing consequence for their self-sufficiency: they lost the creative unity of the Word. Not until millennia later did the risen Christ and the power of Pentecost restore the Word to their descendants.

Today we've lost sight of the significance of the Word. We think of words as tools—the servants of our ideas. Science, business, and technology have definitive value, we're told, but words are relative. We use them to get what we want.

But the Word is not relative. The Word is God. And the seminal power of the Word is ours as we submit to the calling to be his brothers and sisters.

As bearers of the Word, we must be accountable for what we write and speak. We must choose to know and say the truth, wherever that may lead.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” Paul told the jailer, “and you will be saved.”

Believe on the Word.

Believe in the transformation that will mark your words as you submit to the Word.

Believe that the Word will be in your speaking and writing as you open yourself to the authority of his love.

Believe that you are called to bear the Word to a world that desperately seeks it.

*As bearers of the Word, we must be accountable for what we write and speak. We must choose to know and say the truth, wherever that may lead.*



Colleen Moore Tinker is the managing editor of *Adventist Today*. This essay is excerpted from a talk she gave to the Loma Linda Writer's Guild in March, 1999.

# Folkenberg Business Details Revealed

COLLEEN MOORE TINKER

**T**he full truth about Robert Folkenberg's business deals and his relationship with James Moore may never be known. According to one person who conducted business with Folkenberg who wishes to remain anonymous, Folkenberg and Moore have been business partners for many years.

Folkenberg, this person asserts, traveled around the world introducing Moore to heads of state and promoting Moore's patents. Folkenberg's name, on the other hand, appears in many of Moore's prospectuses. Moore used Folkenberg's position and his friendship with him to advance his business causes around the world.

According to one retired Adventist administrator, Folkenberg served on the board of at least one of Moore's corporations. The church had known of Folkenberg's continuing relationship with Moore for many years, this person said, and while Folkenberg was still in the Inter-American Division, church officials had cautioned Folkenberg about continuing to be involved with him. They had hoped, continued the former administrator, that when Folkenberg went to the Carolina Conference he would discontinue his dealings with Moore.

According to several people who worked with Folkenberg in the Inter-American Division, both at the administrative and at the lay levels, the stories of his questionable business deals abound. One man reports flying with him in the early '70's as Folkenberg openly hid several cameras in the engine compartment of a Cessna 209 he was piloting from Honduras to the U.S. He touched down in Mexico and put the cameras out of sight in the engine compartment, commenting that he could get those cameras for about \$200 in South America, and they were worth about \$1000 in the U.S.

They then lifted off and passed through customs without having to pay duty on the cameras.

## ADRA Computer Fiasco

Another person told *Adventist Today* that in the early '80's, the Adventist Relief Agency (ADRA) purchased new computers. The computers never worked properly, and the ADRA personnel were never able to get the company which sold the computers to provide adequate service.

Finally one ADRA employee approached our source, who was then employed at the General Conference, and asked for help. When ADRA had decided to purchase computers, the ADRA employee reported, Folkenberg had told

**...Folkenberg served on the board of at least one of Moore's corporations.**

ADRA that he could get computers for them at a 40% discount. All they had to do, Folkenberg said, was to employ two independent consultants to assess ADRA's needs and to make up a list of needed equipment. Folkenberg even suggested two people who would be good consultants to do the assessment.

One unusual aspect of the purchase, reported our source, was that the computers, which were purchased from a company in Florida, had to be shipped to Central America and then back to the Washington, DC offices of ADRA. This unusual arrangement, they were told, was necessary in order to assure the 40% discount.

In the course of their research, our source and his ADRA contact discovered that the company that sold the computers was owned by the two "independent consultants" who did the initial evaluation of ADRA's needs, and the third was a blind trust. The sleuths were never able to discover who made up the trust.

They also got an independent bid from the store for the same equipment which ADRA had purchased plus a year's service contract, and the total was less than ADRA had paid at supposedly a 40% discount.

After 18 months of struggling with those computers, our source told us, ADRA had to scrap them and buy new equipment.

## Other Stories Emerge

Another retired churchman told *Adventist Today* of one particular wealthy member who has, for several years, been giving multiple thousands of dollars per month to Folkenberg personally, via his presidential fund. This member was distressed when he heard of Folkenberg's resignation and the questions regarding his dealings. One GC employee also said that Folkenberg had initially contacted one highly respected law firm to handle his case against James Moore.

"But that law firm refused the case," the employee stated; "they said the whole case was too disreputable."

Patton and Boggs, the high-profile firm that took the case, has several offices around the country and is known to be one of the most powerful Democratic lobbying groups in Washington, D.C.

According to a highly placed GC source, Folkenberg has accepted the position offered to him with Adventist Global Communication Network, but the implementation of this position is on hold

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