13th ANNUAL SPRING RETREAT

Retreat Theme:
The B-List: Early Christian Writings That Didn’t Make the Cut (into the Bible)—and What They Tell Us about the Early Church

Speaker: Dr. John R. Jones
La Sierra University

Date/Time: May 20-22, 2011

Place: Pine Springs Ranch
58000 Apple Canyon Road
Mountain Center, CA 92561
Ranch phone: (951) 659-4131

Directions: A map and directions will be provided to retreat registrants

REGISTRATION FORM BELOW

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: April 15

About the Theme

Are you aware that there are documents, including some that have come to light rather recently, that have titles such as The Gospel of Thomas, The Gospel of Peter, The Gospel of Mary, The Acts of Paul and many others that were not included in the New Testament? Why were they written and why are they not part of the Bible? What do these other “gospels” teach us about Jesus, his relationship with Mary, the early Christian church and its appeal to women? What is “Q” and what do we know about it? Dr. Jones will lead us in a fascinating journey as he answers these and many other questions. There will be ample time for questions and discussion. Please complete and mail the attached Registration Form by April 15.

Retreat Sessions

Friday evening: “So what was Leigh Teabing talking about, anyway?”

The Da Vinci Code is built around the claim that there were many early gospels, which the patriarchs of the Church eventually suppressed—and which would surprise us if we had read them. Parts of this theory are true, and parts are not—but which is which? First, a quick overview of non-canonical “gospels:” general characteristics, variety of viewpoints, connections back into various aspects of Jesus’ life, driving motives. And a look at the stages in the preservation of the memories about Jesus.

Then we’ll look at the actual text of certain of the earliest non-canonical gospels—a process that’s both entertaining, intriguing and serious. We sample materials from the only two serious contenders for pre-New Testament gospels: (a) The Gospel of the Nazareans, and (b) that fascinating, mysterious source called “Q” – a pretty clear example of a “gospel behind the gospels.”

So what do we learn from these sources, that we didn’t know before?

Sabbath morning: “The Other Muhammad Ali”

An amazing discovery in the sands of Egypt that rivals that of the Dead Sea Scrolls—yielding a treasure-trove that includes the Gospel of Thomas and 45 other early Christian documents not included in the New Testament. What are we to make of these?

Sabbath morning #2: “Peter, Paul and Mary”

We’ll look at the Gospel and the Acts of Peter, and then turn to especially consider two women who obviously bothered the early Christians a lot: The story of the Gospel of Mary is itself an episode of discovery and recovery in the midst of two world wars and other tragedies. And it preserves the early Christian intrigue with the relationship between Jesus and Mary, and its influence in the early Christian movement. Three fragmentary copies of this text exist, dating from the 3rd and 5th centuries; but the material they preserve has been dated on linguistic grounds to the late 1st to early 2nd centuries. Definitely worth a look!

The second story of an early Christian woman derives from the Acts of Paul, and takes place in Iconium. It too records material that, while not traceable back to Paul, appears to be in circulation by the end of the first century AD. Not only is the story of Thecla a rattling good yarn, it reveals much about early Christianity’s appeal to the female half of the human race. How to relate this tradition to the appeal for public respectability and conventional conduct in the epistles to Timothy and Titus?

Sabbath afternoon: “…and last but not least, Judas”

One of the most despised figures of history, Judas too has his own early document—completely unknown until one threadbare papyrus copy was discovered by some peasants in Egypt in the late 1970’s, and then subjected to a bizarre series of cloak-and-
dagger misadventures until finally deciphered in 2000. We’ll view a bit of the National Geographic video tracing this strange story, then read what we have of the actual text in English translation. Then we’ll ask ourselves what motives prompted the composition of this strange and haunting work?

**Sunday morning: “So what can we conclude about all this?”**

We complete our survey of these early non-canonical Christian materials with a look at the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, the earliest attempt at a church manual, regarded by some scholars as predating the canonical gospels.

There is much more: The *Epistle of Barnabas*, dating from the turn of the 1st/2nd century; the *Epistles of Ignatius* bishop of Antioch, written to a half-dozen churches as he was passing through them en route to his martyrdom in Rome (108AD), the *Shepherd of Hermas*, a visionary Christian apocalypse written during the first half of the 2nd century, and more. Each of these works was regarded as sacred scripture in some early Christian circles, and functioned as part of their Bible. At the same time, certain of our New Testament books—most notably the *Epistle to the Hebrews* and the Revelation of St. John—were seriously doubted in certain Christian groups. As the canon gradually took shape in the 5th century and beyond, we consider anew the influences that gave it shape—and what we can learn about the first believers from all of their writings.

**About Dr. John R. Jones**

John, a third-generation Adventist, was raised in the Philippine Islands, where his parents served on the faculty of Philippine Union College. After graduation from Walla Walla College and completing masters programs at Andrews University, John and his wife Patricia moved to Napa, California for a year of pastoral internship and nursing. They then accepted invitations to Hong Kong Adventist College where, for five years, John chaired the theology department and Pat established and administered their School of Nursing.

After doing masters and doctoral programs at Vanderbilt University, John and Pat returned to Asia in 1978, where, for nine years, John taught at the Far Eastern Division’s theological seminary and Pat established and administered the Division’s graduate nursing program.

John has been with Loma Linda and La Sierra Universities since 1987, when he joined the central administration of LLU as Senior Assistant to the Vice President for Academic Administration. Following the separation of the two institutions in 1990, he served as Dean of the School of Religion at La Sierra until four years ago when he hung up his administrative hat “for good” and returned to his first love, full-time teaching.

John’s areas of expertise are New Testament studies and Asian religions. A well-known preacher and public speaker, he is a member of the American Academy of Religion, the Society of Biblical Literature, and the Adventist Society of Religious Studies. His extracurricular interests include several languages, folk music of several traditions, and conducting adventurous study-tours “to obscure places like Tibet and the Silk Road.”

Pat teaches in the graduate nursing program at Loma Linda University and serves as Associate Director of the Health Ministries Department of the General Conference. Their married daughters Carla and Janelle are cultural anthropologist and psychiatrist, respectively.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

Fall 2011 – pending—see next Newsletter for the date, new meeting time, speaker and topic

Winter 2012 – David Neff, Editor, *Christianity Today* (date and topic to be determined)

**SDAF NEWS**

In case you were wondering … well over 100 people attended the March 5, 2011 SDAF meeting when Drs. Dick Osborn and Richard Winn discussed the role of faith-based colleges in the world of higher education. Because of other competing activities and the beautiful pre-spring San Diego weather, there was a smaller crowd for the question and answer session but the quantity of high quality questions kept the presenters busy and challenged for well over an hour. As always, CD and audiocassette recordings of the meeting are available (see order form below).

SDAF has a new address… With the relocation of the SDAF office from Lakeside to the San Diego community of Tierrasanta, it was impractical to maintain our longstanding PO Box in the La Mesa post office so we have a new one just a few blocks from our headquarters as indicated in the masthead and on the Membership / Subscription Application form below.

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**San Diego Adventist Forum**

Membership / Subscription Application

Name(s) __________________________________________

Address __________________________________________

City __________________________________ State ___ Country ________

Postal Code ________ Phone ( ) __________

Email ____________________________________________

2010-1 membership

(single $30/couple $40) $__________

2010-1 meeting recordings

___ Compact Disc format (domestic $69 / international $99) $__________

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SDAF Newsletter

___ Email version (free) $__________

___ Printed version (US/Canada $20, others $30) $__________

Tax-deductible contribution $__________

TOTAL ENCLOSED $__________

Mail with payment to:

SDAF, PO Box 421320, San Diego, CA 92142
SAN DIEGO ADVENTIST FORUM—13th ANNUAL RETREAT

LOCATION:  PINE SPRINGS RANCH, MOUNTAIN CENTER, CALIFORNIA

DATE:  MAY 20-22, 2011

THEME:  The B-List: Early Christian Writings That Didn't Make the Cut—
and What They Tell Us about the Early Church
(see May Newsletter for more information)

SPEAKER:  John R. Jones, PhD, Associate Professor of Religion, La Sierra University

REGISTRATION FEE: rates listed below depend on number of occupants per room and include

- five meals per person
- two nights lodging (two double beds per room—maximum occupancy = 4 persons)
- five presentations
- Saturday night entertainment

REGISTRATION FORM

PRIMARY CONTACT ____________________________________________________________

MAILING ADDRESS ____________________________________________________________

CITY __________________________ STATE _____ ZIP ____________

TELEPHONE (______) __________________________

EMAIL __________________________

NAME OF FIRST OCCUPANT __________________________________ $220 total for 1

NAME OF SECOND OCCUPANT __________________________________ $340 total for 2

NAME OF THIRD OCCUPANT __________________________________ $450 total for 3

NAME OF FOURTH OCCUPANT __________________________________ $560 total for 4

TOTAL DUE for room, meals & meetings $ ____________

Please make check payable to SDAF and mail by April 15 to:

San Diego Adventist Forum
PO Box 421320
San Diego, CA 92142

Note: CHECK-IN TIME—3:30 p.m. Friday