

NEWS

ANALYSIS

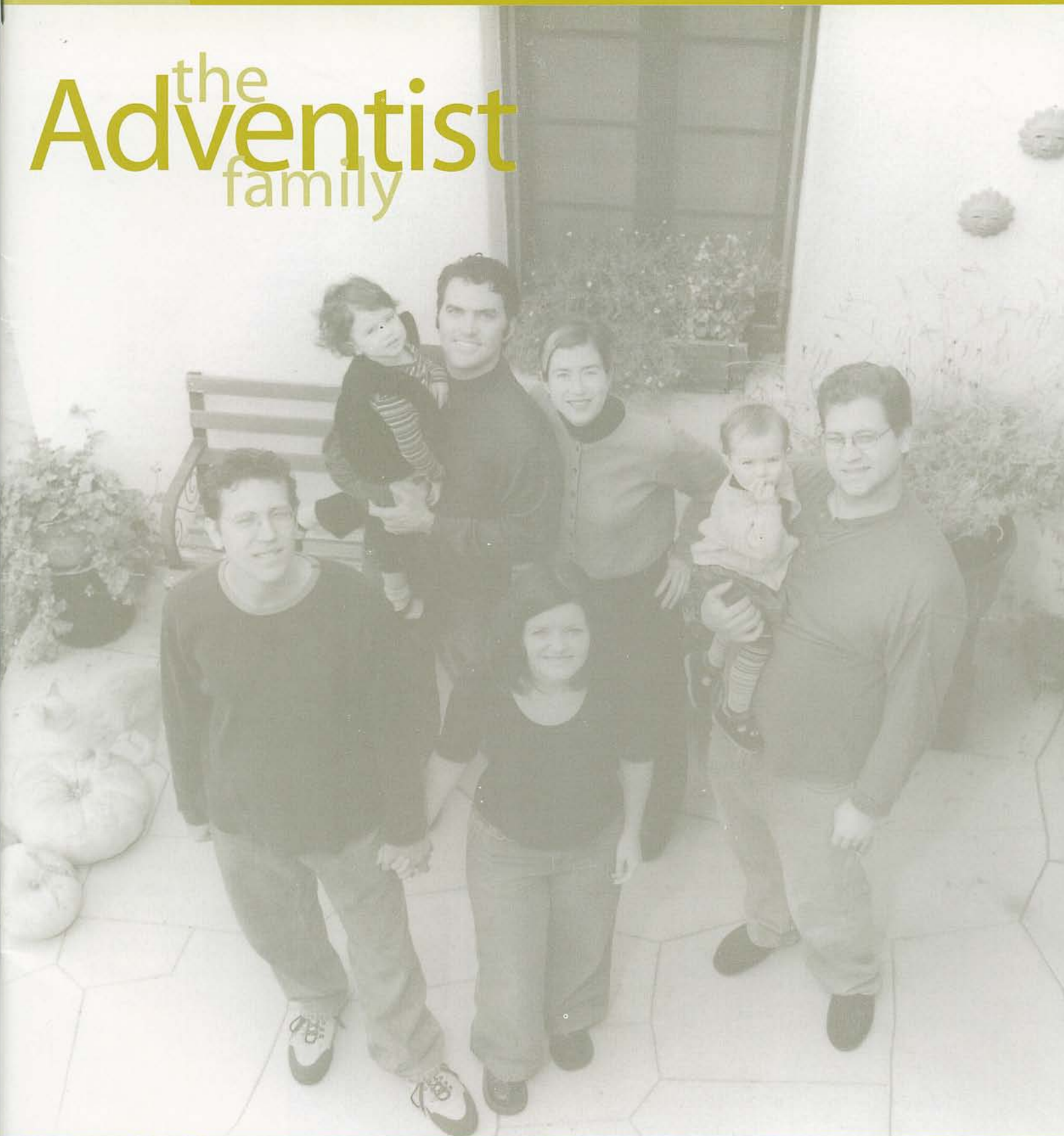
OPINION

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the Adventist family



inside

Enrollment

New Senior Pastor in Largest NAD Churches

The Adventist Home

John McLarty

They were both in their eighties. They were members of the church, believed Adventist teachings about God and the end times. They had both been widowed. Officially she lived upstairs, and he lived downstairs. My senior pastor said they would get married, but because of the way their pensions were set up they wouldn't be able to survive financially if they got married. So they preserved the legal and public fiction of difference residences. Was that an Adventist home?

My father is a doctor, my mother a nurse. They sent their six children to Adventist schools. We grew up reading a selection from a devotional book every morning before heading out the door to school. We were vegetarian, movieless, tithe-paying Sabbath keepers. It's been over forty years since the youngest of my siblings was born, and we are all still members of the Adventist Church. I think you could call that an Adventist family.

In their extended family Bob and Karolyn can identify a witch, alcoholics and drug addicts. Among the friends and relatives they bring to our church are Baha'is, and Pentecostals, Roman Catholics and recovering addicts with hardly any religious background who are eager to learn. Bob and Karolyn joke about all the dysfunction connected with their home, but aren't they, too, an Adventist family?

I grew up in the diaspora of the College of Medical Evangelists subculture with a clear idea about what it meant to be an Adventist family. Adventism permeated every aspect of our life—diet, entertainment, career choices, Friday evening and Sabbath afternoon habits, use of disposable income. And family meant Mom and Dad and kids and grandparents and aunts and uncles, most of whom were Adventist medical professionals with kids who went to Adventist schools.

But then, fresh out of seminary, I began pastoring in a large city and was confronted with the staggering diversity of human connections—octogenarian lovers, single moms with preteens, married singles

(men or women who shared an apartment with a spouse, but not much else), an old woman who shared a dingy, cluttered apartment with her cat, a middle-aged homosexual who craved not sex but a home, interracial families challenged by daunting societal censure, groups of unrelated immigrants—a couple, a family with a teenager, two singles—packed into less living space than our family of four could have endured. Wasn't their cramped apartment an Adventist home?

I have no problem arguing that the ideal family begins with Mom and Dad and kids who enjoy warm connections with an extended family that shares a common faith. The ideal includes lifelong marriage and happy intergenerational connections. I am an unabashed booster of Adventist family traditions surrounding Sabbath and shared daily worship and a distinctive diet. This form of family life has nurtured many of us.

I believe there is a particular ideal. But the older and larger the church gets, the more we will be compelled to take notice of other sorts of families—“broken” families, “partial” families and even “imaginary” homes (that is households that have arisen out of imagining how best to approximate the magic of home life in a nonfamily setting).

Paul speaks of the church as “the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). Christians in those days were urban dwellers. When they joined the despised Nazarene sect they were often ostracized. The church became the family the convert lost in being born again or became the family the convert had never had.

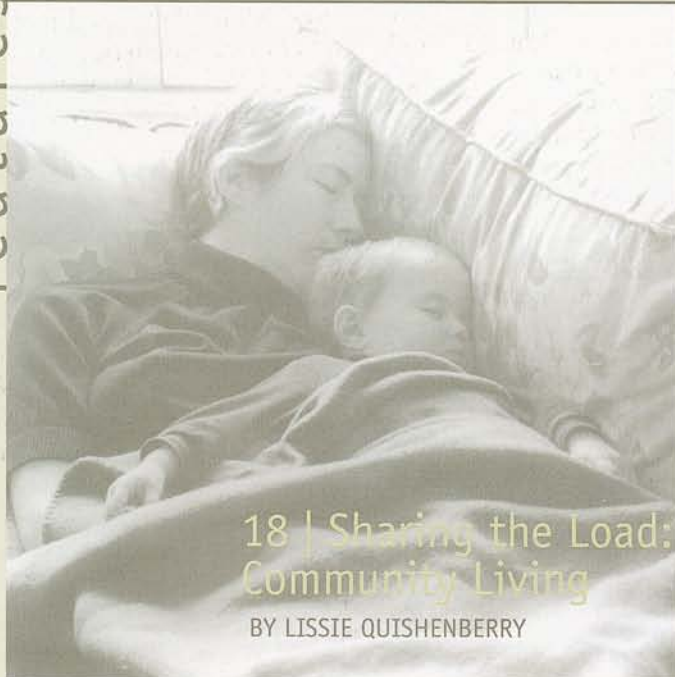
This is still God's ideal for the church. We must offer a real home to those whose other home is not supportive and warm. We must provide for those who are harried, scolded, and abused a place where the heart can rest. A place of grace and growth where brokenness is neither condemned nor condoned. The church is called to be the model Adventist home. ■



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Parliamentary Procedure

An interview with Garry Hodgkin, (AT July/Aug), leaves some interesting and instructive impressions. The foremost is that one delegate to the General Conference who is committed, concerned and courageous can make an astounding difference.

The second is that knowledge is power. If Elder Hodgkin had not known the applicable parliamentary procedure, he would have been at loss to know how to proceed.

The third is that paltry attendance by delegates can be crucial. At Friday morning's business session where were those whose cause was defeated?

Rolland Ruf | Collegedale, Tennessee

What are the qualifications for a delegate to the General Conference session? I fail to understand how Samuele Pipim, who has lived in the U.S. many years and is employed by the Michigan Conference, could be a delegate from the African/Indian Ocean Division.

M.C. Jackson | Longview, Washington

Editor's Note: *We understand that Dr. Koranteng-Pipim has served as a consultant to the Division through the years he has been in the U.S.*

The Sociology Thing

Once again, we try to solve a huge multifaceted problem with one little simple answer. Several miles down the road, when we are starved for oxygen and pull our heads out of the sand, we wonder why our problems haven't gone away.

The writer in "It's the Sociology Thing, Stupid!" (AT July/August) has picked up on one little factor of the myriad of factors that contribute to the loss of young people in the church in droves. Sociology, while an interesting minute part of the problem, is not the problem. This kind of reasoning only gives Adventists another excuse to do nothing in reaching out to a group of people who are vital to the

growth and development of any organization.

True, many young people are leaving the church, but if you want to do something to stop the trend instead of dwelling in gross self-denial, take a few of these suggestions to your church boards:

Young educated (single or not) Adventists like to have intellectually stimulating discussions. We are tired of being force-fed "truth" without an opportunity to exam it, prove it and assimilate it. We are tired of hearing "you are too critical of the church" or "you are too educated so you can't accept truth." If we cannot discuss "truth" why come?

Young Adventists would like to participate in the services without overbearing "elder" intervention. Let us participate in the services by singing the songs that appeal to us, the verses that touch us in the ways that are interesting to us. Stop "intervening" in our Sabbath school classes. Implementing these suggestions might very well cause massive heart attacks across the congregations but the alternative is what you are looking at—empty pews.

Love one another. Adventists take way too much pride in their shallow, overly sugary brand of "friendliness." We can get friendliness at the grocery store. A lot of young professionals leave family and friends back home several states away and no one really cares about them in their new churches. Most of the time no one notices, let alone misses them, when they

are gone. Who do these people turn to when they are hurt, depressed, homesick? A lot of these young people are looking for fellowship, companionship, love and acceptance. If you can't find it at church why come?

Sociology? Not!

Nnena Achilefu | St. Louis, Missouri

Casebook or Codebook

Thank you for "Casebook and Codebook: Alden Thompson speaks to Forum retreat on inspiration" (AT July/August, 2000). I agree with Thompson that in studying the Scriptures, rather than simply applying what is written ("codebook thinking") one should strive to accurately interpret the principles behind the words ("casebook thinking").

Young educated (single or not) Adventists like to have intellectually stimulating discussions. We are tired of being force-fed "truth" without an opportunity to exam it, prove it and assimilate it. We are tired of hearing "you are too critical of the church" or "you are too educated so you can't accept truth." If we cannot discuss "truth" why come?

It is unfortunate that the members of the Adventist Theological Society were referred to as "codebook readers." I am not a member, but I do subscribe to their periodical *Perspective Digest*. In my opinion, their relatively traditional, conservative position on such subjects as the ordination of women to the ministry is not based upon codebook thinking, but upon matters of hermeneutics and exegesis.

Keith Gilbertson

Give Us the Facts

Thank you for keeping us informed of the facts regarding our church's progress and problems. We need an instrument that is not directly supervised by elected church officials. For obvious reasons, there are matters which leaders may wish to hold back, sometimes justifiably, and possibly because of a certain bias. This was the case with the ordination issue, and when I mentioned to Dr. Johnsson that I felt that he had been biased in the *Review's* coverage of women's ordination, he seemed to be quite displeased. I had suggested that perhaps the stated net gain in membership between 1990, the date when ordination was first defeated, and 1995, the second time around, was less than 500 members. His response was the listing of several figures, showing considerable numbers of baptisms, but he did not mention the heavy losses of the same time period.

I sent him a copy of the Pacific Union *Recorder* article, which clearly stated the net gain as 400 plus members for 1990-1995, clearly showing an unacceptable rate of progress, hence, Dr. Johnsson's displeasure. He has not responded to this latest data.

I would like to suggest that you do as the *Recorder* did; examine and publish the net gains in our church, and in other areas where bias or other reasons could exist, publish the facts, that we may be informed and react according to conscience.

Earl G. Meyer | Oakhurst, California

Editor's Note: Firm figures on church membership and net growth are hard to come by. Official figures in the denomination's Yearbook, available on the Internet, give net growth figures totaling over 75,000 for the North American Division between those years. ■

Send Letters to the Editor:

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Adventist Today Survey Results Are In

As publisher, it is my privilege as well as responsibility to oversee all that our team at *Adventist Today* seeks to accomplish. One of those items is the privilege of reviewing your responses to our year 2000 Reader Survey.

Last year about a fourth of our subscribers responded to the survey. We seem to be well on our way to a similar response rate this year. In general, they mirror those received a year ago.

Contrary to many people's opinion, responders overwhelmingly see themselves as "middle of the road" and demonstrate great concern for the welfare of the church. Some of you view the "hierarchy as often secretive," and thus describe the need for *Adventist Today's* "balanced [and essential] voice" in reporting "what is happening behind the scenes."

Our editorials and the "letters to the editor" are not only the first items read, but also receives the most comment by our readers.

Some of you have expectations which exceed even our hopes, such as achieving "full funding" of the denomination's retirement plan and demonstrating the way our youth can be found "leading out" in our church's activities.

Somewhat surprising to me, however, are how few there are of you who have chosen to visit our AToday.com web site. While our sample is incomplete, less than a fourth of you have done so.

Overwhelmingly, your response has been positive. "Keep up the good work," "excellent," "don't be discouraged" and "we love you" are recurring comments. Because of your prayers and continuing support, we look forward to a wonderful future together. ■

Have a joyful holiday season.

Elwin Dunn, M.D. | Publisher/Board Chair

Sunnyside SDA Church

Disfellowships Bob Bretsch

John McLarty

On October 18, 2000 the Sunnyside Seventh-day Adventist Church in Portland, Oregon, voted to disfellowship Robert (Bob) Bretsch. The motion to disfellowship passed by one vote.

Bretsch had been senior pastor of Sunnyside from June, 1992 to May, 1997. After leaving Sunnyside he became co-pastor of Bridge City Community Church. (Bridge City was an independent Sabbath-keeping congregation that had been established some months earlier by people who had left Sunnyside because of their concerns about the intentions of the Oregon Conference administration and the actions of Sunnyside members opposed to Bretsch.) In October, 1998, he left Bridge City. In February, 1999, with several others, Bretsch established Christian Growth Center where he is currently senior pastor.

According to Bretsch, about a year and a half ago he offered to resign his membership at Sunnyside to spare the church continued conflict. At that time some of the elders of the church asked him not to resign, since Bretsch still considered himself to be a Seventh-day Adventist. Shortly afterwards most of these elders were replaced in a church election and under this new leadership the church voted to censure Bretsch.

According to church policy, a vote of censure must be for a specified time, at the end of which the case is to be reviewed. A subcommittee of the Sunnyside Church Board was asked to interview Bretsch and report back to the church. The

committee's report attempted to present the facts of Bretsch's thinking and his relationship with Adventism; it did not make a recommendation for or against disfellowshipping. At a church business meeting in September of this year, after the committee's report was received, a motion was made to reinstate him to regular membership. That motion failed. Then it was moved to disfellowship him. That motion carried by a vote of 34-33.

Participants in that meeting report that the pastor did not wish to take such a serious action on the basis of such a slim majority, and it was decided to consider the matter again at a future meeting.

Bretsch was informed of this action. He reports that he again offered to resign his membership so that the present pastoral staff would not have to deal with him as an issue. Bretsch understood that it would be some time before the matter was considered again in a church business session.

A second meeting was called sooner than Bretsch expected. He happened to be out of town at the time, so repeated attempts by the Sunnyside staff to reach him failed. More people attended this second meeting than were present at the first meeting. Before a vote was taken on Bretsch's membership, the group discussed what to do if the vote was again extremely close. The group voted unanimously to accept whatever was voted by whatever margin as the final vote on this matter. The vote was taken, and the church voted 55 to 54 to remove Bob Bretsch from membership. Sunnyside

membership includes a number of retired church administrators, some of whom serve on the committees and boards that govern the congregation. By these men congregationalism is seen as a grave threat to the very existence of the worldwide Adventist church, and Bretsch was seen as at least an ally, if not an advocate, of congregationalism. There was another significant source of conflict, according to some observers: the disruption of the historic centers of power and control within the congregation. Under Bretsch's leadership the congregation had attracted so many new members that simple numbers altered the power structures of the church, and Bretsch's leadership style was not designed to sustain the influence of long-time lay leaders.

According to two participants in the process, the reason for the action against Bretsch was "divisiveness." This charge was rooted in his employment by Bridge City Community Church and his subsequent founding of Christian Growth Center. One participant said that since Bretsch felt called to serve in another church which was not an Adventist church and that he had no intention of attending Sunnyside, it just made sense to remove his name from the membership rolls of Sunnyside Seventh-day Adventist Church. Those who opposed the action to disfellowship cited Bretsch's undisputed effectiveness as a preacher, his agreement with the core doctrines of Adventism and his saving impact on young people and on their own spiritual life. ■

Nancy Hoyt Lecourt

The Association of Adventist Women meet for their eighteenth annual conference

One Light, Many Reflections: Women Passing the Flame" was the theme for the AAW's 18th annual conference, held on October 12-15 at a hotel in Sacramento, California. Approximately 150 women, some of them accompanied by men, came to pray, sing, listen, talk, laugh, and sometimes cry together.

On Thursday evening there was a one-act play by Pacific Union College's Dra-

matic Arts Society, Susan Glaspell's "A Jury of Her Peers" (also known as "Trifles"). The play drew enthusiastic responses because it touched on issues vital to Adventist women: loneliness, neglect, abuse, and the importance of love and support.

Friday began with small prayer groups and then moved to an opening plenary session by Lisa Beardsley, executive vice-president for Loma Linda University.

Beardsley spoke on "Prototypes of Spiritual Women." The rest of the morning was spent in workshops, one on mentoring, by Gail Catlin, president of LeaderSpirit, and the other a rhetorical analysis of the Utrecht ordination speeches in 1995 by Beverly Beem, professor of English at Walla Walla College, and Ginger Hanks-Harwood,

Continued on page 23

Enrollment Figures, SDA Colleges and Universities, Fall 2000

Andrews University	N/A
Atlantic Union College	544
Canadian University College ..	415
Columbia Union College	639
La Sierra University	1471
Loma Linda University	3257
Oakwood College	1730
Pacific Union College	1474
Southern Adventist University	1939
Southwestern Adventist University	1187
Union College	846
Walla Walla College	1604

Some of the schools surveyed this year were jubilant about their enrollment increases, especially Columbia Union College and Canadian University College. Two schools announced their introduction of programs in Biblical archaeology. Southern Adventist University will offer a new bachelor of arts in archeology, with two choices of emphasis: classical studies (with study of Greek) or Near Eastern studies (Old Testament, with study of Hebrew). Walla Walla College will offer a new minor in archaeology under the School of Theology, although it will be cross-listed with other departments. Faculty from both schools have been involved in archaeological projects in the Middle East. ■

"The Essence and Accidents of Christian Belief"

Inaugural Richard Hammill Memorial Lecture

Ervin Taylor

dr. Earle Hilgert, Emeritus Professor of New Testament, McCormick Theological Seminary, delivered the inaugural Richard Hammill Memorial Lecture in Loma Linda on Sabbath afternoon, October 28.

The lecture was jointly sponsored by the Adventist Today Foundation and the Association of Adventist Forums. In his lecture, entitled "The Essence and Accidents of Christian Belief," Dr. Hilgert based the distinction between "essences" and "accidents" on the comments of the 4th Century B.C. Greek philosopher, Aristotle, who first pointed out the difference in his Posterior Analytics. "Essences" are those things which make something that thing, or as Dr. Hilgert notes the "inner being without which it would not be what it is"—e.g., what makes something unique. "Accidents" are those attributes of something which are not "necessary to its being what it is." Aristotle used the example of the geometric shape of the triangle to illustrate the difference. For a triangle to be a triangle, the sum of the angles must be 180 degrees—it can not be 179 or 181 degrees. However, the area or size of a triangle can vary—that is one of the "accidents" of a triangle.

Dr. Hilgert applied this distinction in thinking about Christian beliefs—what is the essence and what are the accidents? He suggested that the earliest confessions of faith by Christians contained two "essences" that are the key, focal elements of Christian belief: the resurrection and the Lordship of Christ. "Jesus Christ is risen, and he is Lord!" is the essence of Christianity. "The conviction that the risen Christ is present with us in some way is an essence of Christian belief; just how this is conceptualized is an accident"

In addressing the accidents, Dr. Hilgert recalled his own doctoral oral examination at the University of Basel where his examiner in theology was Professor Karl Barth. Professor Barth, at the end of an hour of questioning, asked (in German): "Now, Mr. Hilgert, you are an Adventist. What then is the central teaching of Seventh-day Adventists?" Earle Hilgert's reply was: "The central teaching of Seventh-day Adventists is salvation in Christ" to which Karl Barth replied: "Das ist gut!" (That is good) and continued (in German): "Then we can say that Adventists too really are Christians! If salvation in Christ is really your central doctrine, then every other doctrine you hold must be related to that center."

In Dr. Hilgert's view, the accidents of Christian belief include theological explanations or doctrines, symbols, and liturgies. For example, like contemporary Christians, early Christians found several ways of conceptualizing the purpose and meaning of the death and resurrection of Christ and his lordship. In summarizing the question of essences and accidents in Christian faith, Dr. Hilgert adapted an old Latin adage: "In essentials unity, in accidents liberty, in all things love."

This lecture series is dedicated to the late Dr. Richard Hammill, who served as Vice President of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and President of Andrews University. In retirement in Loma Linda, Dr. Hammill was actively involved in discussion and dialogue that contributed to progressive approaches to various traditional SDA theological understandings. ■

Audio and video tapes of Dr. Hilgert's lecture are available by contacting Harold Wareham at (909) 796-3193 or Ervin Taylor at (909) 796-3585, FAX (909) 799-3703, or retaylor@citrus.ucr.edu.

New Senior pastors

Editorial Staff in largest NAD Churches



In recent months, both Loma Linda University Church and Sligo SDA Church have elected new senior pastors. This is significant in that these two churches are among the largest in membership in the North American Division. This issue features one of the two men, Randall L. Roberts (pictured above).

Randall L. Roberts was born in South America of missionary parents. Until college age, the majority of his life was spent in Latin American countries. In 1981 he graduated from Southwestern Adventist University in Keene, Texas, with a major in theology and a minor in modern languages. For more than five years he pastored in the Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, during which time he completed his master of divinity degree at Andrews University in 1985.

In 1987 Roberts began work as a chaplain at Loma Linda University Medical Center in Loma Linda, California. For more than seven years he provided patient and staff support, spiritual care, and counseling. He was also instrumental in establishing and leading the Medical Center's grief recovery program. He also completed his master of arts degree in marriage and family therapy from the United States International University, in San Diego. In early 1994, Roberts began teaching full time in Loma Linda University's Faculty of Religion. He graduated with his doctor of ministry degree from Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, in June 1996. Since then, he has served the University as associate professor of theology and ministry, as well as associate dean of the Faculty of Religion. Concurrently, he has

held the position of senior pastor of the Corona Seventh-day Adventist Church, in Corona, California. Roberts is married to Anita (Justiniano) Roberts. They have a son, Austin, age 7, and a daughter, Miranda, age 4.

The search committee carefully compiled a list of 45 names, which was narrowed to 10. By secret ballot, Randy was chosen unanimously. During the weeks prior to making his decision to come to the University church, Roberts met with pastoral and support staff, lay leaders, music department leaders, and university students. "When I started listening to and considering the University church—where it is and the task ahead—" Roberts relates, "I knew the only way to succeed would be through the grace of God and the help of others." He continues, "I sensed a readiness and willingness to change and grow, while building on existing strengths—to truly make a difference in the community."

Roberts sees four areas that will receive his attention in the coming months: preaching, setting a long-term vision, spiritual leadership formation, and creating a more inter-generational environment in the church. He is committed to trying to understand what the Scriptures say and establishing a biblically based pulpit program. It is also vital, Roberts feels, that the church revisit its identity and long-term goals over the coming months, re-asking the questions, "Who are we?" "Why are we here?" and "What is our long-term purpose?" He intends to rely heavily on the current church leaders as, together, they plan for the challenges that lie ahead. ■

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Compassion practiced vs. compassion preached

John A. Ramirez, Jr.

R H E T O R I C O V E R R E C O R D

In my first presidential election as a franchised voter, I paid a lot of attention to all candidates and what they offered me, a young Adventist theology major. I was looking for reform and responsibility in my potential choice. George Bush, with a nod from the religious right and apparent endorsement from moderate Texan democrats, began his run for office as the man to satisfy all voters' needs. The Republicans' campaign mantra, "compassionate conservatism," was a clever answer to liberals' assertion of right-wing indifference on social issues. However, the addition of Dick Cheney to the ticket quickly sobered my enthusiasm for his campaign. You see, Mr. Cheney voted against every social program (even head start) that would offer our society's dispossessed an even chance. It was then I realized that Bush's idea of compassion was not a statement of policy, but a state of mind. In the recent presidential election, conservatives were more concerned with the rhetoric of the candidate than the morality of his policies.

Principles Betrayed

On the 700 Club the icons of evangelical America call for greater morality, but I see these same leaders (i.e. Billy Graham) endorse the Bush-Cheney ticket and I feel betrayed. As these religious leaders bond their fight against abortion with the political right they, through silent approval, put on the robes of the priest and Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Should government play a role in legislating morality? The advocates of the religious/political right hark back to the Constitution and with "implied intent" and a strict constructionalism, they pretend to be the voice of America's ideals. With this self-empowering ideology they set forth to restore morality to our nation. They skirt the substantive issue of teen pregnancy, deeming sex to be solely within the marital domain. So they fight sex education that seeks to teach contraception in public schools. And conservatives, with Bush at the helm, fought against guaranteed health care for children in Texas; and when it passed, the governor remarked: "You crammed it down our throats."⁷ I have concluded that the religious right supports govern-

ment-led morality only to the extent of legislating behavior. Why are moral issues such as adequate health care not advocated by the right with the same vigor used in the fight against abortion? They would have government mute on conception, abruptly step in and deny abortion, then immediately withdraw this responsibility (to protect the infant) upon birth. The question must be asked, "Who is my neighbor?" How does a country with a Christian heritage respond to its moral obligations? It's ironic how morality is seen as a public issue, but only to the extent of legislating behavior. This logic reveals a peculiar kink in the moral conscience of the religious right. They are only bothered by an active breach of a limited moral code. Harking back to my parable comparison, it is clear that neither the priest nor the Levite contributed directly to the (potential) death of the robbed traveler by passing him by, but by their inaction they were passively or indirectly responsible. Their lack of action resulted in diminished chances of survival for the broken traveler.

Appeal for action

If our faith is going to be our guide for a moral government it is clear how we should play our part. A lateral glance at the welfare of our neighbor is not sufficient. Like the Samaritan we must provide a real opportunity for all our disadvantaged neighbors to receive a fair chance at life. The U.S. government must be moral, but not on narrowly religious grounds. This is a historic Adventist idea, as we have a long tradition of embracing civil liberties. Adventist interest in this area has waned in recent years, as witness our reluctance to enter the civil rights struggle. I appeal to our traditional role as the mavericks of American Christianity and propose that we face current social issues with the courage of William Miller and Joseph Bates. ■

⁷<http://washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics/news/postseries/texasrecord/archive/>

John A. Ramirez, Jr. is a sophomore theology major at Pacific Union College. His home town is Colton, California. He hopes to enter the graduate program in Christian Bioethics at Loma Linda University upon graduation.

AToday.com

a forum discussion

The following is an excerpt from a forum discussion on our web site. This is a free and open forum and indicates one part of what is available online. There is also a "comments section" available in the archives of AT. Please visit us online: www.atoday.com. Some of this conversation was edited for space constraints.

Elaine Nelson (Elaine) on

Friday, September 29, 2000 08:53 pm:

How does a new organizational structure come into being when leadership and other personnel are so constantly shifted around? There is total loss of continuum and loss of rapport for everyone involved. Is it a wonder? Our SS class has been studying for several months a book on decision making and the will of God. Tomorrow we will be discussing how that applies to group decisions such as:

- Determining the kind of music acceptable to the church
- Deciding on women's ordination
- Spending money on programs
- Electing an officer for the organization
- Determining the local church's autonomy
- The issue of dress
- The curriculum in schools

Does the process change for the local church government?

Who or what is the final authority for decision making?

All this, with the idea of "unity" and the need emphasized by Pres. Jan Paulsen's article in recent review and the manner in which the church decides doctrinal or fundamental beliefs and practice. How has the church tried to maintain "uniformity" throughout the world, and should there be a uniformity of all believers no matter their location or culture? Should the members support the church's decision if it is contrary to their principles? What philosophy should the individual member have regarding the church's decisions?

Daniel Deakins (Ddeakins) on

Friday, September 29, 2000 - 09:22 pm:

Well, it appears a good starting point for at least the local church would be to have a clear goal as to what an SDA church is all about. Do we individually know what goal our individual church has for itself?

An example of one goal: suppose the goal of Boeing was to build an airplane. That is a poor goal. On the other hand the goal of building an airplane that can go around the world ten times without refueling gives it direction and meaning. From that point the second action steps can be added in.

For the second part, when we understand that goal do we know what our strategy is to reach that goal? I doubt it. Does the local church have a goal and a strategy? If so,

where is it posted? If Boeing had their 10 lap airplane they would have some defining criteria to provide for some solid strategy to make it happen (sounds like a satellite airplane to me).

In my experience these goals are vague, if there are any at all. That leaves people to go the church's pathway willy-nilly (as it relates to a group doing things together).

Claudia Burrow (Claudiaburrow) on

Saturday, September 30, 2000 - 02:42 pm:

Hello All: I know how the church deals with "honest" dissent... They run truth out of the church in favor of those who espouse the New Theology and those who support it. And real truth is dealt with as the Church Leadership dealt with Jesus Christ when He "honestly dissented." We all know where he ended up!

The Church deals in a way with "honest dissenters" as Rome does, by crushing them out as best they can.

Please read these Bible verses and think about it: Eph:6:1,4: Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right... And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

It is the children's responsibility (Church Members) to obey their Elders (Church Leadership), but when the Church Leadership "provokes the children to wrath" in how they deal with their honest dissent, then who is it that is really responsible for the results? Read how a spirit of domination in the Church Leadership leads to a rebellious attitude on the part of the Church Members: *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, page 362, Ellen White "The spirit of domination is extending to the presidents of our conferences. If a man is sanguine of his own powers and seeks to exercise dominion over his brethren, feeling that he is invested with authority to make his will the ruling power, the best and only safe course is to remove him, lest great harm be done and he lose his own soul and imperil the souls of others. 'All ye are brethren.' This disposition to lord it over God's heritage will cause a reaction unless these men change their course.

"Those in authority should manifest the spirit of Christ. They should deal as He would deal with every case that requires attention. They should go weighted with the Holy Spirit. A man's position does not make him one jot or tittle greater in the sight of God; it is character alone that God values."

The problem I see here is that it appears the Church Leadership is, by showing this article, trying to cast the blame upon the Church Members... for not following their idea of "proper dissension."

The Church Leadership "ignores the parental character of God" in His merciful, kind, compassionate dealings with

man, and they follow the example of Satan instead, in being more like a dictatorship...

The honest-hearted dissenting Church Members are pressed into hard places by the Leadership, and they feel forced to resort to other means to be heard, then they are blamed for being "rebels."

But who is it that is really at fault here?

J. R. Layman (Jrlayman) on

Saturday, September 30, 2000 - 04:02 pm:

Claudia: RE: "the Church Leadership is, by showing this article, trying to cast the blame upon the Church Members... for not following their idea of "proper dissention". Interesting analysis, I'll buy that. So now we must obtain their permission for what style of dissent we practice, otherwise we're condemned?

Elaine Nelson (Elaine) on

Saturday, September 30, 2000 - 07:30 pm:

Sorry, I totally disagree. We, the members, are not to obey our elders. The church doesn't function in a parent-child relationship; we are the church comprising the priesthood of all believers and as such, it is only in community with unity of Spirit can we work together. Leaders are not to give orders; we are not to obey anyone but God and our Spirit-filled conscience.

A visitor in our SS class this morning (from a town up north) had been a member of the church there and she told how they were so strict that she was asked not to use a taped accompaniment to her singing (formerly she was in The Heritage Singers). The church at one time a few years ago had 300+ members; today there are about 30! Guess few of them passed inspection, or the inspectors at the door!

By Becky Schmidt (Beck) on

Sunday, October 1, 2000 - 03:53 am:

My, my, my, I can't pass up this rare and illustrious opportunity to agree with Elaine. When all is said and done, it be just me who has to be accountable for my deeds. Spiritual leadership is a gift and while there are those who are not gifted who serve as spiritual leaders, there are many who serve one another in good stead. Many spiritual leaders have sacrificed their entire lives to honest, authentic service to God and fellow spiritual travelers.

Certainly, our own spiritual awareness and search can be guided by healthy, Spirit-led leadership. (1Cor.12,13)

Daniel Deakins (Ddeakins) on

Sunday, October 1, 2000 - 01:18 pm:

On the other hand the New Testament speaks volumes on the concept of God's people being part of "family." My take on a family is a group working together with as much harmony as possible.

Guess I can see merit on both Claudia's and Elaine's views. Problem is they both sound very good.

Elaine Nelson (Elaine) on

Sunday, October 1, 2000 - 04:47 pm:

Know any dysfunctional families? Church suffers from same family descriptions, can't it?

By Claudia Burrow (Claudiaburrow) on Sunday, October 1, 2000 - 08:56 pm:

HOW TO DEAL WITH THE BIG PEOPLE IN AUTHORITY
Has there ever been a time in your life when you just

didn't want to go somewhere, didn't want to do something? Yet you did it anyway because that was what was expected of you. That was what everyone else thought that you should do.

When were we taught that it is okay to say what you feel when you feel it? As children we are taught what to say and what not to say if it will make others uncomfortable. The others are big people. We are taught to honor those in authority. Don't talk when the big people are talking. Don't express your ideas if they are different from the big people's ideas. These are the people that we must honor. In honoring the big people we are taught to dishonor ourselves.

We must learn to tell the truth about what we feel, what we want, and what we think. However, as a child, if we have a spontaneous outburst of truth about big people, these clearly observed acts of hypocrisy about big people were not to be discussed or challenged.

Eventually this group of big people grew into elders, employers, and others in authority positions. You knew better than to offend them because they might have something that you needed or wanted. Always the vulnerability, and the having to do what someone else desired. Not honoring your own feelings and opinions.

You find it difficult to speak up for yourself. This denial of what you want, what you need and feel spreads all throughout your life, your relationships. Afraid to go against your husband's wishes, afraid to speak up in a room full of people if their opinion happens to be different than your own. It prohibits your finding the most appropriate ways of responding when your sensibilities are offended by the big people.

Eventually, not honoring what you feel, when you feel it, will turn into anger or rage. It pollutes your relationships. Family relationships. Professional relationships. Personal and intimate relationships. Finally you come to realize that you are somebody important, just as important as anybody else. But you also realize that you should give an answer without purposely offending the other person. And so what are you to do?

You must honor what you feel, honor your own opinion, by saying it the way you would want to hear it. When you say it honestly and with love, then your job is done. And nobody, and I mean not a living soul, has the right to put you down for doing that. Nobody has the right to define what the proper way of saying it to "the big people" ought to be. Only you... for Jesus said, "Treat others as you would want to be treated." Only you know how that would be.

Daniel Deakins (Ddeakins) on

Sunday, October 1, 2000 - 10:23 pm:

When I think of family relationships I think of my family. I hold the opinion that underlings in time will outdo our own abilities through better education, experiences, new thought processes, and so on. At least I thought that is how progress came about over the years. If this is true it might be a good idea to listen to what underlings say for a change. Does anyone know if the official "parents" from the East listen to underlings? ■

at the growing point

Craig Van Rooyen

As a five-year-old, I had no doubt that the color plates in the blue Bible Story Books were simply openings through which the realities of the world appeared in frozen moments—a sort of “best of” photojournalism montage of the ages. The paintings are rendered in excruciating detail; it takes little faith to believe that the Red Sea actually parted when confronted with the aquarium-like walls of water in the Blue Book Exodus. Hebrew children hold their parents’ hands like good children crossing the street. They point out interesting fish in the water walls as they walk down the sandy aisle in their sandals. Photo-real paintings of floating axe heads and arks, falling giants and manna, shining clouds and chariots, impressed on me the three-dimensional truth of the scripture.

My mouth watered for manna while I imagined the taste of the Pillsbury Doughboy’s biscuits; I picked up logs the size of Goliath’s sword and assured myself that I had the strength of a giant-slayer. I even tried running “lightly” across mud puddles to test whether I was one who could muster the proper quantity of faith. And I nervously watched shining sunset clouds that were about the size of a man’s hand. One day, I knew, one of these clouds would explode into an atomic mushroom of angels and trumpets. I shuddered at the color-plate prophecy in the last chapter of the Blue Books entitled “God Wins at Last.”

And so it is with a certain amount of guilt that I have to admit I do not want to enter through the color plate window into Blue heaven and recline on the manicured lawn under the Tree of Life. This Tree of Life grows beside a tame glass river and shades white children dressed in Sabbath clothes. It makes me nervous. The scene looks entirely too much like a Prozac advertisement. I can almost hear the buzzing of a halogen sun that never turns off. And then I realize with dreadful clarity that the Tree of Life grows on the manicured grounds of a mental hospital, where nurses with white robes and gold crowns never raise their voices and Valium-lidded

patients never stop smiling. This Tree of Life was never part of a forest. It was planted after clear-cutting. It bears a different fruit every month in dreadful scheduled repetition. And the trees in the distance are an orchard, not a jungle. Light filters through a pruned canopy, puddling rows of symmetrical shadows.

Perhaps the Tree of Life does not actually straddle a crystal stream on the manicured grounds of Prozac heaven, where the sprinklers are tastefully recessed and the offering calls must last no longer than two minutes.

I have camped in an old-growth forest of sequoia trees and wondered at their survival secrets. Concrete pillars, reinforced with steel re-bar, the age and size of these trees, would be crumbling like the Parthenon by now. But these trees grow stronger with years—another ring, another six inches deeper or wider into the earth. The taproots must be warming by now to the heat of some deep secret core. Here is life that is wild and stronger at the end of each brutal winter.

This Tree that moans above me must have been born at a time when Christ fell under his own tree. The jay (if jays eat sequoia nuts) hopped over this nut instead of eating it. The earth softened at this particular spot, opened up a small depression for the seed. A spring rivulet carved around this seed, sparing it the oblivion of others carried off to sea.

It lay buried for a decade—maybe two—before lightning struck on an adjacent ridge. Holy fire swept through the forest, cracked the hard outer shell, blistered sweet inner meat. And in the Spirit pain, life began—small and green at first, pushing up through ash, growing through the blackness, naked on a hill where the needles of ages past had been bush-burned in the night. Take off your shoes. This is the charred remains of holy ground.

This Tree, conceived in fire, will not be moved. Annie Dillard writes of one such tree that was struck by lightning in a July storm. The upper branches smoldered for months until an October snowstorm doused the burning. This is a Tree of

Life. Shudder. Strain closer to the core of things. Whisper survival secrets to those who are as lucky to live as you are.

My own Tree of Life straddles two continents and contains some years of violent growth rings. My great-grandfather marched north with Cecil Rhodes to kill the Matabele for God, empire, and an African farm. My grandfather, Samuel van Rooyen, or Oupa Sam as we know him, left the farm in Rhodesia after he found his father with an African spear pinning his right forearm to his throat. Oupa Sam moved into my grandmother's boarding house in South Africa while her first husband was away fighting the War. First he moved into a room. Then he moved into her bed. My father, Jan Christian Smuts van Rooyen, was named after a famous South African general. He attended his parents' wedding when he was six.

Oupa Sam, a six-foot-six gold miner, spent two hours every morning in a cart, descending mine shafts into the African earth where he and his crew blasted away at the rock in search of gold. After a full day underground they spent two hours being hauled back to daylight. Oupa Sam was counted lucky by some—in the twisted way that luck is measured inside the ground. The miners in his crew went a long time without drilling into unspent explosives or tunneling into underground lakes. For this combination of luck and bravery they called him Mballung, an African mining camp euphemism meaning "Big Balls." I saw Oupa Sam for the first and only time when I was seven. He was in the hospital and his toes were rotting off from diabetes. "Smutsie, you have a lovely family," he told my father. I was scared of him even as he lay on the hospital bed with black feet sticking out from under the sheet. This, I thought, was no place for Mballung.

My mother did not attend her parents' wedding. They did things the old-fashioned way—matrimony before conception. Quaker sap flows strong in our family. This means that the dark core of things often remains unspoken. Great-great-grandfather Uriah E. Thomas was the king of Quaker cheer—even as he fought in an Indiana cavalry unit during the Civil War.

On July 8, 1863, he wrote home about a near-death experience, "the firing had continued some twenty minutes when a solid shot struck the ground just in front of my horse's head, tearing up the ground and throwing sand and gravel into my face with such force as almost brought me to the ground. A rock the size of a hen's egg struck my horse in the head and brought him to his knees. The shot glanced over us and no damage. I thought I was kilt outright for a moment but after rubbing the dirt out of my eyes I found that I was as sound as a brick, but it was close shavings." Later in the war, Uriah was captured and languished in

Andersonville prison, the Confederate concentration camp in Georgia. After the war he refused to discuss the details of life as a POW. This, perhaps, was too dark even for Quaker faith.

My grandfather Ralph Moore sold his medical practice when my mother graduated from high school and moved the family to Botswana. My mother went to South Africa, where she met my father. They linked little fingers at Friday night vespers. She left a few months later. He quit school to work in a junk yard to earn passage to the United States and then worked in a cookie factory to put himself through theology school. They were mar-

And then I realize with dreadful clarity that the Tree of Life grows on the manicured grounds of a mental hospital, where nurses with white robes and gold crowns never raise their voices and Valium-lidded patients never stop smiling.

ried four years before I was born.

And now my wife and I are at the growing point. The rings laid down before us are close to our centers. She follows her father and my grandfather—studies to be a doctor. She puts on a white lab coat in the morning and returns from the hospital sometimes stained with blood. I spend my days searching for words with meaning—sometimes in a courtroom, sometimes in a church, sometimes in yellow letters penned by Uriah E. Thomas. There are times when I believe I am kilt outright and then, after I rub the dirt out of my eyes, I find I am right as a brick. Oupa Sam is also in me—this man who descended daily three miles deep to hammer at the guts of the earth in search of gold veins.

We are somewhere in the upper branches, where the air is thin and the sky spins and there is no sign of a crystal stream flowing from the throne of God. Sometimes we sit like dazed animals in church pews. Often we don't. We reel at the vertigo and pray for an anointing. Lightning. A Pentecost. Tongues of flame. A smoldering that will sustain us until some October storm arrives. We will add another ring. Hold on through the winter. Strain closer to the core of things. Whisper survival secrets. Thrill to the feel of spring sap rising in this Tree of Life. ■

Craig van Rooyen is Deputy D.A. with Riverside County's District Attorney's Office and dreams of one day inheriting his grandfather's nickname. This story first appeared in Scanner Vol. 5.



in the beginning all over again

Kristina Dumbeck

Recently, I have learned that ordinary life—that which we memory-verse-reciting haystack-eating types often refer to as “secular” is sometimes not completely separate from “spiritual” life. I am beginning to think that perhaps it is only through our human need to categorize and label things, in essence to understand things through our language, that we even separate these two aspects of life at all. Perhaps what is closer to the truth is that life, in all its complexities, is both sacred and secular most of the time maybe all of the time.

In the last 8 months, finding myself about to cross one of life’s greatest milestones, I have had the opportunity to give this idea more thought. I am embarking upon one of those rare life experiences which, as hard as I might try to label and categorize it, has taken on its own shape. It is the experience of becoming a mother, and although it is something completely ordinary, completely natural, completely falling into the “secular” category in one sense, it is truly the most “spiritual” experience I have ever been through. However, it has taken me some time to realize this.

When my husband and I first found out that I was going to have a baby, I was filled with fear. I was afraid of what my new life would be like. I was afraid of the image of myself walking around with a diaper bag slung over one arm, a soggy teddy bear under the other, and a slobbering baby around my neck. I was afraid of being pregnant. I was afraid of the radical changes that my body was about to undergo (stretching, growing, bloating, and eventually, the painful bursting-forth). I was afraid of being in charge of an entire person (I am barely capable of being in charge of myself sometimes).

Only weeks into the adventure I knew that this new life inside me was running its own course;

nature was busily dividing cells and forming them into little person parts. Already I wondered if everything was working the way it was supposed to. Were the cells dividing the way they should? Were all the right parts going to all the right places? Was the food I could keep down (mostly Top Ramen and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches) making my unborn child strong and healthy, or was it starting him or her prematurely down the destructive path of a carbo-junkie? What kind of mother would I be? Was I capable of the selflessness that was required? Would I be able to give my child everything it needs? Could I be open enough? Could I share enough? Could I love enough? In essence I became so concerned with the mundane, the ordinary, everyday stuff, that I was completely unable to appreciate the miracle that was occurring.

One morning, I remember waking up in the shadow of this fear and anxiety (and the usual nausea, as well). I was busy fretting over my clothing that was growing tighter and my career that was becoming less and less predictable, when suddenly the answer came to me. Suddenly, I knew just what to do to cure myself of the chronic worrying. It was really the only thing to do, but until now it had been overlooked. The answer was to pray.

Prayer has been a practice of mine since before I learned to talk, I’m sure. Before I could even speak my own prayers, I was listening to the rhythmic and comforting hum of my parent’s prayers over dinner and beside my bed. When I awoke with nightmares about wolves and bears, or when I had scary thoughts about the house burning down without the kitty getting out, I would run to my mother, who would always react the same way. She would hold me on her lap and pray with me. So it is not a surprise that over the

years, even as my religious beliefs have changed considerably, I have participated in prayer consistently. It is probably the most profoundly spiritual practice that I have maintained throughout my life.

So that morning, I lay there in my bed with the sheets tangled around my legs, the dim morning light peaking through the twisted blinds, my eyes staring at the slim crack in the ceiling, and I prayed as I had when I was a small child. And I knew just what to say. I asked God to make me free and fearless. I asked God to take charge of the person inside me. And as I prayed this simple, short prayer, tears of relief began to fill my eyes and I truly began to feel free. And then, just as quickly, I began to feel tremendous joy! I was finally feeling the immense happiness that creation can bring. By laying my burden down (bedside rather than riverside), I was finally able to feel the pure magic of the experience.

And so it was that I began to awaken to the depth of spirituality in which this experience was shrouded. Because of my fears, I had disallowed myself the connection to the truly sacred side of being pregnant and carrying a child. I had ignored the strange and wonderful beauty that it offers. The act of prayer took away my fear and gave me clarity. It made me able to realize that every day I have with this child is beautiful and precious. I am not in control of it, but I am connected to it. It is a part of me and I am a part of it.

As I sit here today, less than five weeks from the projected date of delivery, feeling what I now know to be a tiny girl person kicking and squirming within me, I am more happy than afraid. Naturally, I still worry. I still wonder what kind of mother I will be and what kind of person she will be. And I still have moments of anxiety over what dangers she faces, both while inside me and outside of me. But these fears are fleeting. They are quickly smothered out by the incomparable pleasure I have of being close to her. My fears no longer compare to the elation of looking at her sonogram pictures and feeling her tiny elbows and knees poke around inside me. Just knowing that in a matter of weeks she will be a whole, kicking, crying, laughing, sleeping person that has come to share my life makes me feel happy beyond reason.

Within this new feeling of freedom and clarity I am able to see so clearly the spiritual value of this experience. Becoming a mother, more than any other experience in my life, has made me realize the undeniable presence of God. Perhaps, by identifying myself in this uniquely creative role—the role of mother, the carrier of human life—I am able to identify more closely with God's role as creator of all things. Perhaps God

too feels afraid for all the dangers that await his children. Knowing that they are unique spirits, creatures of their own instincts and desires, perhaps God too holds his breath as he watches his creation evolving in strange and independent directions. Surely God, as the ultimate designer of life and all its wonderful complexities, must know the immeasurable love that the act of creation engenders. What a privilege that I can share this experience. What a great fortune that through this I am allowed a glimpse into God's experience—a small sampling of God's abundant love.

Through this rare spiritual awakening I am

**Becoming a mother, more
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looking at the world differently. I look at my parents now with new eyes. I see their joy and their fear and their struggles and their successes as they made their way through the experience of parenting. Sometimes I catch myself hoping that my little girl will love me as much as I love my mother—the woman who held me inside her for nine months, who taught me the gift of prayer. And sometimes I find myself hoping that she will feel as proud of me as I did when I listened with six-year-old ears to my father explain to me the science of the solar eclipse or watched him at work in the garage as he carefully cut lumber for my playhouse. I selfishly want to be loved and admired the way that I do my own parents. I guess we all want that. And now that I not only recognize, but welcome and appreciate, the spirituality of becoming a mother, I can savor the profound effect that this baby is having on me. Not yet out of my womb, she is already speaking to me. She is re-creating my connection with my husband, with my parents, and with my God. She is opening my eyes to the strength of prayer and to the liberation it offers. She is bringing all things closer. Already I am listening to the sounds of the world through her ears; I am seeing the sights of this life through her eyes. My every day world is a spiritual world. ■

Kristina Dumbeck is a mother (Sadie Dawn was born on March 14, 1999), wife and writer living in Solano Beach, California. This story first appeared in Scanner Vol 5.

REACHING

Hurting families

inside & outside the church

Steve Daily Ph.D.

hank Hanegraaff, president of the Christian Research Institute, was recently asked, in a radio interview on KBRT, a Southern California Christian station, what he thought of Seventh-day Adventists. His reply, "It depends on which Seventh-day Adventists you are talking about. The denomination has become so diverse that one group bears little resemblance to the next." Adventism has become so fragmented by its pluralism that the last thing we need, in the opinion of many, is more new models for change. And yet current models are not generally working. Most of our North American churches are declining in attendance as aging memberships begin to die off. The majority of our schools are struggling to survive.

For years we have focused on reaching the public through large-scale evangelism (Revelation Seminars, Net Meetings, etc.) and Dorcas or Community Service activities that provide food and clothing for people in need. But these methods have done little to change the general perception which persists in the public square, that Adventists are an isolated sect preoccupied with externalism and sabbatarianism. Nor have they helped us to meet the rapidly escalating needs of fragmenting families in our society.

When we consider the major social problems, and resulting needs, found in some of our major cities today we could prioritize them as follows:

Problem: Single parents and poor dual-career families.

Need: Affordable quality infant and child care

Problem: Declining literacy rates and school performance

Need: Tutoring and mentoring programs

Problem: Increasing delinquency and teenage crime

Need: After-school empowerment programs
Problem: Marital problems and increasing divorce
Need: Affordable community counseling centers
Problem: Other family and community problems
Need: Free adult-education classes/seminars

Most churches and schools, be they Adventist or otherwise, are not reaching out to help meet these needs in our communities. This was not the approach that Jesus modeled or what he calls his church to do today. Christ related to people at the level of their felt needs. He listened to them, assessed their needs and met their needs before he called them to follow him. In the same way our churches and schools have an unprecedented opportunity to follow Jesus' example in our communities by establishing community service centers that are ADRA affiliate agencies.

For years ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) has been known for its impressive work providing humanitarian aid and development around the world. But in recent years, this agency, which is able to attract significant private and public grants, has begun to focus its attention on American cities in a manner that has tremendous implications for our Adventist churches and schools. To illustrate, approximately a year ago we began laying the groundwork to establish an ADRA affiliate in Orange County. We formed committees, made demographic studies, and surveyed neighborhoods identified as having the greatest needs. As a result of this needs assessment we determined and prioritized the needs mentioned above.

The next step was to become integrated into the communities where these needs were most visible. We did this by joining city and county task forces and collaboratives who were also trying to address these needs. As we made friends and established relation-

ships with these people, they expressed tremendous surprise and joy to see Adventists taking a hands-on interest in community affairs. I was told by several community leaders that they were used to seeing Catholics and Lutheran Social Services involved in such a manner, but that this was a new day for Adventists, and that they were thrilled.

We named our ADRA affiliate KEYS (Keeping Education Your Strength) Family Resource Center. And it has been amazing to see how God has opened one door after another since we stepped out in faith and started our Center. Rudy Torres, senior pastor of the Garden Grove church, has a vision for this kind of ministry and is serving as the chair of the KEYS Board. Other local pastors and our Orangewood Academy principal are also serving on the board, but the KEYS center has not drained finances from our local churches or schools in order to operate. By contrast, we have already received more than \$130,000 in grants and donations, with more than 75 percent of this money coming from non-Adventist sources. We currently have applications being processed to receive another \$240,000 in the months ahead. One non-Adventist donor was so impressed with our program that he provided scholarship monies which allowed 54 students to attend our local academy this year, who could not have attended otherwise. Many of the students who received scholarships in turn volunteered to participate in our after-school tutoring program.

Those who say the Adventist church has lost its relevance ... need to take a sip of this "new wine."



In its short existence, our KEYS Center has started a community counseling center, is providing quality child-care and an excellent pre-school program, and has plans to start soon with an Infant/Toddler Development Center with affordable rates for single parents and low-income families. We are presently offering the following adult education curriculum free of charge to our community:

- Healthy Nutrition for Busy Families
- Building Healthy Marriages
- Saving Your Marriage
- Dealing With Divorce
- Single Parenting
- Coping with Adolescence
- Finding Financial Freedom Seminar
- The Many Faces of Domestic Violence
- 5-day Plan to Stop Smoking
- Dealing with Depression
- Child Immunization Program
- Community Health Fair
- Preventative Health Care

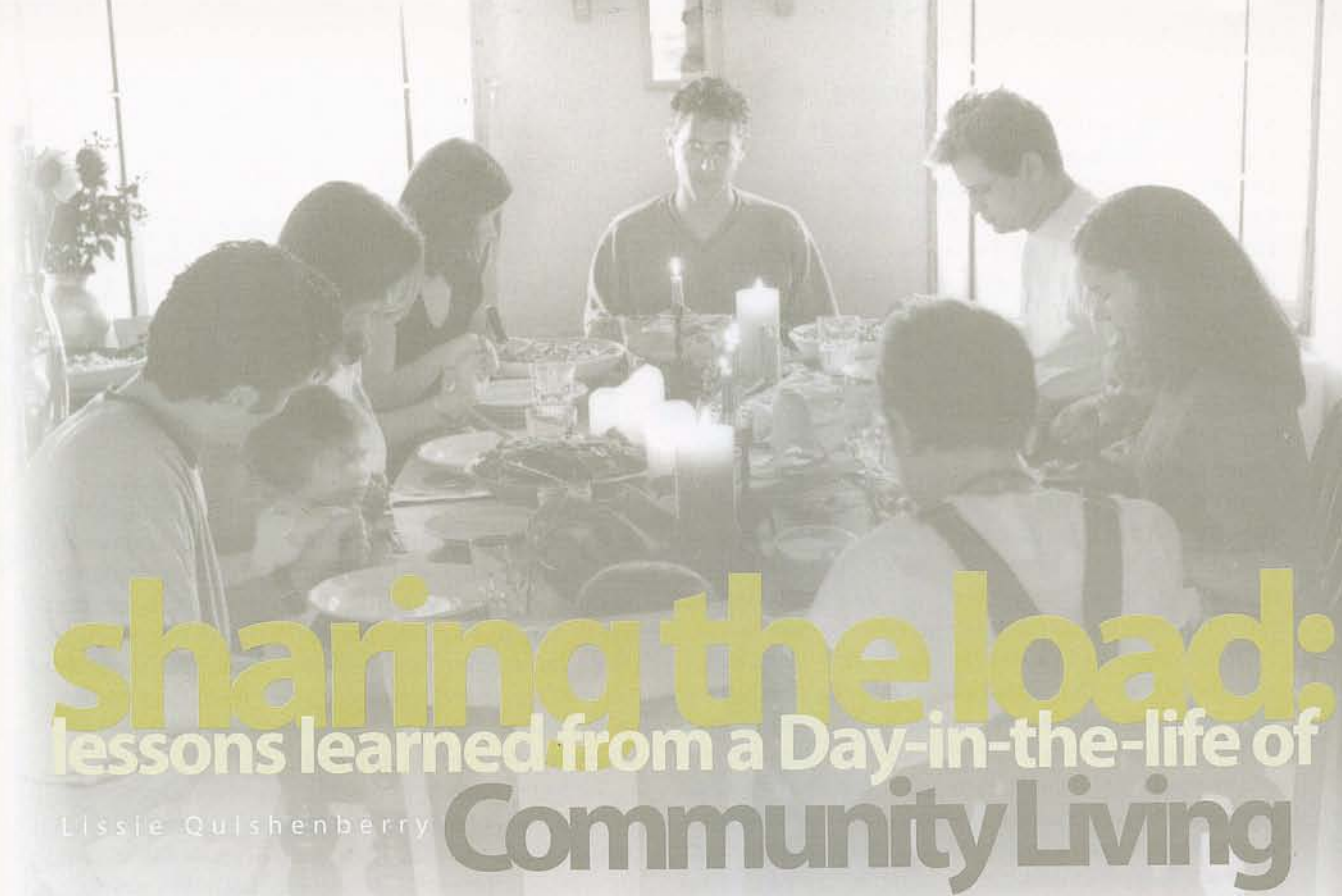
- Stress Management
- Effective Parenting
- Anger Management
- Dealing with Addictions
- Preparing for Aging and Retirement
- Child Abuse and Molestation
- Money Management
- Debt Counseling and Family Law
- Teaching Basic Computer Skills
- Law School for Laymen
- Landlord/Tenant and Neighbor Rights
- Bad Checks and Bankruptcy
- Personal Injuries and Insurance

These meetings have been attended by more than 500 people from our community already, and we are less than a fifth of the way through our curriculum. People are hungry to find churches and schools that are willing to step into the gap to meet these needs. Since January we have seen our church attendance at Garden Grove more than double. What God has done in our community can happen in any community where there is vision and faith.

Some may argue that a program like ours violates, or at least flirts with violating, the line separating church and state. But that is the beauty of an ADRA affiliation. By working through this branch of our denomination, which functions separately from churches and conferences, we can protect our congregational autonomy while still accessing much-needed resources through ADRA that can help to transform our communities. Our ADRA programs function in a nonsectarian context, thus preserving the freedom of our churches and schools to continue teaching the principles that we hold dear.

My vision for the 21st century involves a paradigm shift from the traditional way of relating to communities and peoples to a community-centered, need-based approach that is much more in harmony with the method of Jesus. There has never been more public openness to faith communities trying to help at-risk families. We are incapable of meeting these needs in our own strength, for God has said, "It is not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord" (Zechariah 4:6). This is why prayer has played a foundational role in our ministry and outreach. Those who say that the Adventist Church in North America has lost its relevance, or that our best days are behind us, need to take a sip of this "new wine." God wants to empower our churches and schools in new ways that will not only get our own blood pumping with passion again, but will minister to him (in the person of those in need) as we've never ministered to him before. He offers us the KEYS to his kingdom, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against us. ■

Steve Daily is the director of the KEYS Family Resource Center, an ADRA affiliate agency in Orange County, California. He is a licensed psychologist, a pastor in the Garden Grove SDA Church, an adjunct faculty member at Loma Linda University, and an editorial consultant at Adventist Today.



sharing the load: lessons learned from a Day-in-the-life of Community Living

Lissie Quishenberry

Downtown Glendale's Brand Boulevard is humming with life on a Thursday afternoon. Weekly Farmers' Market is folding up; shoppers and late business lunch parties hurry along the sidewalks. One block east, the city library's sliding doors are in constant motion.

Two blocks further east is Kenwood Street; behind it, a typical city alley—concrete, surrounded by office and apartment buildings, their accompanying dumpsters. You turn into one of the driveways, and suddenly and deliberately, city becomes farm. Green trees spread over a garden bursting with tomatoes, peppers, sunflowers, squash, broccoli, kale. Hummingbirds and white butterflies dart about lantana blossoms. Your leg brushes the herb garden, releasing the pungent aroma of mint. Then you notice something peculiar. There is a little face in the window, a pigtail on either side, and she's watching you intently.

"Who's home?" she interrogates you through the screen.

"Go to sleep, Jamie," my voice drifts through the kitchen window. "Okay," she calls out. Then, "Who's home?" again. "A friend," I tell her. You laugh as I invite you inside, and we peek in on the babies. Sixteen-month-old Kiera is slumbering peacefully in her crib, cheeks rosy with warm sleep. Jamie, who's a precocious three, is once again instructed to lie down. She sticks her pacifier in her mouth and hums. We close the door

quietly and embark on a house tour. Graceful archways, wood floors, black iron fixtures, tiled fireplace, all mark a house designed with love and decorated with care. I blush and thank you for noticing. We complete your backwards tour with a dinner invitation (bring juice) tonight, and you exit through the "monastery" (the entrance hall), out the solid carved door into the front patio garden. An iron "tavern sign" that reads "The Bilberry" peeks over the bright purple Mexican sage. "Short for Billocks and Quishenberrys," I answer your glance.

The Bilberry is an experiment in community living by a group of young Adventists. It started as a joke about a commune. Four months of househunting and several serious conversations later, we signed the rental agreement. Six blocks south of our church on Isabel, it seemed perfect for hosting young adult activities (vespers, concerts, film and game nights, etc.). Not a bad commute to church, either.

But it's not just an activity hub. It's home. Three families under its roof share space, stuff, experiences, good food, many friendships, spirituality, distinct views and perspectives, moms and dads (parents are practically

interchangeable by now), operating expenses, jokes, duties. We eat together, work on house and grounds together, raise the children together, hike, run and ride together, attend Sabbath School and church together, tell each other about our days, our vacations, our conferences, our jobs.

In essence, we share life, for now. We enjoy our privacy; retreating to lone spaces with a phone call, a set of feelings to work out, difficulty with a housemate. But we seem to gravitate to the same rooms together, in the end. There's safety in numbers.

I spend most of my days here, a self-appointed stay-at-home mom, working occasionally as an educator. My days are spent interacting with text, voices on the phone, and household appliances as I juggle caring for small children, my duties as a young adult church leader, and household tasks. In just a few minutes my "other half" is due home for an in-between-jobs lunch. Mike divides his time between a consulting firm and a nonprofit organization aiding youth in the North Pasadena community. Together with Jamie and Kiera, we form the "-berry" sector of the Bilberry.

The back door slams, announcing Mike's arrival. I hear him clumping around downstairs, opening and shutting cupboards in his lunch prep routine. He wanders upstairs, finds me editing a writing piece at the computer. We exchange mid-day updates, a sandwichy kiss, dinner plans. We celebrate my late brother's birthday tonight, inviting a select company. I give Mike a grocery list; he'll stop for supplies on the way home.

Christy, one-third of the "Bil-" in Bilberry, calls from the car on the way to one of her doctoral classes at USC. Her schedule has her hopping between there and Loma Linda University, where she teaches OT classes. Research, studying, and an endless string of meetings fills her schedule to overflowing. Fortunately for us, she unwinds by cooking.

"What can I do to help tonight, Lissie?" she asks.

"Mike's got the shopping covered," I tell her. "I could use some help making Frito plate (my family's term for haystacks)." We swap some information, joke around a bit, she promises to help with dinner.

It's my turn to cook. Every Thursday night is "feast night;" we take turns cooking with our family friend, Elke. This ritual has become essential to the household, as we invite old and new friends to join our table.

A bit later, Paul, Christy's brother-in-law, calls from his programming desk at Neopets. He moved into the Bilberry from Walla Walla about a month after the rest of us and straightaway became our fix-anything genius and one of our chefs.

"Do we need anything for tonight?" he asks.

"We're all set, Pio, thanks."

"What's on the menu?"

"Glennie Frito plate. All you can eat. And birthday cake."

"Cool."

A short while later Greg checks in. He's Christy's



The rules of Bilberry

1. Everyone is entitled to his or her own space, but you'll probably end up in the same room.
2. Watch very little TV. There are too many other good things to do. Movies are okay.
3. Seek forgiveness if you break something that belongs to someone else.
4. Anything in the fridge is up for grabs.
5. Be kind.
6. Thou shalt swing dance after dinner.
7. Everyone guides the children.
8. Support each other's exercise and diet programs with one exception: Moose Tracks ice cream.
9. Some things are distinctly yours, but share as much as possible.
10. Respect each other's spiritual walk.

sharing the load: Community Living

husband and Paul's brother and completes the Billock trio. Plugging away at the last of his PhD research, he graduates from CalTech this winter. Nicest super-genius you'd ever hope to meet. "What's up for tonight?" he asks cheerfully. I give him the spiel and hang up to finish my story. The sun streams in the office window as it drops down into the West. Bilberrians begin to come home. Annemarie and Jolene arrive (Elke can't make it tonight, she's in DC). Jamie greets you through the peekaboo window, smiling. The door opens and Paul invites you in, taking your juice. Most everyone else is in the kitchen preparing the meal, or playing noisily with the babies on the living room rug. People smile and introduce themselves to you.

I'm upstairs hitting "print," at long last. I rush downstairs to finish preparations and stop short in the dining room. Everything is ready, steaming on a beautifully set, candlelit table. I'm speechless as I take in this gift from my housemates, my friends. We gather around the table, take hands, heads bowed. I utter a simple prayer of thanks, then tell the "story" of the meal. We are to stuff ourselves and to be as silly as possible, in memory of my brother James (Jamie's namesake). The group "falls to" willingly and conversation ensues, peppered with little girl-isms, laughter and requests to pass this and that, forks clinking, ice clinking, people telling each other about their days, discussing upcoming elections, events, headline stories. Kiera is just short of talking and everyone competes to see whose name she will attempt next.

After dinner, the babies are bedded down, plates are carried to the kitchen. Mike brings out dessert. It's informal this evening—Moosetracks ice cream, with a birthday candle in each serving. We sing boisterously, eat our ice cream, gather in the living room around the fire. In-

stead of the usual informal talk, roll-up-the-rug swing dancing, or well-chosen movie, tonight it's a story of a girl and her brother and what happened when he died. Mike brings out a Kleenex box and virtually everyone dives for it. The story ends with a song, then silence, then reflective discussion. In this conversation, this activity, you get your first sense of what the Bilberry truly is about. This woman's sorrow is shared by all in the room, and while it is not diminished, it is distributed, each carrying part of the load.

You think about it more as you bid good-bye to the company, get in your car, drive home. This household, smack dab in the middle of the city, has created one family out of many. And this is its foundation: the sharing of the load. ■

Lissie Quishenberry is a self-appointed stay-at-home mom who works occasionally as an educator. She lives at The Bilberry in Glendale, CA.



Seeing Through Places:

Jim Stoicheff

Reflections on Geography and Identity
by Mary Gordon

Where we are, where we have been, affects who we are. But the title, *Seeing Through Places*, is misleading: this is not a book about the way places in the abstract affect how people in general see. Gordon has written a memoir about how specific places have shaped her. She has an uncanny ability to interpret her childhood from an adult perspective.

Much of the book focuses on Gordon's childhood in the 1950s and 1960s in Queens and Long Island, New York. There are chapters dedicated to a next-door neighbor's home, a place where Gordon was babysat, and to spaces where she played when at home.

In the last three chapters Gordon addresses her adulthood. She writes of Rome, both how she imagined it as a child: static as the photos in her ViewMaster; and how she experienced it as an adult: a place designed for seeing, a place she could enjoy so long as she kept her back to the Vatican. Then Cape Cod, where for several summers she rented what she calls ... "the only house that I have ever really loved." She ends up on New York's Upper West Side, finally at home, teaching at Barnard College.

Gordon's world isn't hostile, nor is it entirely hospitable. She had odds to overcome: her father died while she was still young, and she was raised by an alcoholic mother who was partially disabled from polio. And Gordon had something else to overcome: a religion she experienced as oppressive. She lived in an atmosphere where the simplest pleasure could be condemned; even the most congenial situation could be misread as ominous.

Sexuality is significant to the story. In fact, the central moment occurs when a priest tells her at confession not to worry about a particular sexual activity. She leaves the confessional in a daze; from that moment, she is on her way to liberation. Gordon leaves the church in search of herself and a place where she can be intellectually honest, a place where creativity and questioning are encouraged and even rewarded.

That place was a college campus. Gordon "finds herself"—as a student, and later as a professor—in that setting. There she asks, "How did this happen to me?" She had envisioned things much differently: "How has it come about that I have, to this point, escaped my fate, that I am here, in the sun, under the blue sky, not a martyr?" (205)

I ask myself similar questions. Like Gordon, I have felt oppressed by religion. I have left a church, and I have returned. But the person who returns is not the person who left. Like the prodigal son, one sees a lot on one's journey. But in contrast to the prodigal son, one need not end up eating with the pigs; like Gordon, one can learn along the way. Nor is the place to which one returns the same as the place one left. It cannot be. For just as place affects how we see, so does our vision—a vision determined partly by where we have been—affect our experience of place.

Gordon has admirably described her own spiritual journeys. Readers who have escaped, or who long to escape, a religion they experience as oppressive are especially likely to appreciate the book. But most readers should find *Seeing Through Places* an instructive and evocative guide to evaluating the places that have shaped who they are.

A memoir should do more than tell us about an interesting person. Like all good writing, it ought to tell us something about ourselves. Gordon's writing does more than present pictures of her childhood: she conjured elements of my own. My reading was hindered, though profitably, by the desire to stop and ponder how places affected my seeing. My pondering, like Gordon's memoir, was occasionally nostalgic, but more often an attempt to look honestly, really look, at where I'd been, and how that made me who I am. ■

BOOK >>

Seeing Through Places: Reflections on Geography and Identity By Mary Gordon
Scribner, 254 pages, \$23, hardcover

Creation, Catastrophe and Calvary

Ervin Taylor

This volume has as its subtitle, “Why A Global Flood Is Vital to the Doctrine of the Atonement.” When I first read this, I had to make sure that my eyes were correctly focusing, since, at first reading, the question did not make any sense—or, using a more contemporary expression, this statement did not compute.

What could a purported major worldwide geological event, which is supposed to have occurred within the last 10,000 years, and for which there is little scientific evidence, have to do with a complex theological concept that has been the subject of debate among Christian theologians for more than fifteen hundred years? The editor of the volume states it as follows: “What impact, if any, does the answer to... questions about the extent and effect of the biblical flood have upon our salvation?” (p. 11)

I assumed initially that since I lack formal theological training, my puzzlement was a function of my ignorance. So I read on, hoping that I would be able to gain an insight about how an understanding of the geologic column could have anything to do with a Christian’s view of salvation—or as the volume’s editor expressed it, “What do sedimentary layers have to do with Calvary?” (p. 120). I also read on to be able to contrast and compare the positions taken in this treatment with those expressed by other Adventist authors in another recently published book—*Creation Reconsidered; Scientific, Biblical, and Theological Perspectives*, a volume edited by James Hayward of Andrews University and published by the Association of Adventist Forums.

Creation, Catastrophe and Calvary contains a foreword, an introduction, and nine chapters by eight authors. Chapter 6, “The Geologic Column and Calvary: The Rainbow Connection,” written by the editor, presents the essential message of the book. It is that how one interprets the origin of the geologic column i.e., whether it was deposited over millions of years or very rapidly in a worldwide deluge “can either support or demolish the gospel.” (p. 121). Why is this? A worldwide flood “geologically establishes the needed causal connection between human sin and all death by burying animals into the geologic column subsequent to Adam’s sin, thus confirming the truth of the biblical claim that all death is the wage of sin.” (p. 115).

He further argues that “if geology shows that the biblical claim of the causal relationship between Adam’s sin and the death of animals is false, we could ask on what grounds would the biblical claim about

the historicity of the causal connection between Adam’s sin and his death as outlined in the fall narrative be true? (p. 113). This reviewer would argue that this is an excellent question. What indeed is the “biblical” claim on this point? More to the point, is it a “biblical claim” or a claim developed within a particular fundamentalist-oriented hermeneutic?

Why must this flood be worldwide? Because the “forgiveness of human sin seems to depend in part upon the historicity and universality of the flood.” (p. 115). If a worldwide flood never occurred, then geology would “undermine the atoning power of Calvary.” (p. 115). If “...fossils in the geologic column lived and died for millions of years before the appearance of Adam and his sin, the geologic column destroys the causal relation between sin and human death...” (p. 113). “Because the conventional interpretation [i.e., a scientific interpretation] of the geologic column [denies] any causal relationship between animal death and human sin, [this undermines] the atoning or sin-forgiving power of Jesus’ death.” A local, Near-Eastern flood also “undermines the atonement” because it is “unable to produce the existing global geologic column” (p. 119).

Some readers might wonder about the subtitle of the chapter: “The Rainbow Connection.” The rainbow, which is used by one of the writers/editors of Genesis as a symbol to signify the resolve of the deity to never again destroy humanity by water, is employed by Dr. Baldwin as a sign of “God’s global, geologic column-producing flood...” (p. 120). We are informed that the “message of the rainbow for the geologist today” is that the geological column did not form “over billions of years, but came into being rapidly by means of the divinely initiated, unimaginably violent, planet-wide flood described in Genesis 6-9.” (p. 120).

In an introductory chapter, Dr. Baldwin also provides an exegesis of Revelation 14:7 to conclude that it provides an “implied specific endorsement” (p. 35, footnote 11) for a six-day creation, the “need for a global flood... [and] a hermeneutic that interprets the early narratives of Genesis in a literal, historical fashion.” (p. 33). Some readers may find it fascinating that this expansive interpretation is obtained from a single verse of biblical text.

The other chapters in the volume provide supporting and confirming interpretations to bolster the core message. For example, in the chapter by the late Gerhard Hasel, it is argued that the “days” of Genesis 1 are literal days. Randall Younker insists that Genesis 1 and 2 are fully compatible creation accounts. Richard Davidson

argues that the writer of Genesis views the flood as a "worldwide event." Regretfully, Dr. Davidson never addresses the question of whether "worldwide" would mean the same thing to an ancient Near Eastern writer that it now means to a modern reader. (Those interested in a more comprehensive and better reasoned treatment of this issue may wish to read Raymond Cottrell's discussion on the "Extent of the Genesis Flood" included in the *Creation Reconsidered* volume noted above.)

A chapter by Ariel Roth on the geology of the Grand Canyon expresses his faith that a global flood produced the geologic column. In Norman Gulley's "Evolution: A Theory in Crisis," we have a theologian who wishes to lecture us about science and confidently proclaims that Seventh-day Adventists "believe that Satan lies behind the various forms of evolutionary theory." Unfortunately, he never tells us how he has determined what all SDAs believe on this topic.

What is a nontheologian to make of such a book? This volume vividly demonstrates the principle that most of us are lifelong prisoners of our presuppositions. Dr. Baldwin views salvation in terms of a "blood atonement" process, ignoring the number of alternative explanations of the Christian salvation motif. The other contributors to this book apparently share his view—a position that, along with biblical inerrancy, is one of the historic cornerstones of classic Protestant fundamentalism. For example, the author of the foreword, Harold Coffin, suggests that the "core of the gospel" is the "substitutionary death of Christ." The cynic in me sees this book as the product of an intellectual "panic attack" as certain Adventist theologians and others of traditional orientation realize that more and more informed and educated members of their faith community can no longer ignore the massive weight of both scientific evidence and theological scholarship that does not square with traditional SDA understandings of the opening chapters of Genesis. One wonders if Dr. Baldwin and the other writers whose contributions are included in this volume would feel more comfortable living in the 18th century—perhaps at the same time as William Paley—a time when pesky scientific data did not complicate one's theological conjectures.

On the positive side, Dr. Baldwin calls for all participants in the dialogue on this subject to "place all issues onto the table for discussion" (p. 11), to "exercise genuine respect, love, and courtesy to one another, and to demonstrate an openness to new ideas." (p. 116). All can endorse and subscribe to these fine and helpful sentiments. Regretfully, the views expressed in most of the rest of this volume reflect a fundamentalist hermeneutic that is both scientifically and theologically problematic. ■

BOOK >>

Creation, Catastrophe and Calvary

By John Templeton Baldwin, ed.

Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 2000

AAW meet for annual conference

Continued from page 7

assistant professor of religion at La Sierra University.

Other meetings through the day included a talk on "In My God's Secret Garden," by Ileana Douglas, vice-president for academic affairs at Pacific Union College, and a panel on Ellen White by Kit Watts, director of LSU's Women's Resource Center, and Terrie Aamodt, professor of English and history at Walla Walla College. A Sabbath vesper service and agape feast concluded the day.

On Sabbath morning there were reports from Maranatha, *Women of Spirit* magazine, LSU's Women's Resource Center, and TEAM ministries. Then Bev Sedlacek, a psychiatric counselor, and Bonnie Dwyer, editor of *Spectrum*, spoke on the topic, "Why We Need Each Other," pointing out the need for both "flaming liberals" and "dyed-in-the-wool" conservatives to love and listen to each other. Other activities included a liturgy, "The Dance of Light," by Hanks-Harwood, and a sermon by Jean Sheldon entitled, "The Legacy of Eve," which focused on Mary Magdalene.

Speakers for the afternoon included Carolina Rosa, a religious liberty activist, on the subject of "Liberty." Later a panel of college women from PUC, led by Marilyn Glaim, professor of English, discussed "What We Want Our Older Sisters in the Church to Know." They emphasized their desire not to be prejudged, but to be accepted and loved as they are.

Saturday night was the annual Women of the Year banquet, at which Adventist women are honored in various categories. This year the following awards were made: Elaine Estes Drury, Family Life; Karen M. Flowers, Church Life; Effie Jean Ketting, Lifetime Achievement; Dorothy Ellen Valcarcel, Community; Rebekah Wang-Cheng, Outstanding Achievement; Penny Estes Wheeler, Professional Life; and Miriam Wood, Lifetime Achievement. ■

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are you ready for Jesus to come?

James Stirling

We have a very short-sighted view of this fundamental question.

We sing about it in church and put it on bumper stickers. It jingles nicely and conjures pictures of clouds of angels, trumpet blasts, Jesus on a throne and the wild excitement of resurrection and rapture and space travel.

But what does it mean to "be ready"? Does being ready somehow mean that all your sins have been completely confessed and forgiven so no "spot" shows on your record? Does it mean having such a stalwart character that you can "stand without an intercessor" and yet hold your head high because you know you are invulnerable to temptation? Heaven help us; few can say honestly they have achieved anything near these goals.

We need to look at the fuller implications of getting ready. The apocalyptic part of this experience would occupy only a small part, a brief instant compared with what follows. What will it be like to live in a community where people think and feel and behave like real Christians?

Think about the radical life that Jesus lived, disregarding the high and lofty, recognizing the "little ones" who were held in such contempt by the church hierarchy, even treating women like equals with men.

How much adjusting will it take for us to become members of a "redemptive community," looking out for the good of others, trying to help others achieve their full potential as children of God?

How much effort will we have to put into learning to listen to others who have suffered many hurts at the hands of their supposed "brethren"?

Do you hope to have a part in making heaven that kind of community? Then maybe when you sing that song again you can think about practicing those behaviors now. The community of believers on the other side of the eschaton will not require force to treat one another right; they will not look for political advantage in selecting those to whom they extend favors. There will be no talk of "Adam's birthright;" Jesus said both men and women will be as angels. Their only head will be Christ.

Won't it be great to live in a community like that? Wouldn't it be great to live in a community here and now where people were practicing up for the great experience in heaven? Are you ready? ■