

belief which perhaps makes our church uniquely qualified to welcome persons with disabilities into our fellowship.

Today, many churches of other denominations are reaching out to persons with disabilities. Many have one or more services interpreted for persons who are deaf. Many churches are also being made physically accessible to persons who use wheelchairs or other assistive devices. And I understand that some

churches are working on study curriculums that can be used by the cognitively impaired. I am pleased with all of this progress. In fact, I think these types of reforms are well overdue and *must* be embraced by our church, and many congregations are doing just that. But I also believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church may have a unique role to play in enabling persons with disabilities to reach their full God-given potential.

monkeys, lions that roared till the ground shook, and poisonous snakes invading the children's quarters of their bungalow on the mission compound. The ebony elephants and carved ivory tusks that decorated the parlor of their Maryland home substantiated the exotic stories.

My personal roots in the Adventist community grew strong during a protracted family crisis. My parents' marriage disintegrated over a period of six years or so, and as things became more and more difficult at home I began to look elsewhere for emotional stability and personal support. I found it in the close-knit and caring community of our church and the church school my sister and I attended. Caring teachers, church leaders, and even childhood friends were always there for us. They seemed to understand our situation and respond to our needs for companionship without prying for explanations or offering advice.

These troubling experiences had some lasting effects on my religious outlook. Our family's problems made me sensitive to life's larger questions at a rather early age, and the church's teachings provided me with helpful answers to these questions. Moreover, the profound reassurance I drew from my religious community and its beliefs validated my convictions on something much deeper than an intellectual level. So, I began to identify the things about religion that really mattered, and my confidence in them became firmly established.

At the age of 10 I requested baptism. And three years later I enjoyed the most intensely religious phase of my life. Over a period of several months, God became a vivid personal presence in my life. He occupied my first thoughts in the morning and my last thoughts of the evening. I spent

Why I Am a Seventh-day Adventist



by Richard Rice
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parative Study" (Vol. 2, No. 1, Winter 1970).

By one great aunt's account, I am a fourth- or fifth-generation Adventist. I'm not sure which. I only know that my ancestors were looking for Christ's return long before I arrived. And they not only looked forward to it, they spent their lives preparing for it and helping the church finish the work. My grandparents on both sides left the United States for overseas mission work. In fact, church leaders encouraged my mother's parents to marry and leave college before they graduated. The end of time was near, the fields were white with harvest, and church policy prevented my grandfather from entering mission service as a single person. After their wedding, the couple went directly from the church to the railway station and caught a train to San Francisco. There they boarded a ship to the Far East, where they spent seven years helping to establish the Adventist work in Korea. My mother was born in Seoul in 1919.

My father's family served for a seven-year term in Portuguese West Africa. I grew up riveted by Granddaddy's accounts of boisterous pet

hours in prayer and personal Bible study. Those months were the high-water mark of my religious life. Ever since, I have regarded them as the time when I became thoroughly "converted." My later decisions to study theology in college and prepare for a career in ministry were in large measure a natural consequence of that experience.

With the exception of ninth and 10th grades, I attended Adventist schools all the way through seminary. Religion classes were a regular part of the curriculum, and of course they formed my academic concentration at La Sierra College. I was the type of student who generally enjoyed school, and with few exceptions I found things to appreciate in all my classes and teachers. However, with my natural tendency to

look at religious questions from a philosophical perspective, I found the classes Fritz Guy taught during my first two years of college in the Gospels and in theology especially stimulating. (He took a study leave after my sophomore year to complete his doctorate in theology at the University of Chicago Divinity School.)

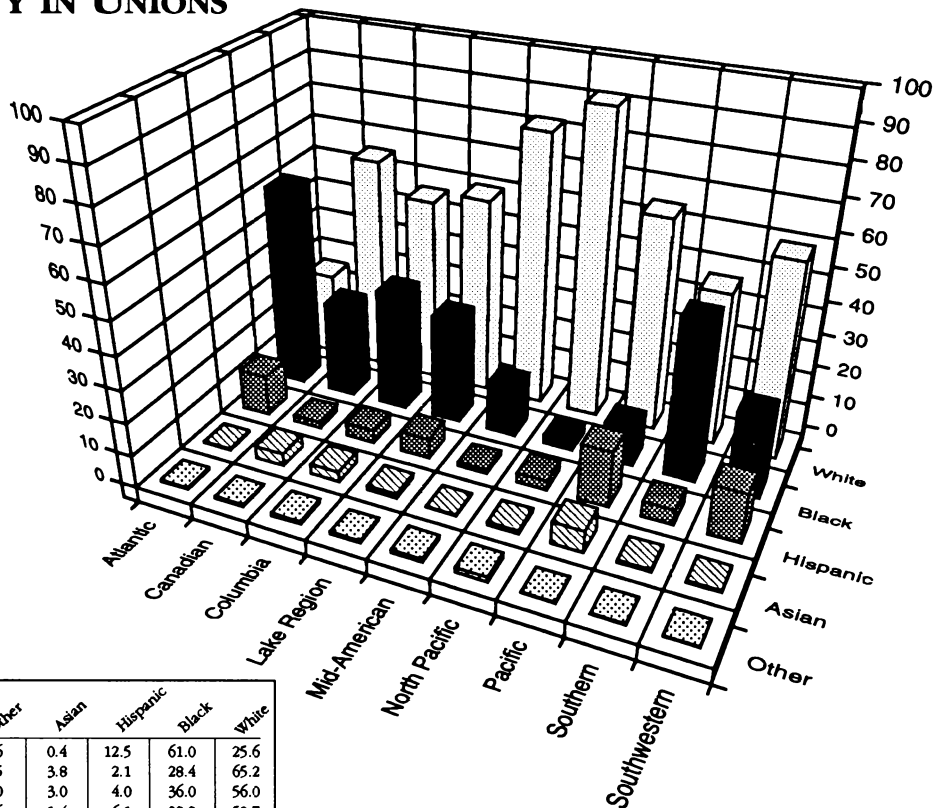
Guy insisted on raising tough questions and probed issues from several different view points. He not only encouraged but demanded intellectual rigor from his students. Under his direction, supposedly settled points of doctrine became topics for vigorous discussion. Some of my fellow students in the ministerial program tired of his constant urging to think things through, but I found the regimen exhilarating.

Here was an invitation to do our own thinking about our religious convictions and a demonstration that the endeavor could be exciting. There is no question that Fritz Guy's classes turned me on to theology. Looking back, I think it was only a matter of time until I followed in his footsteps—from pursuing graduate study at Chicago to teaching theology at La Sierra. . . .

My perspective on the Adventist Church also includes a healthy respect for Christian doctrine and the task of Christian theology. . . .

Theology rests on the assumption that the contents of Christian faith deserve and ultimately benefit from careful examination. Admittedly, in the short run, serious examination may have negative effects. Traditional explanations may

ETHNICITY IN UNIONS



	Other	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White
Atlantic	0.6	0.4	12.5	61.0	25.6
Canadian	0.5	3.8	2.1	28.4	65.2
Columbia	1.0	3.0	4.0	36.0	56.0
Lake Region	0.6	1.4	6.1	32.2	59.7
Mid-America	1.0	0.2	1.1	15.3	82.3
North Pacific	1.5	1.0	2.9	2.8	91.8
Pacific	0.2	6.6	17.0	11.8	64.5
Southern	0.3	0.9	4.6	47.8	46.5
Southwestern	0.2	0.6	15.0	24.9	59.3
TOTAL	0.6	2.6	8.5	28.9	59.4

1992 membership statistics compiled by the Office of Human Relations, North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. Issued November 15, 1993. (Other includes Native Americans in both ethnicity graphs.) Vol. 23, No. 5 (April 1994).

appear inadequate; time-honored positions become less secure. As a result, people looking for snappy answers to religious questions, quick fixes for spiritual problems, or windfall profits from minimal intellectual investment—to mix several metaphors—find theology irritating, because it seldom provides any of these things. People looking to theology for reassurance are often disappointed, because theology frequently raises as many questions as it answers.

The benefits of theology emerge over the long haul. The full wealth of conviction that understanding brings, to quote the book of Colossians, requires great patience. It builds confidence, but not at the price of devising easy answers to

difficult questions. Theology calls the church to complete honesty in long-term, serious reflection. In the final analysis, I believe those who are willing to subject the church's beliefs to careful examination manifest great confidence in them.

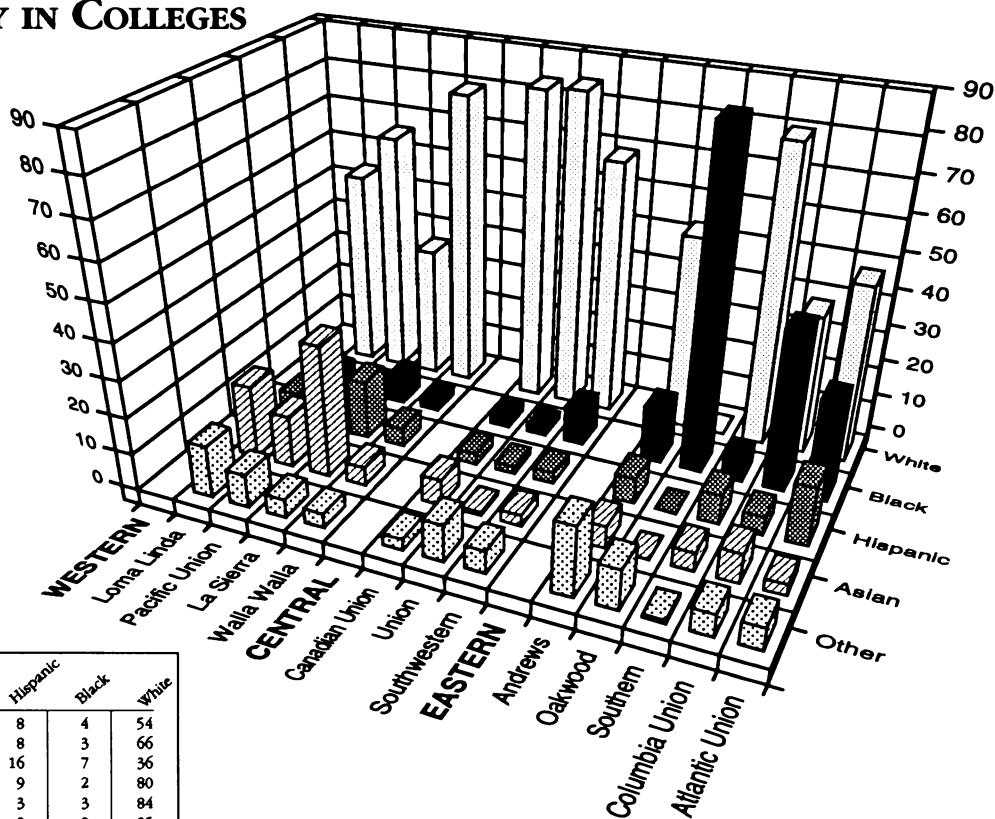
Because theology is a human enterprise, its task is never complete and the efforts of theologians are subject to the shortcomings that afflict all human endeavors. Theologians are no more free from self-interest than other men and women, and their work is just as susceptible to bias as any other human undertaking. The appropriate response to these liabilities is not to despair of the task or to disparage those engaged in it, but to join in the quest for truth. Theologians are not

a special class of people in the church, nor are they engaged in an activity that is somehow foreign to the church's activity. Theology is a task for the church as a whole.

Our basic motive for doing theology is love for the church. Our love for the church is much like our love for our parents. We love our parents, not because they are perfect, not because they have never made mistakes, not because we agree with all their decisions, not because our opinions always coincide. We love the church as we love our parents, because we share its basic values and deepest commitments.

We love our church because we owe it our existence, because it is the avenue through which God's richest blessings have come to us.

ETHNICITY IN COLLEGES



	Other	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White
LLU	14	20	8	4	54
PUC	9	14	8	3	66
LSU	5	36	16	7	36
WWC	4	5	9	2	80
CaUC	3	7	3	3	84
UC	10	1	2	2	85
SWAC	6	3	12	10	69
AU	19	6	7	15	53
OC	11	0	0	89	0
SC	1	5	8	6	80
CUC	6	8	5	43	38
AUC	6	3	16	27	48
TOTAL	9	11	8	17	55

Total percentages for North America are approximate, since figures are for the 1992-1993 school year (from "America's Best Colleges," *U.S. News & World Report*, 1994), except for Canadian Union College and Loma Linda University, whose figures are for 1993-1994. Vol. 23, No. 5 (April 1994).