Cliff Goldstein: ‘A Safe Place’

Posted: 30 Apr 2011 04:42 PM PDT

Educate Truth shares the following article from The Adventist Review as a service to readers.

Cliff Goldstein

As I have said numerous times: Adventism and evolution are mutually exclusive. If one is true, the other is false. Ergo, you can be an Adventist or an evolutionist, but not both. Our name, Seventh-day Adventist, implies a rejection of any creation story that’s premised not on the six days before the seventh but on eons of evolutionary hell. Honesty demands that those who call themselves Seventh-day Adventist ought to at least believe in what the name they claim stands for.

Because I’ve taken this unyielding position on what’s an unyieldable position, I’ve been accused—both in the flesh and in the fleshly androgyny of cyberspace—of advocating that anyone who believes in evolution ought to be thrown out of the church.

That’s false. What I’ve said is that it’s hard to see how anyone who believes in evolution would want to be in this church. Nothing Adventist makes sense with the neo-Darwinian synthesis as backdrop. To paraphrase a fundamentalist atheist, evolution is an acid that erodes everything it touches. That would include the
three angels’ messages of Revelation 14, which have the central theme of creation and redemption, two truths nullified by evolution, even a “theistic” kind. (Who’d want to worship a theos who created like that, anyway?)

To reiterate: be a Seventh-day Adventist or be an evolutionist, but let’s end the charade of thinking one can be both. (Read more)

LSU student petition criticizes curriculum

Posted: 30 Apr 2011 03:21 PM PDT

UPDATEED 4/30/11: Information from The Press Enterprise has been added to this article.

By Educate Truth Staff
Aug. 20, 2010

According to a Press Enterprise® article dated Saturday May 22, 1999, “A group of La sierra University students complained to the board of trustees Friday that certain required courses lack appropriate emphasis on Jesus and the Bible.” The petition was signed by 300 of La Sierra’s 1,400 students. In the article, senior history/political science major, Monte Bridges said, “Our biggest opposition is that it attacks what the school was founded on, which is the Bible. It says, in essence, that all religions are paths to the same truths. The problems is that Christ said ‘I’m the truth; I’m the way’ I’m the life.” “We pay a lot of money for a Christian education and we’re not being given it,” Bridges said.

The LSU student paper, The Criterion, surveyed students and found 93 percent of the students opposed the core program of course requirements.

Then president, Larry Geraty, was also interviewed in the article:

Geraty said that although the university has students from more than 35 religions, its focus will always be in the Seventh-day Adventist tradition. The approach, he said, is scholarly, not Bible-study, as some students may have experienced in high schools. “It’s not like Sunday school,” Geraty said. “It’s not like family worship. I think it’s just a question of growing up. And that’s the whole reason why you come to college.”

... Geraty said next year’s core courses will have more emphasis on the Seventh-day Adventist viewpoint but the course topics won’t change. “Anytime you introduce a new program, there are criticisms,” he said. “But we will take seriously the concerns of students.”

According to Steve Daily, the campus chaplain at the time, administrators have ignored students since the core classes were imposed in 1996. “The students haven’t been listened to,” he said. “They’ve been ignored.” “I think when
that happens, there's a problem," said Daily.

The petition states the “C.O.R.E. Curriculum/University Studies program” at LSU is “unacceptable.” It goes on to list the “total unwillingness of administration to evaluate the program or survey student opinion, and the suppression of dissenting views relating to C.O.R.E.” as one of its eight reasons why the program should be dismissed:

Dear Alumnus,

We the students of La Sierra University have reached a crisis that calls for the desperate attention of all concerned parties. Due to the complete lack of respect on the part of the administration to listen and acknowledge the students and our complaints on the CORE curriculum, we have collectively gathered together to ask for help. In the last two weeks over three hundred student signatures (approximately one third of the student body) have been gathered to voice our deep concern. It must be stated from the start that this letter is only being sent out because of a desperate situation.

The petition that students signed, addresses eight issues. Stated on the petition are the more prominent reason for the dismissal of CORE. Your immediate attention to this matter is vital to ensure changes necessary in bringing this institution back to the Biblical principles that Adventist education was founded on. We believe that Adventist education is precious and rare and this letter is written in the hope that you will help to keep this alive. You can let your influence be felt by letting those in decision making positions know how you feel. It must be restated that your help in this matter is absolutely crucial to bringing about the changes desperately needed.

May God Bless you in every way!

(signatures)

Monte Bridges (History/Political Science)
Shawn Paris (Religious Studies/Pre-Seminary)
Manasseh Nwaigwe (Health Science/Pre-Med)
(300+ Students)

P.S. We can be reached at: FrustratedLaSierraStudents@usa.net

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

We the undersigned students of La Sierra University find the C.O.R.E. Curriculum/University Studies program to be unacceptable for the following reasons:

1. Its misrepresentation of the Christian God, and total lack of emphasis on Christ and the Bible.
2. Its underlying humanistic (versus Christian) values and foundation.
3. Its emphasis that “religions are different paths leading to the same truth.”
4. The general inconsistency, unfairness, and incompetence of team teaching.
5. The general inability of credits to transfer in and out of the program.

6. The superficial, and liberal political content of the classes.

7. Subtle subversive attacks on Christianity and Monotheism.

8. The total unwillingness of administration to evaluate the program or survey student opinion, and the suppression of dissenting views relating to C.O.R.E.

"La Sierra students criticize core classes" by Karen Joseph. Not archived online.
CLIFF GOLDSTEIN

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Because I’ve taken this unyielding position on what’s an unyieldable position, I’ve been accused—both in the flesh and in the fleshly androgyny of cyberspace—of advocating that anyone who believes in evolution ought to be thrown out of the church.

That’s false. What I’ve said is that it’s hard to see how anyone who believes in evolution would want to be in this church. Nothing Adventist makes sense with the neo-Darwinian synthesis as backdrop. To paraphrase a fundamentalist atheist, evolution is an acid that erodes everything it touches. That would include the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14, which have the central theme of creation and redemption, two truths nullified by evolution, even a “theistic” kind. (Who’d want to worship a theos who created like that, anyway?)

To reiterate: be a Seventh-day Adventist or be an evolutionist, but let’s end the charade of thinking one can be both.

That being said, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has to be a safe place for anyone who struggles with this issue. Notice, I said struggles. I understand the challenge that science, with all its prejudices, speculation, and presuppositions, poses, especially to anyone who doesn’t realize just how heavy-laden with subjectivity even the hardest sciences can be (much less something as speculative as what supposedly happened to some proto-RNA a billion years ago). I understand that the secular academy is manically hostile to any hint of teleology, design, or goal in nature (other than, perhaps, survival), and is not only going to interpret everything through an a priori materialistic lens but demand that every student do it too. I understand that much of today’s science will be overturned, as has happened to many now-defunct scientific theories; but I also understand that, until then, current theories can seem compelling. I understand, too, that the world that science studies today is not the same as the original creation; instead, it suffers from the “double curse” (as Ellen White called it) of Adam’s and Cain’s sin, as well as massive water damage, i.e., the Flood. Therefore, what is can easily lead even the most astute observer astray about what was.

Thus it isn’t hard to sympathize with those who are confronted with scientific “facts” that contradict all they have believed. We have to be sensitive to their struggles; we have to affirm them in their search; and we have to create an environment in which they can, without being judged or condemned, ask questions as they work through these issues.

In short, our church has to be a safe place for anyone struggling with this attack on his or her faith.

That being said, the church also has to be a safe place for our students. It’s heart-wrenching to think that, on occasion, young people in our Seventh-day Adventist colleges face teachers who, though professing to be Seventh-day Adventists, hold a view on evolution that nullifies that profession. It’s a problem that is now coming more to the attention of church members who are anxious for church leaders to deal with it. The recent Adventist Accrediting Association decision to offer only a limited extension of term to La Sierra University because of its acknowledged mistakes in conveying the church’s belief on creation exemplifies how seriously the church is dealing with this issue.

No question, the overwhelming vote at the Atlanta General Conference session in 2010 to strengthen the language on the Fundamental Belief regarding creation shows the church’s legitimate concern about the inroads of a theory that, at its core, undermines everything we Seventh-day Adventist Christians believe. As Paul said: “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned” (Gal. 1:8). And make no mistake: evolution is another gospel.

Yes, the church needs to be a safe place: safe for those struggling with evolution, and safe for those who have rejected it.

Clifford Goldstein is editor of the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide. This article was published April 21, 2011.