

# Spectrum

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The Journal of the Association of Adventist Forums

## Adventism's Expanding Horizons

INTO THE WORLD OF  
THE 21ST CENTURY

THE PRIORITY OF THE PARTICULAR

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR  
OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT EXPLORATIONS

ROMANCE IN THE  
FIELDS OF THE LORD

"TOTAL COMMITMENT TO GOD"  
AND NAD RESPONSES

YOUNG REVIEWS PIPIM'S  
*RECEIVING THE WORD*

May 1997  
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# Spectrum

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# The Daring Vision That Is Adventism

Why do theologians frighten and anger others? Why do Adventists attack their theologians by name (see the review of Samuel Koranteng-Pipim's book, pp. 49, 50)? Why do denominational administrators find it necessary to set up a special committee to investigate arguably the finest theology department in the denomination (see the compilation of recent news reports, pp. 59, 60)? Why do theologians stir up such negative passions?

Because theologians can't stop imagining new ways to express the vision that is Adventism. They spend years learning their Adventist Christian tradition (it takes as long to complete a doctorate in one of the theological disciplines as it does to become a board-certified general surgeon). Deeply rooted in the tradition, theologians then feel compelled to make the Bible and the teachings of the church fresh, vital, and moving in the present.

In the last issue of *Spectrum*, we read how Graham Maxwell's classes re-examining Scripture and Adventist teachings helped save his students' faith. That continues to happen in religion classes throughout Adventist colleges and universities. But some find that theologians make Adventism annoyingly complex. They expect religion and their church to bring to their distracted lives a reliable, reassuring order. Despite Ellen White's belief that truth and "knowledge is progressive" (*Great Controversy*, p. 678), they find that new ways of understanding their religion only intensify the general chaos of life. They deeply resent theologians' excitedly sharing diverse, innovative ways of

expressing the traditional faith. They seek simple fundamentals. They demonstrate how fear creates fundamentalists.

This issue of *Spectrum* features not simplicity but freshness. The special section brings scouting reports on new ways Adventism might be expressed into the next millennium. These essays are based on presentations made at the 1996 meeting of the Adventist Society for Religious Studies. The society, which meets once a year, is comprised primarily of theology teachers in Adventist colleges and universities. In this issue, as well as in universities, the term *theology* encompasses the disciplines of Old Testament (Greg King), New Testament (Ernest Bursey), mission (Jon Dybdahl), as well as specifically constructive or systematic theology (Richard Rice).

G. K. Chesterton once defended the long history of conflict—even warfare—carried out by Christians by saying, Of course they fight; they care so much. The future of the Adventist Church depends on its theologians not responding to what seems like an increasingly hostile environment by becoming more politically astute, muted, and gray. For succeeding generations to care about Adventism, its theologians must feel passionately enough to make us long for vistas we can barely glimpse. For a faith rising out of visionary experience to flourish, Adventism depends on its theologians to continue to be passionate and daring enough to inspire the church with sightings of new horizons.

—Roy Branson



# Romance in the Fields of the Lord

Adventists write, publish, and read romance novels. What kind of heroes and heroines do they idealize?

by Carolyn Shultz

ADVENTISTS WRITE, PUBLISH, AND SELL ROMANCE novels. The four Chloe Celeste Chronicles (*Love's Tender Prelude*, *Winter's Silent Song*, *Sweet Strings of Love*, and *Love's Cherished Refrain*) and the four Chloe Mae Chronicles (*Flee My Father's House*, *Silence of My Love*, *Claims Upon My Heart*, and *Still My Aching Heart*) by Kay Rizzo, published by Pacific Press, are just a few examples of fast-selling novels in Adventist Book Centers.

Such novels from Adventist authors and publishers are part of a vast Christian romance novel market: One series by June Masters Bacher has sold more than one million copies; Jane Peart's *Brides of Montclair* series has sold more than 400,000. The even broader, secular romance novel market sells millions of books each year. Just one label, the well-known Harlequin Romances, produces at least 12 titles a month.

Rizzo's two quartets are set in late 19th- and

early 20th-century America, and feature the daughter and granddaughter of a Pennsylvania oil pipeline inspector. Unlike many popular "inspiration romances" published by evangelical presses such as Thomas Nelson, Harvest House, and even Zondervan, Rizzo's novels do not feature "secular Lotharios . . . forever tempting young Christian maidens" or worldly wise, lustful suitors who, once converted by the heroine's steadfast virtue, become the answer to her prayers.<sup>1</sup>

Rizzo modifies the secular romance patterns in positive ways. Representing, perhaps, the best of the Christian romance genre, her stories employ uncomplicated sentence structure and vocabulary, and formulaic characters and plots. Her plots are often packed with dramatic episodes and crises in unusual or exotic places.

Christian romance novels assure readers that—at least for beautiful, talented, resourceful women who trust in him—God will provide a handsome, loving husband. Furthermore, while these novels often quote God's promises in the Psalms to the lonely, the sad,

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and the frustrated, especially Psalm 37:4 ("Delight . . . in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart"), both the heroine's and the reader's attention are focused mainly on the hero. Union with him becomes the driving force of the novel; the formula does not allow the heroine to find God but not a husband.

Critics of popular romance novels are indebted to two well-known researchers. Tania Modleski, professor of literature and film at the University of Southern California, analyzed the Harlequin romances themselves; Janice A. Radway, professor of literature at Duke University, studied the readers of romances in a large Midwest city she calls "Smithton."<sup>2</sup> A majority of the approximately 20 characteristics of secular romances identified by Modleski and Radway can also be found in Christian romance novels, including Rizzo's. Both secular and Christian romances present an attractive heroine who, through marriage, achieves emotional validation as well as (usually) financial security and social standing. The main differences involve some traits of the hero. Though in all romances he is usually handsome and rich, in the secular romances he is also sexually experienced, initially rude, often

contemptuous, and sometimes brutal to the heroine.

Radway theorizes that secular romance readers return again and again to these novels. They need frequent "fixes," because their own experience, even if it includes being happily married, does not satisfy the psychological needs their culture and upbringing have trained them to seek. Adventist romances, with their regular additions of new titles and series, no doubt perpetuate similar hungers.

## Stunning Young Heroines

From the 20 "best" romance novels picked by her Smithton romance readers, Radway deduced the characteristics of the "ideal" romance heroine. Surprisingly, the Smithton readers preferred unusually intelligent or fiery-tempered heroines, marked by early childhood rebelliousness, such as dressing as boys. These heroines pursue unusual careers, such as anthropologist or concert pianist. They are often outspoken and spunky. Thus, heroines may initially reject or supersede typically "feminine" traits.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Rizzo's Chloe Mae has a feisty Irish temper and is a "medicine woman," with a thorough knowledge of herbal remedies. Her daughter, the equally spunky Chloe Celeste (CeeCee), is both a fine violinist and a nurse.

Modleski observes that the Harlequin formula for a heroine is to show her achieving happiness only by undergoing "a complex process of self-subversion during which she sacrifices her aggressive instincts, her pride, and—nearly—her life."<sup>4</sup> Rizzo's heroines modify the formula to some extent. Both Chloe Mae and her daughter remain strong-minded and practice the healing arts, at least intermittently, after marriage.

Two other important characteristics of a romance heroine, whether secular, Christian, or Adventist, are her youth and beauty. She is



usually in her late teens to early 20s, virginal, and unusually attractive.<sup>5</sup> She is not necessarily a classic beauty, but possesses such features as "glorious tresses" (magnificent curly red hair in the case of the two Chloes) or "smoldering eyes."<sup>6</sup> The heroine's beauty plays a key role in arousing the hero's desire for her, and is also "a sign both to the hero and to the reader that the heroine is sensual and capable of carnal passion. . . ." However, the heroine is unaware of the effect of her beauty and innocent of the meaning of her own responses to the hero's reactions. Rizzo's Chloe Mae, in response to a broad hint from the widower McCall that not only his son will miss her if she leaves his Kansas ranch for California, reports that, "A shiver skittered up my spine."<sup>8</sup> She attributes the shiver solely to the cold weather.

Rizzo wrote both Chloe quartets of romances in the first person, incurring the danger of the heroine's appearing vain about her beauty. She sometimes attempts to soften the effect by focusing the heroine's gaze on her clothes more than on herself:

The satin rustled when I held the dress up in front of me to admire in the mirror. The vibrant green satin deepened my fiery red hair to a rich auburn hue. . . . I held the brooch up to the neck of my new dress, admiring the silver filigree.<sup>9</sup>

Sometimes other characters assume the task of conveying the heroine's stunning looks. For example, in *Claims Upon My Heart*, a Paris boutique clerk exclaims to CeeCee, "Mademoiselle . . . I have never seen such incredibly beautiful hair."<sup>10</sup> However, since the first-person heroine narrator must duly note and record these compliments, one is left with the problem of her appearing vain or disingenuous.

Many romance novels are written from the heroine's point of view, but usually in the third person, which allows the woman to be surveyed and assessed as a physical object. In *Valiant Bride*, by the Christian romance novelist Jane Peart, the narrator describes

Noramary's appearance in a manner a first-person narrative would preclude:

The door opened slightly and around its edge peered an enchanting face. The coloring was perfection—the pink and porcelain complexion bestowed on country-reared English girls by a benevolent Creator. Masses of dark curls framed her forehead and fell in disarray about her shoulders. Her eyes were deep blue and darkly lashed; her smile, radiant.<sup>11</sup>

For a heroine to thus describe herself would be to betray the sins of vanity and self-absorption, which may explain why "much of the humor in early satires of women's novels like Jane Austen's *Love and Freindship* [Austen's spelling] arises from the simple substitution of the 'I' for the usual anonymous narrator."<sup>12</sup> Henry Fielding could excoriate Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), the "first" English novel, Modleski observes, precisely because its heroine tells her own story and thus cannot simultaneously appear ignorant of her charms and describe their effect on Squire B.<sup>13</sup>

Surprisingly, romance heroines show great courage and resourcefulness; they are not simply decorative. In fact, Radway stresses how consistently the "Smithton" women perceived their favorite secular romance heroines



as strong and in control.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, Rizzo's James tells Chloe Mae that her saving his horse's life and her bravery when a horse spooked, stranding her in a runaway wagon—not just her beautiful red hair “illuminated by the sunlight”<sup>15</sup>—have won his heart. Romance heroines, whether secular or Christian, reflect at least obliquely their readers' desires “to believe in the female sex's strength and capabilities and in themselves as well.”<sup>16</sup>

## From Villains to Worthy Foils

Another structural technique common to both secular and Christian romances is the use of foils or villains. In the secular romances, Radway reports that “the suggestion that some men see women solely as sexual objects is made only fleetingly in order to teach the heroine the true worth of the hero.”<sup>17</sup> A vestige of this pattern occurs in Rizzo's *Still My Aching Heart*, when Chloe Mae is briefly courted by a secretly married man. He is quickly exposed, though, and she is never seriously involved with him.

A significant difference in the Christian novels is the replacement of a truly villainous suitor with an attractive, more or less worthy, male foil. The absence of crude villains in these Christian romances suggests that Christian readers and authors feel no desire to portray men as potential woman-haters motivated solely by lust. In Rizzo's Adventist romances, the attractive, good rival for the heroine's affections, a “very shadowy” figure in the secular romances,<sup>18</sup> becomes a more substantial character. He is usually the same age as the heroine, though sometimes he can be several years older, and he appreciates her character as well as her person. He is, however, less mature, less devout, or not as physically attractive as the hero.

Christian romances also follow the secular ones in often including a flawed female foil,

suggesting that both types of romance readers see other women as more threatening than sensitive men to the heroine's happiness. Romances—secular and Christian—reflect a social perspective that regards successfully competing in the marriage market as a woman's most prized achievement. Furthermore, any traits the heroine (or reader) may find unacceptable, or be unable to admit, can be embodied in, and ultimately defeated in, the female foil. For example, in Rizzo's second quartet, Ashley is a living lesson to her cousin CeeCee of the unhappiness awaiting beautiful but flirty and careless young girls. When Lucille, for a short time a more serious competitor for Thad's love, refuses to take religion seriously, she fades from the picture.

## Rich, Older, Godly Heroes

The romance heroine's search for identity on the threshold of adulthood dovetails with her developing relationship to a hero. Typically, these romance heroines are orphans, or at least as the stories begin, they are removed from their families and familiar surroundings. Readers sense that characters need to find their niche in society and the assurance that they deserve to be loved. Not surprisingly, the romance heroine finds her identity in becoming Mrs. So and So.

The plot of both the secular and Adventist romances usually traces a conflict between the heroine's growing love and desire for the hero and his apparent indifference or antipathy. In secular romances, the heroine is initially indifferent or hostile to the hero because she believes his interest in her is purely physical; he then “retaliates by punishing the heroine.”<sup>19</sup>

By contrast, in Rizzo's romances, as in most Christian romances, the hero and heroine are mutually attracted from the first meeting. Usually conflicts arise, not from antipathy, but from previous engagements, or from the



hero's estrangement from God. Thus, the heroine's emotional and physical attraction to the hero conflicts with duty to family, to previous commitments, or to what is perceived as God's plan for her life. In Rizzo's novels, both Chloes struggle with their own ability to trust God at all times, and with the fact that the men they love doubt either God's love or his existence.

How does the Christian romance heroine know what to do? How does she discover where her true duty lies? She recalls Bible texts, often from the Psalms. For example, when Rizzo's Chloe Celeste despairs over Thad's spiritual indifference, she remembers an appropriate text: "That night . . . the Holy Spirit spoke to me through the words I'd been reading that morning . . . : 'Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.'" <sup>20</sup>

The Christian romance heroine prays and does her duty as she has been taught to see it, and waits for God to intervene if she is going down the wrong path. Happily, even though she or the hero may struggle to submit to God's will when it apparently does not coincide with their desires, in the end those desires and God's will prove identical.

This brings us to the depiction of the hero. In traditional Harlequins or other secular romances, he is usually 10 to 15 years older than the heroine, strong-minded, yet capable of tenderness. He is sexually experienced, wealthy, and initially scornful. Rizzo's heroes can also be several years older than the heroine, wealthy, and from equal or higher social status than the heroine. But Rizzo varies

this profile by depicting a hero who is, from the beginning, upright, kind, and not sexually experienced (unless he's a widower). In Rizzo's Chloe Mae quartet, Chloe's first husband is a Harvard graduate and older son of a wealthy Bostonian; her second is the son of the oil executive for whom her father worked. In the second quartet, Chloe Celeste's parents have just moved into a San Francisco mansion with 11 bedrooms and seven baths.<sup>21</sup> Thus, although her love, Thaddeus Adams, is a ministerial student and the son of a grocer, the couple need not fear poverty.

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*Romance readers attempt to recover in a relationship with a husband the complete security of the original mother-daughter bond. When the woman's need for nurturing goes unfulfilled, she turns for that nurturing to romance heroines.*

Modleski notes that in Harlequin romances, a "large amount of anger" is expressed by the heroine "almost to the very end of the story."<sup>22</sup> The hero's brutality and the futility of her resistance—he may, for instance, laugh at her rage and tell her how cute she is when angry—elicit feelings with which readers identify.<sup>23</sup>

Contrary to her secular counterparts, and unlike even one Christian romance writer's advice that the hero should appear "aloof, cynical, domineering,"<sup>24</sup> Rizzo's heroes are not initially cold or cruel, nor do her novels dichotomize physical and emotional attraction. To her credit, Rizzo's heroes do not treat the heroine cruelly. They do, however, show determination and physical strength. At one point James, for example, has surmised in spite of her protests that Chloe Mae's ankle is broken and plops her into a snowdrift. When she refuses to let him help her, McCall announces, "We can do this one of two ways. I can carry you, gentlemanly, in my arms as I was doing, or I can throw you over my shoulder like a sack of grain. It's your choice."<sup>25</sup>

In the Rizzo romances, the hero is never verbally or physically abusive, and only apparently withdrawn or indifferent. The heroine's anger is also muted or shown to be unreasonable. The heroine suffers mainly from anxiety about whether her desires for a particular man coincide with God's will, and, if so, how and when God will effect the desired outcome.

A no doubt unintended and unique aspect of Christian romances is the virtual substitution of the hero for God. In the end, heroes are full of unconditional love, ready to protect and shelter the heroine for the rest of her life. Of course, heroines pray for God's guidance and quote to themselves his promises never to forsake the confused and forlorn. But the pole and center of their emotional lives, the object of their most fervent thoughts (and presumably of the reader's fantasies), is the hero.

## Golden Marriages

Both secular and Christian romances assume and affirm that marriage within a patriarchal culture provides women's highest happiness. Romance heroines discover that their love has brought out (in the case of secular heroes) or strengthened (in Christian heroes) the hero's best character traits. Indeed, Radway's "Smithton" readers enjoy a strong, talented heroine who doesn't need to pursue a career, yet gains a sense of power through the knowledge of "the hero's dependence on her," of "his realization that he could not live without her."<sup>26</sup>

One of the strengths of Rizzo's novels is her ability to depict a couple as equally mature. A passage from the end of Chloe Mae's story exemplifies the maturity and honesty she and Cy, her second husband, have achieved:

I had one last bombshell to drop. "Remember I told you how Mrs. McCall [Chloe Mae's former mother-in-law] is eager to have CeeCee visit? The

dear lady would be delighted to have CeeCee to herself while we spent a week at my cottage on Cape Cod."

"James's cottage?"

I turned slowly to face him and met his gaze. "Our cottage, as soon as we're husband and wife. Will you find it difficult to accept that I own land and am comfortably set?"

His brown eyes studied mine for several moments. "No, I don't think so."

In a low, nervous voice, I said, "You'd better be sure."

The tender smile he gave me erased my fears. "Chloe, when I promise before God to love you for better or worse . . . I will vow to love you and all the extras you bring with you—CeeCee, Jamie, your former husband, your previous in-laws . . . Memories that don't include me, even wealth I didn't provide. And I know you will promise the same to me. It won't be easy blending our pasts in order to build a new future, but with God's help, we can do it."<sup>27</sup>

Of course, Chloe Mae and Cy are middle-aged by now, but the fact that Rizzo deals with older lovers both embarking on a second marriage is a commendable departure from the usual romance plots.

Rizzo, and some other Christian novelists, do modify the secular romance formula in several positive ways. Rizzo, for instance, takes Chloe Mae through her first marriage, which ends with her husband's death in a mining accident, through a second romance, and on to a second marriage; Rizzo also extends Chloe Celeste's story to include her and Thad's eventual mission service in China. In addition to omitting a "true" villain and an abusive hero, Rizzo sometimes presents educated, capable heroines who practice a profession.<sup>28</sup> She also avoids presenting love as manipulative or sex as purely lustful, showing both love and sex as mutually desirable experiences.

On the other hand, these novels uphold and reinforce the paradigm of romantic love and

marriage as necessary components of life—especially for women. The fact that there are no romance novels written for men speaks for itself. Particularly in Christian communities, the roles of wife and mother are still the ones which primarily confer on women ultimate “legitimacy and personhood.”<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, romance heroines of any stripe are not too fat or too thin, too tall or too short; they invariably possess beautiful eyes, skin, and/or hair, a graceful carriage, and a pleasing voice. The hero is tall and good-looking, sporting a “strong jaw,” or “chiseled good looks,” and a broad chest. An article offering advice to writers of inspirational romances notes, though, that “variations [in appearance] are now acceptable and recommended,” as long as authors keep characters “physically appealing to the reader . . . sexy, attractive, and vulnerable. . . .”<sup>30</sup>

Radway argues that romance fiction “functions always as a utopian wish-fulfillment fantasy through which women try to imagine themselves as they often are not . . . that is, as happy and content.”<sup>31</sup> Drawing on psychoanalytic theory, she theorizes that romance readers attempt to recover in a relationship with a husband the complete security of the original mother-daughter bond.<sup>32</sup> However, men reared in families in which nurturing is almost exclusively the mother’s role tend to define mascu-

linity as “all that is not female.”<sup>33</sup> Thus, the woman’s needs for nurturing in the marriage relationship go largely unfulfilled, and she turns for that nurturing to romance heroines.

Obviously, the enormous popularity of romance novels, including Christian novels written from the early 1980s on, suggests that they are catering to some real psychic needs. Rizzo’s romances from Pacific Press manage sometimes to go beyond the stereotype of the powerless female. But modern popular romances, both Christian and secular, could profit from Jane Austen’s astute eye. In works like *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen’s portrayal of human foibles and her witty satire mockingly illuminate the very stereotypes she depicts. In *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë daringly develops a plain, poor, unrelentingly frank and determined heroine, who refuses to embrace either the God of Reverend Brocklehurst and his Sunday school tracts, or the God of St. John Rivers who exacts service at the price of personal happiness.

The challenge for Adventist romance novelists is to follow such classics in creating heroines that depart even further from female stereotypes. If Christian romances can push beyond and question more of the popular romance genre’s stereotypes, they may find a new, appreciative audience among both women and men.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Kenneth L. Woodward, “Inspirational Romances,” *Newsweek* (February 20, 1984), p. 69.

2. Tania Modleski, professor of literature and film at the University of Southern California, and Janice A. Radway, professor of literature at Duke University, are probably the best-known social/literary critics to study the structure of mass-produced romance novels for women and to analyze what makes them so attractive to their audiences.

Radway’s 30 subjects were mostly married, middle-class women with children under 18, reporting household incomes of \$15,000 to \$50,000, with most ranging between \$15,000 and \$25,000 (early 1980s figures). Most (38 percent) were full-time housewives and/or

mothers, while 21 percent were working full-time outside the home, and another 21 percent were working part-time. These women were mostly in their 20s, 30s, and 40s, and the mean age at first marriage was 19.9 years. Nearly all had finished high school; 24 percent had finished less than three years of college, and 19 percent claimed at least a college degree or more. About 55 percent were regular churchgoers. Most began reading romances in their teens or 20s (see Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984, 1991]). As far as I know, there are no demographic studies of Christian romance readers, though *Newsweek* reported in a February 1994 article

entitled "Inspirational Romances," that "up to 85 percent of the patrons of Christian bookstores are women between the ages of 25 and 45" (Radway, *Reading the Romance*, p. 69). I think Adventist readers of Christian romances would probably be similar in most ways to Radway's Smithton women.

3. Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984, 1991), pp. 123-125.

4. Tania Modleski, *Loving With a Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women* (Originally Archon Book, 1982; reprinted by Routledge, 1990), p. 137.

5. Radway, *Reading the Romance*, p. 126.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., pp. 126, 127.

8. Kay Rizzo, *The Chloe Mae Chronicles: Claims Upon My Heart* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1993-1994), p. 31.

9. Ibid., p. 121.

10. Ibid., p. 99.

11. Jane Peart, *Brides of Montclair Series: Valiant Bride* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985-1993), p. 11.

12. Modleski, *Loving With a Vengeance*, p. 56.

13. Ibid., p. 54.

14. Ibid., p. 79.

15. Rizzo, *Claims Upon My Heart*, p. 31.

16. Radway, *Reading the Romance*, p. 79.

17. Ibid., p. 133.

18. Ibid., p. 131.

19. Ibid., p. 134.

20. Rizzo, *Claims Upon My Heart*, p. 184.

21. Wealth supplies part of the escapist fantasy of both secular and Christian romances, allowing the reader vicariously to experience upper-class Virginia or San Francisco society, for instance; or even, in the case of the Chloe Celeste Chronicles, to encounter deposed Russian nobility fleeing the Bolsheviks.

22. Modleski, *Loving With a Vengeance*, p. 44.

23. Ibid., p. 42.

24. Yvonne Lehman, "Writing the Inspirational Romance," *The Writer* (December 1984), p. 14.

25. Rizzo, *Claims Upon My Heart*, p. 15.

26. Radway, *Reading the Romance*, p. 81.

27. Kay Rizzo, *The Chloe Mae Chronicles: Still My Aching Heart* (Boise: Pacific Press, 1993-1994), pp. 247, 248.

28. Some recent Harlequin romances also break new ground in presenting a heroine with a career who manages both to earn the hero's love and to inspire respect for women in the workplace. See Leslie W.



# “Total Commitment To God” Statement

President Robert Folkenberg drafts “a declaration of spiritual accountability in the family of faith.”

The “Total Commitment to God” statement has had a somewhat troubled history. The document was conceived by Robert Folkenberg, president of the Adventist World Church, in preparation for the North American Division Higher Education Summit, scheduled for December 1996. Once drafted, the document was expanded to include not only institutions of higher education, but also the General Conference, divisions, unions, conferences and missions, food industries, Adventist Book Centers, publishing houses, radio stations, hospitals, institutions of lower education, congregations, pastors, and individual members. This document, citing the Gospel Commission found in Matthew 28: 19, 20, to “Go . . . teach . . . baptize . . . and make disciples,” calls for “spiritual accountability” on the part of all of the above mentioned groups and indeed any person, group, or organization associated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

As work on this document pro-

gressed and its scope was broadened, leaders decided that it should be presented to a more representative church body before it went to the summit on higher education. With this in mind, the “Total Commitment to God” statement was presented at the General Conference Committee Annual Council held in San Jose, Costa Rica in October of 1996. After passing through the administrative committee of the General Conference, Folkenberg recommended the document to the Annual Council of the General Conference Committee. The recommendation to the full committee was not to accept the document as part of the denominational working policy, but as a guideline which was still subject to alteration. In his recommendation speech, Folkenberg outlined his intent in the creation of this document:

This is not, cannot be, is not written to be, it is designed not to be, anything that takes any intrusive governance mechanism, that's authority centrally applied on any-

thing. If you read it, you won't find it. It's been designed out. Why? It won't work. It just simply doesn't work. The only way there can be transformation is for the Holy Spirit to be poured out. What this [document] is doing, is saying, “Please come together, on your knees, with the blessing of the Holy Spirit, but ask the right questions. Don't be satisfied with the popular positive pabulum.”

In the ensuing discussion, several minor wording amendments were suggested and approved. One, recommended by Donald E. Robinson, modified the title from “Developing Total Commitment to God,” to the current title. Another added as a subtitle “A Declaration of Spiritual Accountability in the Family of Faith.”

At the end of deliberation a “yea” vote was taken, and it was unanimously voted “To approve the wording of the ‘Total Commitment to God’ document, with the understanding that further attention to the document will be given during the

ensuing year" (as reported in the General Conference Committee Annual Council minutes, Action #199-96Ga).

Shortly after the Annual Council of the General Conference Committee, at the North American Division Year End Meetings, the document was viewed with some misgivings (see transcript, beginning on p. 20). When it was introduced, Harold Baptiste, secretary of the North American Division, made the motion that the document be "adopted" by the North American Division. But, in the end, the vote was "To receive the document . . ." Alfred C. McClure, president of the North American Division and chair of the session, explained the motion that was voted: ". . . We have before us a motion to record in our minutes that we have heard, reviewed the document. We're not suggesting that it must be assimilated at this point."

The North American Division Committee then referred the document to several other bodies. The Health Care Summit, which meets semi-annually and is comprised of presidents and board chairs of all Adventist Health Systems in North America, along with the president of the North American Division, met in Tucson, Arizona, December 1996. Although no action was taken which directly responded to the "Total Commitment to God" statement, the committee accepted an extended statement that grew out of earlier meetings between Folkenberg and Adventist health care executives.

The North American Division Board of Education, K-12, is scheduled to discuss this document in their meetings in February 1998.

One major group to which the document was referred has already met. The Higher Education Summit, comprising presidents and board chairs of all Adventist colleges and universities in North America along with North American Division official, was the original impetus of the

"Total Commitment to God" statement. Discussion at the December 1996 summit in Tucson was long and, at times, heated.

Concern centered around the last paragraph of the section entitled "What 'Total Commitment to God' involves for the colleges and universities." This paragraph mentions a "General Conference-appointed, international panel of highly qualified educators who will provide the college/university board with a written evaluation of the spiritual master plan and the assessment program." Dr. Charles Scriven, president of Columbia Union College and an attendee of the Higher Education Summit, said, "No North American college or university president is totally comfortable with the last paragraph."

The discontent surrounding this portion of the document does not stem from an unwillingness on the part of the colleges and universities to assess and improve spirituality on their campuses. Indeed many of them, such as La Sierra University, Loma Linda University, and Union College, already have their own programs in place. Dr. John Kerbs,

president of Union College, says that this document and the discussion surrounding it has led him to take a look at the current spiritual assessment methods, and to consider possible ways to improve and expand their methods.

The perceived problem is with a group of outside 'experts' attempting an evaluation of a situation with which they are not totally familiar. Some, such as Dr. Marvin Anderson, president of Southwestern Adventist University, also cite the existence of the Adventist Accreditation Association which, among other things, reviews the spiritual programs on Adventist college and university campuses. "We already have a system, so why are we having to submit to this new panel?" In the end, the representatives at the Higher Education Summit took no official action or vote on the "Total Commitment to God" statement.

—Mitch Scoggins

*Mitch Scoggins, a senior journalism major at Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland, is a Spectrum editorial assistant.*

## Total Commitment to God

The history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is filled with examples of individuals and institutions who have been, and are, vibrant witnesses to their faith. Because of their passionate commitment to their Lord and appreciation of His unbounded love, they all have the same goal: to share the Good News with others. One key Bible text has motivated them. It is a text that fires the souls of Seventh-day Adventists everywhere. It is what is called the Gospel Commission, the mandate from the Lord Himself, as recorded in Matthew 28:19, 20, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in

the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." The New International Version says: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations. . . ."

This mandate, from the Lord Himself, is simple, beautiful, and binding. It is for every follower, whether member, pastor, or administrator—**Go . . . teach . . . baptize . . . make disciples.** This principle ignites the mission of the Church and sets the standard for any measuring, any assessment, of success. It touches all, whatever their responsibility, whether they are laypersons or church employees. It spans all the elements of church life, from the

local church to the General Conference, in schools and colleges, publishing houses, health-care institutions, and health food organizations. The promise is encapsulated in the baptismal vows, in mission statements, in aims and objectives, in policies, and in constitutions and bylaws "to witness to His loving salvation," "to facilitate the proclamation of the everlasting gospel," "to supply the multitudes with the bread of life," and "to nurture them in preparation for His soon return." The four-fold command to **go . . . teach . . . baptize . . . make disciples** sounds wherever Seventh-day Adventists work or come together.

As the Church has grown in size and complexity, more and more members, pastors, and administrators have asked serious questions about how the Church relates to the Gospel Commission. Do the wheels and the gears of the Church just turn out above average products and services that cannot be readily distinguished from their secular counterparts? Or does the Church make sure its basic products and services reveal to the world the way to eternal life? Nothing should be excluded from these questions, whether it be church worship services or organizational or institutional programs and products.

The time has come for the Church as a whole to ask and answer the hard questions about how the Church is relating to the guiding principle of the Gospel Commission. How can the guiding principle be actualized in the lives of members, pastors and congregations? How can they measure their progress in fulfilling the Gospel Commission? How can the Church's universities, colleges and academies, health-food factories, high-tech health-care institutions, clinics, publishing houses, and media centers develop accountability based on the Gospel Commission?

This challenge calls for a frank and analytical approach in determining where the Church is in relationship to the Lord's command. It is not enough to measure success by secular standards, not enough to give those standards priority. Total commitment to God involves, primarily, total acceptance of the principles of Christianity as outlined in the Bible and as supported by the Spirit of Prophecy. Congregations, institutions, individual church employees and church members can easily find satisfaction in goals reached, funds raised, buildings completed, budgets balanced, accreditation achieved or renewed, and yet fail to be accountable before God to the Gospel Commission. The first and continuing priority for the Church must be this directive from the Lord: **Go . . . teach . . . baptize . . . make disciples.**

While the Gospel Commission does not change, its fulfillment is demonstrated in different ways. A pastor works within a different context than that of a classroom teacher, a physician, or an institutional administrator. Whatever the personal or institutional role, each one is accountable to God's command. Among the great benefits resulting from an assessment of their effectiveness will be the increasing trust that develops as each member, each pastor, each administrator, and each church institution addresses this priority and gives it proper attention.

The family of God acknowledges that each person is individually accountable to God. At the same time, believers are admonished to examine themselves (see 2 Corinthians 13:5). A spiritual assessment process has its place in the personal life. Just as surely it has its place in organizational life.

Spiritual assessment, while appropriate, is also a very delicate matter. For humankind sees only in

part. The earthly frame of reference is always limited to that which is visible and to a brief span of time surrounding the present. Nevertheless, there is much to be gained from careful and thoughtful evaluation of personal and organizational life.

It is possible to identify several principles which can guide such an assessment. While any attempt will be incomplete, the following areas of specific assessment will heighten awareness of and accountability to God and to the mission which is an integral part of the Christian's relationship and commitment to Him. The list is not comprehensive of those identified for attention, but the principles outlined here are applicable also to other individuals, organizations, and institutions.

#### **What "Total Commitment to God" involves for each church member.**

Each Seventh-day Adventist, whether denominational employee or layperson, is promised the gift of the Holy Spirit which will enable spiritual growth in the grace of the Lord and which will empower the development and use of spiritual gifts in witness and service. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is demonstrated by . . .

- maintaining, where possible, a Christian home where the standards and principles of Christ are both taught and exemplified,
- experiencing a life that rejoices in the assurance of salvation, is moved by the Holy Spirit to effective personal witness to others, and which experiences in Christ a gracious character that is consistent with God's will as revealed in His word,
- using the spiritual gifts God has promised each one,
- dedicating time, spiritual gifts, and resources, prayerfully and systematically, in Gospel proclamation and, individually as well

as part of a church family, becoming the Lord's salt and light through sharing His love in family life and community service, always motivated by the sense of the soon return of the Lord and His command to preach His Gospel both at home and afar, and

- participating in a plan for systematic spiritual growth and assessment of one's personal walk with God by forming mutually accountable spiritual partnership where the primary objective is to prayerfully mentor one another.

**What "Total Commitment to God" involves for a church pastor.**

A Seventh-day Adventist pastor, called and empowered by the Holy Spirit, driven by love for souls, points sinners to Christ as Creator and Redeemer, and teaches them how to share their faith and become effective disciples. He or she regularly shares a balanced spiritual diet fresh from communion with God and His Word. The pastor shows the saving grace and transforming power of the gospel by . . .

- striving to make his or her family a model of what the Lord expects in marriage and families,
- preaching Bible-based, Christ-centered sermons that nurture the members and support the world Church, and teaching the fundamental beliefs with a sense of urgency rooted in the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of prophecy,
- appealing for all to submit to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit so that the Gospel may be validated in the compassionate life of the faith-directed believer,
- leading the local congregation in a strong evangelistic outreach that both increases membership and establishes new congregations, while maintaining strong support for the local and worldwide work of the Church,

- evidencing effectiveness in ministry as the family of God increases numerically and grows in spiritual experience and worship, thus hastening the return of the Lord, and
- affirming the prioritization of personal spiritual growth and mission effectiveness by regularly participating in a spiritual outcome assessment process. The division will facilitate the development of an assessment model, to be implemented by each union/local conference, which includes a self-assessment module as well as elements addressing the pastor's responsibility to the congregation(s) and the world Church organization.

**What "Total Commitment to God" involves for a congregation.**

A Seventh-day Adventist congregation creatively and self-critically functions as a witnessing and nurturing community, facilitating Gospel proclamation, both locally, regionally, and globally. It lives in the world as "the body of Christ" showing the same concern and positive action for those which it touches as the Lord did in His earthly ministry by . . .

- demonstrating an abiding assurance in the saving grace of Christ and a commitment to the distinctive teachings of the Word,
- understanding and accepting its role as part of an end-time movement with a local, regional, and global responsibility for the spreading of the Gospel,
- developing strategic plans for sharing the Good News in its community, with the goal of ensuring that all persons understand how Jesus can change their lives and preparing them for His soon coming, and by helping establish new congregations,
- nurturing the lives of members and their families so that they will

grow spiritually and will continue confidently in the mission and truths expressed through God's last-day Church,

- acknowledging the privileges of being a Seventh-day Adventist congregation and the concurrent accountability to the world family of Seventh-day Adventist congregations, as outlined in the *Church Manual*, by accepting and implementing broad plans that empower the spread of the Gospel in wider contexts, and by participating in the organizational, financial, and representative system designed to facilitate a global outreach, and
- participating in an assessment plan that leads the congregation to awareness of its strengths and weaknesses and the progress it has made in its mission to teach, baptize, and make disciples. The assessment plan will normally be a self-assessment program conducted annually by the entire congregation meeting as a group; but, periodically, it should include an assessment of the congregation's participation in, and responsibility to, the broader organization. Each division will facilitate the development of the assessment process, in association with the unions and local conference/missions, that will be used within its territory.

**What "Total Commitment to God" involves for the elementary schools and academies.**

A Seventh-day Adventist elementary school/academy creates a climate that nurtures the student spiritually, mentally, physically, and socially, and instills confidence in the relevance, role, message, and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The schools provide excellence in Adventist education by . . .

- developing, for the institution, a comprehensive spiritual master plan and curricula for all subjects



that, in addition to academic excellence, support the Seventh-day Adventist world view and integrate faith with learning,

- employing fully committed, professionally competent Seventh-day Adventist teachers, who are actively involved in their local church, and who integrate faith and learning as they nurture their students in being good members and citizens of both church and society,
- working with parents and local congregations to ensure that each student is presented with the claims of Christ and is given opportunity to decide for Him and be baptized,
- transmitting to students an understanding of the biblical role of the last-day people of God and how they can participate in fulfilling the mission of the Church,
- involving staff and students in outreach initiatives in ways appropriate to student age and planning community opportunities for witness, and
- participating systematically in a division-developed, and a union- and conference-implemented, spiritual assessment process which provides annual reports to the school board and its various constituencies.

#### **What "Total Commitment to God" involves for the colleges and universities.**

A Seventh-day Adventist college/university offers academically sound, tertiary and/or post-graduate education to Seventh-day Adventists and to students of nearby communities, who welcome the opportunity to study in an Adventist environment, by . . .

- developing a comprehensive spiritual master plan, proposed by the faculty and approved by the board, that identifies the spiritual truths and values, both cognitive and rational, which the

institution is committed to share with its students and to comprehensively identify the opportunities through which those values will be communicated during a given period of time in campus life,

- maintaining a classroom and overall campus environment which ensures opportunities for both academic instruction and Gospel encounters that produce graduates who are recognized by both the Church and society for their excellence in both the academic and spiritual aspects of their lives; men and women who are well-balanced spiritually, mentally, physically, and socially; men and women who love their Lord, who hold high His standards in their daily lives, who will help build strong, thriving local congregations, and who will be salt and light to their communities both as laypersons and as church employees,
- affirming unambiguously in classroom and campus life the beliefs, practices, and world view of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, sharing the joy of the Gospel, demonstrating confidence in the divinely established role of the Advent movement and its continuing significance in God's plan for these last days, facilitating activities for faculty, staff, and students to engage in Gospel witness and Christian service, and encouraging the faculty and staff to a consistency of life-style which is manifested in nurturing, compassionate faculty/staff relationships with students,
- employing fully committed, professionally competent Seventh-day Adventist teachers, who are actively involved in their local church, and who integrate faith and learning in the context of nurturing their students to be productive members of both society and of the Lord's Church,

and who interact with parents and other constituents in order to understand and to fulfill their high academic and spiritual expectations for educational programs serving the youth,

- evaluating the achievement of the objectives outlined in the spiritual master plan by a faculty-developed, board-approved, comprehensive assessment program, designed with sufficient specificity to evaluate each element of campus life, to guide the college/university administration in taking affirming or corrective measures, and to serve as the basis for annual reports of the spiritual health of the institution to the governing board and various constituencies, and
- submitting the proposed spiritual master plan and assessment program to a General Conference-appointed, international panel of highly qualified educators who will provide the college/university board with a written evaluation of the spiritual master plan and the assessment program.

#### **What "Total Commitment to God" involves for the hospitals and health care institutions.**

A Seventh-day Adventist hospital/health care institution provides the highest quality, whole-person, health care to the community it serves by developing a comprehensive spiritual assessment plan that includes . . .

- creating a well-planned, positive atmosphere that focuses on the healing presence of the Lord,
- developing a professionally competent, mission-oriented, and compassionate staff who sensitively minister to patients from the context of their Christian faith as well as distinctive Seventh-day Adventist beliefs,
- ensuring that all those within the institution's sphere of influence

are aware that the health care facility is affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church by developing staff-orientation and community-witnessing programs that portray positively both the hospital and the Church to those it serves,

- sensitively stimulating spiritual inquiry and responding to it systematically,
- allocating such financial and personnel resources as may be possible to the local, regional, and global soul-winning, educational, and/or health care mission of the Church, and
- demonstrating accountability for fulfillment of mission through participation, at least triennially, in a comprehensive evaluation process developed, planned, and overseen by the respective division executive committee to assess progress toward achieving specific, measurable, mission outcomes.

**What "Total Commitment to God" involves for the institutions of mass communication: publishing houses, media centers, Adventist Book Centers, and radio stations.**

A Seventh-day Adventist institution of mass communication provides quality productions that enhance the mission of the Church and the commitment of its members to mission by . . .

- encouraging initiatives and the distribution only of that which contributes to Gospel proclamation and the nurturing of church members within the context of the last-day message,
- planning or supporting evangelistic activities which may lead to personal contact and involving the local congregation, wherever possible,
- using technology and media in a way that is sensitive to available funds, so that resources are maxi-

mized for the mission of the Church,

- coordinating initiatives with other church entities to ensure interaction with and support of related programs and projects,
- providing such staff as may be possible or appropriate to assist pastors and congregations in the follow-up of those responding to outreach initiatives, and operating a feedback system for product development or modification, and
- establishing, under direction of governing bodies, systems for periodic review of materials and programs, both for members and for the general public, thus providing management and governing bodies with an analysis of effectiveness in meeting mission goals, ensuring concurrence with Seventh-day Adventist beliefs and practices, and preparing reports for presentation to each regular meeting of the constituency and annually to the board.

**What "Total Commitment to God" involves for the food industries.**

A Seventh-day Adventist food industry develops products that contribute positively to health, and provides a resource to assist the giving of the Gospel in these last days by . . .

- manufacturing and selling only those products which are consistent with the divine principles of diet and health,
- training personnel to inform the public on sound health practices and assisting the Church in developing increasingly better health among the members,
- providing low cost vegetarian food to the world's developing countries,
- implementing programs under which those influenced by the health message may receive further information about the

Church,

- budgeting financial assistance for the mission of the Church on a basis established by the division executive committee, and
- periodically evaluating performance in terms of efficiency, return on investment, and contribution to the mission of the Church, based on a system administered by the board and established by the division committee, in consultation with the International Health Food Association.

**What "Total Commitment to God" involves for a Conference/Mission, or Union.**

A Seventh-day Adventist conference/mission or union, with leadership that has a personal relationship with Jesus and is submitted to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, motivates members, pastors, teachers, and all other denominational employees to present to their neighbors and communities the saving truth as it is in these last days, and oversees and prioritizes its plans, initiatives, and finances to give first place to continuous soul-winning and nurturing ministries by . . .

- identifying and promoting the spiritual objectives, both evangelistic and nurturing, of the conference/mission or union and, through a strategic planning and financing process, involving the collective participation of its membership and organizations,
- showing, through the personal example of leadership, that the Church is continuing, without wavering, its divinely appointed role as a witness to this dying and needy world,
- nurturing and supporting pastors, members, and congregations so that they may grow as disciples and experience ways of fulfilling the Gospel Commission,
- exercising administrative leadership in institutions and entities under its direction to ensure that the mission of the Church is kept

clearly in focus, and developing and implementing initiatives to establish new congregations in communities and areas where needed,

- assuring that budgetary provisions for local, national, and global evangelistic endeavors are carefully balanced against the resources allocated to the nurture of the believers, and that both are demonstrated to be of the highest priority, and
- cooperating with the division in developing and implementing assessment processes, which may be evaluated by a committee designated by the General Conference, by which members, pastors, congregations, institutions, and the conference/mission or union itself may ascertain their commitment to and effectiveness in carrying out the Gospel Commission and reporting their findings to the respective constituencies.

#### What "Total Commitment to God" Involves for the General Conference/Divisions.

The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and its divisions, with leadership that has a personal relationship with Jesus and is submitted to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, provide overall global direction to the spiritual life and mission of the Church, develop strategic plans and policies, generate initiatives and programs, and allocate financial and human resources in ways that demonstrate urgency in

completing the mission of the Church and subordination to the command to **Go . . . teach . . . baptize . . . make disciples** by . . .

- giving priority at Annual Councils and Spring Meetings of the General Conference and division executive committees to the nurture of the spiritual life of a growing Church with a clear mission to carry the eternal gospel, in the time of the end setting of the Three Angels' Messages, to all the world,
- appointing small committees with international representation as may be necessary to evaluate and make recommendations to appropriate boards or executive committees concerning assessment programs being developed,
- ensuring that administrations and boards of institutions and agencies under their direction establish spiritual accountability processes that give evidence of their commitment to the last-day mission of the Church, and demonstrate their effectiveness in accomplishing it,
- requiring that initiatives and activities of limited focus, while having some merit of their own, are, in fact, subordinated to the broader, coordinated mission goals of the Church, and governing the disbursement of budgets to promote the promulgation of the Gospel to all the world,
- ensuring the mission of the Church is clearly understood and implemented through assessment pro-

cesses that review progress in meeting mission objectives involving both nurture of members and evangelistic outreach, and

- developing a spiritual master plan and assessment program, to be monitored by a committee appointed at each level by the General Conference/Division Executive Committee, for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of the General Conference/Division in terms of the mission of the Church and assisting all levels of church organization and all institutions to assess the effectiveness of their spiritual master plans and assessment programs.

Truly, the spiritual mandate is simple. **Go . . . teach . . . baptize . . . make disciples.** Responsible Seventh-day Adventist Church members and all church employees must remember that each one will be held accountable before God for this principle. Someday, at the great judgment bar, the Lord will ask, "What have you done, relying on My grace, with the gifts, talents, and opportunities I gave you?"

As He did 2,000 years ago, the Lord commands His Church today: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." **Go . . . teach . . . baptize . . . make disciples.** Total commitment to God mandates the fulfillment of this commission, which is still the only and true measure of success.



# North America Puzzles Over GC Authority

NAD leaders debate the "Total Commitment" statement.

*Readers can make up their own minds about the response of North America's denominational leaders to the Total Commitment document by reading the following transcript of discussion at the 1996 year-end meetings of the North American Division (NAD). The vice-president for education for North America, Richard Osborn, distributed the transcript—transcribed, from tape, by Osborn's secretary, Elaine Furrow—to presidents of Adventist colleges and universities in North America (Speakers who did not identify themselves are listed as "Unknown"). Readers will note that the wording of the final action was "to receive" the document, not "approve," "endorse," or "adopt," all terms available and sometimes used by denominational bodies in response to other documents.*

—The Editors

**T**his debate began with a motion offered by Harold Baptiste (NAD Secretary) that the "Total Commitment to God" document be adopted by the North American Division.

**ALFRED C. MCCLURE (NAD PRESIDENT):** I have before us now the document. I trust that you understand its intent. I believe the purpose of this call is that we

each one take seriously our own relationship to the Lord and the responsibility that we have as leaders in God's Church for seeing that the resources, personnel, the objectives are those that are faithful to that which we proclaim and that we are doing our very best in carrying out that commission. I recognize that it is possible for some to interpret what is being proposed here as a heavy hand or a big brother or whatever term one might choose to use. However, I don't believe that is the intent. It is not suggesting that we need to check up on one another but that we do have responsibility as individuals and as leaders to see that we are faithful to that which we have been called and that we are giving the kind of leadership that keeps us on task. Now there may be comments or questions. However, before doing that, before opening the floor to that, I would like to propose that Elder Jacobsen come forward and share with the group the recommendations from the division officers and union presidents relative to how this document and its response might be handled.

**DON JACOBSEN (ASSISTANT TO THE NAD PRESIDENT):** Let me read all four of these and then I don't know if you want to deal with them separately or not, but

there really are four categories of actions. The first action we're recommending is to refer to the Health Care Summit, which will be held in December of this year, questions about the implementation of the "Total Commitment" document sections that relate to health care institutions. Near the same time in the same place the Higher Education Summit will be held, and the next one is to refer to the NAD Higher Education Summit in December. Questions about the implementation of the "Total Commitment" document sections that relate to colleges/universities are the two major ones. Next one is a little different—to ask the North American Division Office of Education, along with the union directors of education to develop spiritual assessment models for use by K-12 schools. The proposed models will be submitted to the NAD Board of Education, K-12, in February 1998. And finally to establish a representative committee to be determined by the chair that would have representation from all across the division, especially of pastors, to establish procedures for implementing other sections of the "Total Commitment" document. Numbers 1, 2, and 4 we would propose would come back to this meeting in October of 1997.

**McCLURE:** All right, thank you. We have a motion on the floor now, so we're not probably ready for that motion, but at least I thought you ought to hear that recommendation before we take an action on the motion before us, and then we might want to take an action on that which was recommended.

**ELIZABETH STERNDAL (NAD WOMEN'S MINISTRIES DIRECTOR):** Just as I was hearing it read and before I heard these four things, I wondered where it would go. And it occurred to me that, as you stated, it seemed as though it might be a little heavy handed kind of thing that we were expected to vote on. And I wondered if it would be appropriate to footnote it to our mission statement, but not have it as a stand-alone document. That was before I heard these pieces, so I think we need to go on and discuss it more, but it just seemed to me that it should be a document that attaches to our mission statement rather than a document that stands alone.

**McCLURE:** Are there other comments?

**UNKNOWN:** Mr. Chairman, I think it is a good document, but my concern is the title of the document, "Total Commitment to God." We as a church continue to emphasize doing; it's what you do rather than what you are to become. And I'm concerned someone might get the idea that I can do these things and I'm committed to God. And I've gone to some churches where you have individuals who are able to do all of the things that you listed here as a pastor, or maybe even in the area of education, and they may not be totally committed to God. Could we rather name this document, "Expectations of the Church" rather than "Total Commitment to God"?

**McCLURE:** You make a good point, except that we don't have the option of changing the document, even the title, because this is simply a document that has been voted by the world church, so it is in place. And therefore we are simply considering it as accepting here and then deciding what to do with it.

**UNKNOWN:** A second concern is that as you went through the documents I did not discover a biblical basis for all of the

items that you suggested here, and normally we set a basis, a framework, a theological framework and, as you say, we can't change it here, but I would suggest that maybe we would recommend that they would change the title from "Total Commitment" to maybe some other title.

**McCLURE:** Thank you.

**UNKNOWN:** Mr. Chairman, a question first and then maybe a follow-up comment. Explain to me, please, what the intent of the motion is or what is the motion. I want to be sure what we are discussing.

**McCLURE:** The motion is that we accept this document as a part of the North American Division minutes and then we will decide how we want to respond to it.

**UNKNOWN:** And what will that mean if we do that?

**McCLURE:** It will mean that we are a part of the world church that is recognizing this document as having been voted by the world church and we're accepting it in this division.

**UNKNOWN:** Is it my incorrect understanding that the Annual Council voted it as a working document, which gives to it some sense of perhaps being adjusted in the future?

**McCLURE:** Elder Baptiste, do you recall the exact wording? Elder Thompson is here, too. Maybe he could help us with that question?

**G. RALPH THOMPSON (GC SECRETARY):** My understanding, Mr. Chairman, is that that is a possibility. It's a document that we will use to improve our effectiveness, mission, to integrate mission in all aspects of the functioning of the church or that it could be modified or expanded in later years.

**UNKNOWN:** In the context of our conversation yesterday morning about the difference between guidelines and policy, would it be fair to suggest that a document comes even before guidelines or is that synonymous with guidelines or policy? I'm trying to determine what it is we're voting.

**McCLURE:** Right. We're not voting policy. I suppose this could come in the arena of a guideline.

**UNKNOWN:** Mr. Chairman, I would suggest to the body, then, that we ought to vote here is a recording in the minutes that the document was presented to us, but not to reflect in the minutes any kind of action that might suggest total acceptance of it. I'm not opposed to the other four motions that send it on for further discussion and indication of how we implement it. But I think any action that's taken here without some of that discussion, without knowing what in the future may happen to the document, may be too much of a bite to take at this point.

**McCLURE:** Thank you.

**JANET WALLENKAMP (ATLANTIC UNION):** This document I think I agree with completely and the goals are worthwhile and noble. I don't find anything in it though that seems new to any of the arenas that are mentioned, including individual members. And I guess what worries me is this constant reference to assessment and evaluation means that really our commitment to God is something we answer to God alone with, and it seems to me that in a time where many of the church members are worried about it being more and more a "top down" church rather than a "bottom up" church that this adds more to the "top down" effect of the church. And I just don't know about the implementation. That worries me that our spiritual life already has a measurement in the Word of God and the Holy Spirit each convicting us. I think these institutions mentioned may benefit from this as a model for their own mission statements, but I worry about this reference to assessment and evaluation.

**McCLURE:** Thank you. I think you will discover that when it comes to reference to the individual member, there is nothing that suggests an assessment plan. That's for the individual to develop on his or her own. Our institutions are not islands. They are a part of an organization for which there is responsibility and accountability. And I think what is suggested here is not some "super snoop," but rather that those institutions be

encouraged to develop their own assessment model so that they will know whether or not they are accomplishing just that which they are saying they do. That I see as the intent of the document and I believe personally I think we have responsibility as an organization to see that that happens whatever responsibility we carry, whether it be a conference or a union or a division or the General Conference itself or an institution—that we just make sure that we are able to do that which we say we are doing. We proclaim that which we say we are accomplishing the mission of the church. What measures do we take to assess that?

**H. BOWMAN:** “Total Commitment to God” or spiritual accountability? But then I do want to express three concerns. One concern has been alluded to and that is, for many, many years the Seventh-day Adventist Church functioned as kind of a “top-down” structure. The directions came from up above and those of us below followed the directions. And we’ve been endeavoring to change that for some years. Saying that now we want to look at the grass roots and find out what the needs are and then the service organizations up above look at how they can meet those needs. This kind of flied in the face of that relatively newly stated philosophy. Because it comes to us saying this has been voted by the world church and are we a part of the world church? If so, then we need to vote to approve it. When those of us at least who are leaders of the conferences in the North American Division haven’t even seen it, that’s out of harmony with the method of procedure that we say we are following. And so that troubles me greatly. I’m troubled with a statement here on page 7. “Someday, at the great judgment bar, the Lord will ask, ‘What have you done, relying on My grace, with the gifts, talents, and opportunities I gave you?’” I don’t question that God is going to be concerned about what we have done with the in-filling of grace to serve him effectively. But my understanding is that the first question he’s going to ask is, “What have you done with my Son, Jesus?” It seems that this statement, as innocent as it may appear, really plays into the hands of those who are significantly emphasizing that the grace spoken about is power that God

gives to us for obedience rather than a grace that accepts us as we are without having to prove ourselves to God first. I sense that that is not totally in harmony with the gospel, at least as how I understand it, and as I understand that Seventh-day Adventists proclaim it. Then on page 5, under the section total commitment regarding colleges and universities, in the right-hand column it says, “employing fully committed, professionally competent Seventh-day Adventist teachers, who are actively involved in their local church, and who integrate faith and learning in the context of nurturing their students,” and so on.

The last paragraph in that section says that there must be a “spiritual master plan” developed by each institution, and this would be submitted to a General Conference-appointed international panel. A couple of concerns about that—first of all, there are occasions when we are not able to find Seventh-day Adventist individuals to fill certain positions, and occasionally we need to hire Christians who come from other communities of faith to serve in our institutions. This tends to eliminate that as an option. Or, in the very least, if an institution does find it necessary to do so, once again it gives a basis for significant criticism of that institution for functioning outside the recommendations of this document. And then I’m wondering why is it that the General Conference-appointed panel will be the one that will evaluate the spiritual master plan of institutions that are a part of a division and not General Conference institutions as such. I can understand Andrews University, Loma Linda University doing this, but colleges and universities that are operated by unions, it would seem to me if there is such a panel, that panel would be made up of division personnel rather than international General Conference personnel. It seems to me that this has potential to open up areas of significant concern and significant criticism to be directed toward some of our institutions. So those are some concerns that I have.

**McCLURE:** Thank you. That is helpful. You will recall that it is being recommended that this particular section be referred to the Higher Education Cabinet which will be meeting and which

will involve leadership of all those institutions in just deciding how to respond to it.

**G. EDWARD REID (NAD STEWARDSHIP DIRECTOR):** I would like to refer to the very first paragraph. Someone asked earlier what is the biblical basis for this and obviously we have a text there upon which the entire document rests. My concern is that the text is not spelled out completely. I think, personally, from my perspective of the great commission or the gospel commission that it actually has three parts and that is to go teach, to baptize, and then teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. In my personal judgment, an evangelical Protestant church could take this as it stands without that third component and we spent a great deal of time in the pre-session and also when we talked about church planting of upholding the unique standards of the Adventist Church and of course we’ve been talking about Net ‘96 and what makes the uniqueness of the Adventist Church and so on. So I would like to see us include the full text. Obviously verse 20 is not even written out here, but if we’re only going to have one text, we should include the whole thing which would include teaching them to observe all things.

**McCLURE:** That you. Your comments are being recorded so that we can pass them along.

**LENARD D. JAECKS (WASHINGTON CONFERENCE PRESIDENT):** As I listen to Ed Reid’s speech and then the other two, I think it is very important that we understand our personal accountability to God. And I know the caution of top-down. I wish we didn’t use that quite as often as we did because I think God is on the top. And the fact of the matter is, as I understand the doctrine of the church, that yes, we are accountable to God, but he has given us a church, a body of believers that we are accountable to. And I’m afraid, at times, in our earnestness to talk about our accountability to God alone, we bypass the concept that God has given to us of mutual accountability. The eye does not say, “I am alone.” It is in a body. And I like that concept because I want to be accountable to God, but I need the members of

the body to help me understand what that is. And I think there is greater safety there. Our whole philosophy of church governance is based upon that. I don't decide, for example, that I want to be ordained. It is the body that decides that. Even the service of marriage is not just two people saying, "Well, we want to be accountable to each other so we'll go off and do it." We have accountability within the body. So while I can see some reservations, I understand, I think I understand, I'm trying to understand the concern about assessment. Maybe there is a better word someday for assessment. But to have someone, for instance, in prayer that I'm accountable to—that has been very helpful to me. I have found it a great blessing. So I hope that as we're thinking about top-down, which is a factor that needs to be always understood, that we will appreciate the need for a broader life. I think if there's anything that we need to fear in this age, [it] is our own personal independence—that we know that we have all the answers. God has chosen as I understand it to contact us and be in contact with us individually. That's one fact, but the whole philosophy of church is mutual accountability, mutual encouragement, mutual teaching, and I'm afraid that we miss that sometimes, by this very earnest desire of saying, "Well, I have my direct contact with God." So, Mr. Chairman, I have not read this document a great deal in advance myself. I think it's a safe position to be in as we're working through it. We're going to bump into some things. Maybe that's the good part of the document. It tests some of our ideas and reminds us that we are a part of a body life.

**McCLURE:** Thank you.

**UNKNOWN (ARIZONA LAY DELEGATE):** I guess my concern with this document is what's not here. As I read the document, I don't find a great deal of emphasis on the management of change. We live in a fast-paced society that's changing right before our eyes. And I think we would all agree that our doctrines are not subject to change, but I would guess that everything else ought to be. And one of the difficulties of the situation like this, is that we can do an assessment, satisfy ourselves that we have met the criteria, and be totally irrelevant to

the needs that we're trying to meet. And so my concern would be—is—with the evaluation, and I don't see that here, so I don't know how we're planning to do that. But this document, if it is to be effective, needs to relate to the fact that we are ministering to people that are constantly changing. Our methods must change. Our focus, even though it is to preach the gospel, will probably result in many packages. How many of us a few years ago would have even conceived of Net '95 and '96? And how many are prepared to go to the change that will be required of us in the future to stay on the cutting edge? Very difficult sometimes in assessments to make sure that you're assessing the right thing and that we are, in fact, meeting the needs. Hopefully this document does not become a document that gives us a false sense of security.

**McCLURE:** Good. Thank you for the great counsel.

**KEVIN SULLIVAN (ATLANTIC UNION):** I'm a school teacher, and this is my first time here. And if my remarks sound somewhat emotional, there's nothing I can do to hide that. I'm speaking with some [discomfort] and, as you mentioned yourself, Elder McClure, this may sound heavy-handed. From my experience, I came out of the Roman Catholic Church and anything to me that speaks to the opening of a door where morality is legislated, I react very strongly to. One last experience I had with the Roman Catholic Church was I had become a Christian. I had become converted to Christ and I went back to attending the Catholic Church, and I remember going after Mass to the priest, saying I wanted to make a confession, I wanted to make things right. And there he stood, looking at his watch, with a cigarette in his hand, staring out of the window, and I'm pouring out my heart to this man. And it seemed to me that under these kind of guidelines he was doing his job. He would have said to his superiors, "Of course, you know, here's a guy coming back. I heard his confession." Maybe some kind of notch in his report or in his belt, but was he really doing what needed to be done, which was giving attention to a young person who was searching for God? And I would say, No. Now, I think the danger is that when we

create a document, if we're going to create it, there's got to be follow through. If we're going to create a document that creates accountability, then we're going to have to follow it through or it doesn't mean anything. And when spirituality is based on observable facts or numbers or behavior, I have a problem with that. We had a problem in the 18th century. I'm not saying this is where it's going to go, but I think we need to be cautious that it could go this way. With the Salem witch trials, this is why we have the First Amendment. The morality is not supposed to be legislated.

And one last comment. I found that in terms of a person's spirituality, I think it is largely personal. I think that my behavior as a teacher, in the way I perform, I'm accountable to my superintendent. And there have been times when I've had suggestions from them to improve my teaching that I've tried to take and has worked very well. But if you're trying to get people to be more spiritual and to be more dedicated to God, I really think that is the job of the Holy Spirit. Other people may disagree with me, but looking back over my 10 years of [being] a teacher, the things that have been most effective have [not] been things that I have been told to do because it's my job. If I'm speaking and giving a Bible lesson to children, I see their eyes opening wide and sometimes their eyes filling with tears. That's the Holy Spirit; that's not my superintendent looking over [my] shoulder. Or this past year, when our pastor had a broken leg and he was pretty much out of action, it was the Holy Spirit that told me to get on board with the Net '96, push it through, go to the zoning board meetings, organize the church. I'm not saying that to my credit; I'm just saying that that wasn't because it was some document. It was because God was moving me. And I'm just not saying that this is wrong. I'm saying we need to be very cautious. Thank you.

**McCLURE:** Thank you. Well stated. I would remind you that the recommendation that follows is that any procedure will come back for decision by this group next year.

**GORDON BIETZ (GEORGIA-CUMBERLAND CONFERENCE PRESIDENT):** This is a real good



news, bad news document. I think there are some very positive things. Many of us in leadership positions are always trying to figure out ways to have better relationships of accountability with people that we work with and I think that that is some very positive side of that. It could, however, look like an audit. And I think that some of us might have a little angst if the audit was conducted by the General Conference committee rather than my nominating committee. My nominating committee audits me every three years quite carefully, and I think that the prime locus for that kind of activity comes through the presently constituted bodies rather than shuffling those responsibilities to bodies that are not in the present organization. The real devil is going to be in the details of how this is implemented and produced, and I think that's where the people that you choose to put on those committees that are going to come back to us with the recommendations are going to be making the kinds of decisions that . . . well, we'll have a lot more discussion next time, probably. Thanks.

**HARRISON PERLA (CENTRAL CALIFORNIA CONFERENCE):** Mr. Chairperson, I think this document has an incredible amount of potential and it's definitely heading in the right direction; however, the motion at hand is to accept this document, and I have a problem with the fact [that] apparently it's been accepted already by a higher body. So the motion in itself is inappropriate. It's evident by the number of comments that there is an incredible amount of discussion still needed on this document, at least among the North American Division delegates, and our suggestion is—I think what I'm hearing—is that we'd like some time to study this. So the motion, I think, needs to be amended or a previous gentleman's comments were that the minutes could state that it was presented. I'm not sure that we're accepting it. We feel it needs more revision.

**McCLURE:** Thank you. The motion is to accept and record it in our minutes with the proposal that we will then deal with how we direct it at that point.

**ROGER DUDLEY (INSTITUTE OF CHURCH MINISTRY, Andrews University):** The description of total commitment to God in

the document, I wouldn't have any trouble with. I think it is a fine description of what we might be, but I would like to come back again to the question of the assessment, a word that appears quite frequently in the document. In a discussion with one of the delegates a few minutes ago that stood at this microphone, you indicated that there was no attempt to spiritually assess individuals—church members—and that's I think quite correct, but I do notice on page four under the pastor, [at] the very bottom of the first column it says, "The division will facilitate the development of an assessment model, to be implemented by each union/local conference, which includes a self-assessment module" and so forth, and this is in connection with where it talks about spiritual outcome. Now, it's a little vague, maybe, the way it's worded, but I'm wondering if this means that the division office is going to prepare some kind of an assessment instrument that will assess the spirituality of each pastor. I mean, it could be interpreted that way. If so, I have several [questions] and then I would assume that if that's true that that might be true with the workers in the various institutions whether they are elementary, secondary, health institutions, or colleges/universities, food services, or whatever. I have quite a bit of experience with assessment instruments, as you may know, and spirituality is a very difficult thing to assess with an instrument. There are some instruments that do attempt to assess spirituality, and they may have some usefulness when they are used for self evaluation and this type of thing. But I think the underlying question in this document, which it doesn't ever state, one way or the other, but the underlying question is, Are these assessments to be used for hiring and firing? Are we talking about employment through this type of thing? Would people be assessed and then be discharged from their jobs or refused jobs because of this assessment? That would be a rather risky piece of instrument. I don't say that it says that, but the underlying tone suggests that it might possibly be, and I think we need to bring that out in the open and ask the question, if that's what we are talking about.

**McCLURE:** I couldn't agree with you more, Roger.

**UNKNOWN:** I may be jumping ahead of where we're at just a little bit, but it may make us more comfortable perhaps if we know where we're headed, looking at these four recommendations that we might vote on. If we looked at the fourth one and expanded it not only to establish procedure but also revising it. If this needs strengthening, certainly that's something that we can recommend to the General Conference Annual Council that they do and certainly as other world divisions are reviewing it, they'll find as they try and make application of it that it can be clarified in ways that will be more helpful in their fields as well. I would rather look at this as—well, you said it was not a policy, but it's a working document. And we have a notebook filled with working documents that we're revising, and I think if we can work on revisions of this, because it does have many admirable goals and aims in it, and if we can make it more functional and useful and have a committee that would be assigned to bring back recommendations not only for us to consider but that we could refer then to the General Conference as well to strengthen and clarify many of the concerns that have been expressed. I realize, though, that if we did that, the first three motions there may need to be postponed so that those organizations would know just exactly what document they would be responding to. But I think it might make us feel better if we knew that this was a document that was going to receive further work and clarification.

**McCLURE:** All right. Thank you. Obviously this is not etched in stone. I think we need to look at it in a way that has been suggested. We can make suggestions for change, but concurrently we ought to look at how we might feel it is appropriate that we respond to the suggestion made here.

**UNKNOWN:** I'm glad to see my namesake at the other mike because I was hoping to hear something about how the document was developed and put into place at the higher bodies. I would like to hear that.

**McCLURE:** All right. Thank you. Elder Thompson, would you like to comment?



**THOMPSON:** Yes, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to talk about the top-down, bottom-up references. I think we must remember that the Annual Council and this past quinquennium, two of them have [been] outside the United States. Three of them will be held here. According to the constitutional provisions voted at Utrecht last year, all the world union presidents . . . have been members of the GC Committee for many, many years but never attended. Provisions have been made for them to attend, so they were all there—all the world union presidents. From every division we have three lay persons plus pastors plus front line workers from each division. Then in the division where the Annual Council is held, all conference or mission presidents are voted to attend with voice and vote. So three out of the five annual councils within the quinquennium will be held here in this division with all the North American local conference presidents in attendance with voice and vote. Now I heard that there is a document that North American presidents weren't there. Well, when we vote Annual Council actions during those three times when it is held here with all North American Division union presidents, conference presidents, all of the other conference presidents of the 11 other divisions would have to say, "Well, I was represented." So I hope when the shoe is on the other foot, we recognize that we are engaged in a world church. And when you have all the world union presidents, when you have pastors and divisions of the world, when you have lay members from the world, when you have the whole world division officers present—now, according to how this church works, we are a representative body. We can't invite 9,055,000 members that we now have to an Annual Council. Hence, I have to conclude that within the representative form of this church, with all the union presidents of North America and the division officers, including those of the other world fields, they represent me. I may not agree with everything that was voted, but certainly as we work as a world church, that's the representative process. And the North American group will have more to say to the world than the other group because you will have three of these Annual Councils held here where in one division one will be held. We were hoping

to go to the Far Eastern Division, which will be changed in name. The Northern Asia Pacific Division next time. If we don't, then we'll go back to Brazil, which will be the South American Division in 1998. So, you know, we've got to remember the governance system of the church, which works, and that each one of us cannot be present for every meeting to speak for ourselves. Somebody speaks for us. And when we take an action at the General Conference Annual Council, with that kind of representation from the world field, including our own division leadership, then even though I may not agree with every word or sentence or expression, I can't say I wasn't represented. We were represented. Our leaders were there. And within the governance of the church, that's how it operates.

Now this paper, as you know, has been long in being born. It went through many, many, many different revisions and additions—emendations. Sent out to the world division leaders for their input. And it came through the process to the GC officers and division officers.

Then it went to the floor of the Annual Council for discussion and everything else and so it has come to us. Nothing that the General Conference votes is like the laws of the Medes and Persians. That's why even policies and recommendations and guidelines voted by this church are dynamic. They can be changed at any Annual Council as expedient in implementation as the field dictates. So the answer to whether or not this is stuck like this for the rest of time and eternity, no. Observations will come from all the world divisions—not just one, all the world divisions—and then if it seen fit that something needs to be changed through the regular process of change that we bring through Annual Council, it will be done. But indeed the world divisions, together, including North America at an Annual Council discussed this document, voted it, and I think, Brother Chairman, what you have done here with the four recommended areas to go is the area in which every division should be working and will be working as to how they will now implement or go about implementing some of the things that are written here and each

#### VOTED Action:

#### 581-96N TOTAL COMMITMENT TO GOD—A DECLARATION OF SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE FAMILY OF FAITH

VOTED, 1. To receive the document entitled, Total Commitment to God, A Declaration of Spiritual Accountability in the Family of Faith, with the following recommendations for action:

2. To refer to the Health Care Summit in December 1996, questions about the implementation and any necessary revisions of the Total Commitment To God document sections that relate to Health Care institutions.

3. To refer to the North American Division Higher Education Summit in December 1996 questions about the implementation and any necessary revisions of the Total Commitment To God document sections that relate to colleges and universities.

4. To ask the North American Division Office of Education, along with the Union Directors of Education, to develop spiritual assessment models for use by K-12 schools and any necessary revisions to the Total Commitment To God document. The proposed models will be submitted to the NAD Board of Education, K-12 in February 1998.

5. To establish a representative committee to be determined by the chair to establish procedures for implementing other sections and necessary revisions of the Total Commitment To God document.

division will probably be different in its implementation. Thank you.

**McCLURE:** Thank you, Elder Thompson.

**JUDY ST. JOHN (PACIFIC UNION):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Now I know how Bob Dole must feel when he has to follow Bill Clinton in one of the debates. That was very moving. Thank you. My name is Judy St. John. I'm a lay representative from the Pacific Union. I've been interested in the comments that have been going on today about top-down versus bottom-up. This is my first time to ever attend one of these meetings, and I'm struggling to understand a lot of what is going on. However, I would like to make a few comments about this document. In our U.S. Constitution, if a revision is wanting to be made, then it seems to me that it may be passed by Congress but then it is voted on by each individual state before that change is made. We're caught in sort of a "Catch-22" situation right now because there are those of us who may have reservations about this, and yet we're already being told that it is being imposed on us by a vote of the world church. So in one sense I'm not quite sure why we're wasting our time in debate because it seems to me it is somewhat of a foregone conclusion and yet we're called to be here to represent our church and to think about these matters. Maybe some of you have seen this document before, as this gentleman alluded to, but you know I was handed it 10 minutes ago or 15 minutes ago and it was read through and now we're expected to assimilate all of it and to understand it. We're already a church that is perceived by the outside world as having rule upon rule upon rule upon rule. Sometimes I think we're like the scribes and the Pharisees, and now we're being asked to adopt still another set of rules. It makes me wonder whether we really believe that we're saved by works or saved by faith. One problem that I have with this is that if the local program, whatever it may be, of a school, a church, a college, a conference is being assessed, the people who are doing the assessment may not perceive that that institution is fulfilling the local need. Because the needs of my church in Newbury Park, California, for instance, may be vastly different from the local church needs of the Silver

Spring, Maryland, church. While as a lay person I am all for more accountability on the part of our church institutions, I believe that that accountability rests with the local governing board and that we are to some degree trying to usurp or supersede the power of the local conference executive committee, the local school board, the local college board—and I really wonder where we're going with this document. Thank you.

**McCLURE:** Thank you. Once again, we're simply, we have before us a motion to record in our minutes that we have heard, reviewed the document. We're not suggesting that it must be assimilated at this point. We're suggesting that it be done over the course of the next year and that we put in place, we assign a certain group responsibility for helping us to design ways in which we might address this document. The thing that I think is important to also reiterate, it is, I believe, designed to provide for the governing body of those organizations to be the one who makes the assessment. So I hope we don't become too concerned at this point before we see how we will decide to enact or to work on or to respond to that which is being suggested here. Are you ready to vote?

**UNKNOWN:** I think you have dealt with most of what I was planning on saying, but perhaps a little word could help here. In church assemblies in other denominations, interchurch assemblies, too, there is a term that is used often with documents that are taken to the assembly and in this case may fit. To receive the document and then have the time as it has been already suggested to study that in more detail. We are really not prepared after just seeing the document for a few minutes to give definitive answers. And I think the proposal with the four actions suggested would allow committees to study it in more detail and bring whatever good recommendations come out of those committees to the year-end meetings this next year. So I'm just suggesting the possibility of using the term to *receive* the document as an option.

**McCLURE:** That is fully the intent. Thank you very much for the clarification.

**MARY LOU TOOP (CANADIAN UNION):** My question was, every time you've men-

tioned what we're doing, you've changed the actual words and I would feel real comfortable with the last time you did it you sounded like that's what you were meaning, but earlier you had said that we're accepting it. And I just wanted to be really clear before we vote what the intent is.

**McCLURE:** OK. Thank you. Elder Baptiste, would you restate the motion?

**BAPTISTE:** To be historically accurate, Brother Chairman, I use the word *adopt*. When I made the motion I used the word *adopt*. We can modify that, but that was my perception at the time.

**McCLURE:** I'm sorry, I didn't hear you. The motion before us is to receive the document. Yes, please.

**MARK BUELER (FLORIDA CONFERENCE):** Mr. Chairman, my name is Mark Bueler, I'm a layman down there. You've mentioned several times that the assessment process seems to be established by the division or the General Conference in most of the cases where it refers to an assessment. So I think there needs to be some clarification. It may be that the local, that the governing body actually implements whatever the process is, but it seems that the assessment process itself is division-generated or General Conference-generated.

**McCLURE:** Thank you for the clarification. I believe it is the intent that the assessment activity would take place at the level at which it is appropriate. However, it is suggested concurrently that a process be developed so that there is some uniformity in dealing with the various organizations, but that the assessment activity take place within the organization itself. Does that help? I see no one at the microphone. We're ready to vote on the motion that is to receive the document. All who favor the document please say, "Aye." Opposed, "No." That is carried. Now do you wish to take an action on the implementation procedure. All right, you have the recommendation before you, it's been read once. Do you want to hear it read again? It's been moved and seconded. Yes, please.

**UNKNOWN:** I would move that we amend

the fourth one to establish procedures for implementing and revising. Well, I'm wanting something broader than that because I'm not just wanting the other sections of the "Total Commitment" document, but I'd like to empower this representative committee to bring back proposed revisions to any part of the document to us next year. And however the secretary would like to incorporate that into a revised vote motion, I'd be happy for that. But I'd like for the intent to be that not only implementation, but also the very document itself with proposed revisions come back next year.

**McCLURE:** I'm not sure I understand your intent. Is it your intent that the proposed revisions be recommended to the body from which it was voted?

**UNKNOWN:** No. Whether we have this representative committee bring back a report next year, not only with proposed implementation, but proposed revisions, if necessary, to the document itself. We still have not adopted the document, so I'm assuming at some point down the road we are going to have to adopt it. So I'm wanting to ask that this committee . . . bring back revisions in a document that we could consider for adoption later on.

**McCLURE:** Is there support for that amendment?

**H. BAPTISTE:** I'm suggesting—if I understand you carefully—I think you're suggesting that it should read something like this: "To establish a representative committee to be determined by the chair to establish procedures for implementing and revising"—just simply "add and revising sections of the 'Total Commitment' document." Just want the committee to also bring revisions.

**UNKNOWN:** Bring revisions.

**McCLURE:** Suggested revisions.

**ELMER MALCOLM (NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE PRESIDENT):** I had a question regarding revisions of the document. It doesn't seem to me that we have the authority to revise the document. We may have the authority to make decisions in addressing the document, but

it's been stated by Elder Thompson the process this has gone through. We have certainly been represented there, and it's not our position as a body here at the North American Division to reorganize this document or edit or adjust this document. So I would have a problem with a portion of this motion.

**McCLURE:** It is my recommendation that this body, as being suggested here, would make suggestions to the appropriate body for change. I concur with you that I don't think we have the authority to change the document.

**MALCOLM:** Recommendations could be made or appeals made to the body, but changes, no.

**McCLURE:** Rick, is that your understanding?

**UNKNOWN:** Yes.

**McCLURE:** Yes, please.

**UNKNOWN:** If this doesn't have the authority of a policy, why can it not be altered? I mean, if it's only a working document, can not that be adapted to that division?

**McCLURE:** You're asking some very difficult questions. (Laughter.) My answer to that is, No. (Laughter.)

**DALE KONGORSKI (ALBERTA CONFERENCE PRESIDENT):** I have a question on the amendment that has been offered. If it's an appropriate amendment because it seems to me that indeed it would, it is hostile to the intention of the original motion which was to adopt these four things. The adopting of the amendment would pretty much eliminate the first three items on this sheet because really how can these different groups address the document if the document is under revision? How would they address the implementation of the document if they don't know what it is they're implementing? And so it seems to me that it is almost a hostile amendment which is not allowable.

**McCLURE:** Thank you.

**TOOP:** I'm Mary Lou Toop from the Canadian Union and I'm a lay person, so

I'm not 100 percent sure of the structure of everything, but my question has to do with something on page six with the Adventist institutions for mass communication, including the ABCs and the publishing houses. It's the first point saying that "distribution only of that which contributes to gospel proclamation and the nurturing of church members." I know in the ABC they sell non-denominational literature plus games and food and lots of stuff that doesn't proclaim the gospel. So I'm just wondering, is there a body like the Health Care Summit or something that those things would be referred to specifically so they're dealt with by the publishing house boards or whatever?

**McCLURE:** I think the motion before us at the moment provides for that possibility.

**TOOP:** OK. So that would probably go for that.

**McCLURE:** Are you ready to vote on the motion? All in favor, please say "Aye." Opposed, "No." It's carried. We have come to a point in the day that there is probably not a lot of need for trying to do something else before we eat. There are some announcements that we need to make and Elder Jacobsen, would you please bring those on. Yes . . .

**UNKNOWN:** Mr. Chairman, I'm sorry to pause here, but it was my understanding there was an amendment to the motion on the floor. And we sort of voted everything in one capsule there, and I'm not quite sure what we voted.

**McCLURE:** Thank you very much for helping the chair to come to his senses. In the mind of the chair, we were voting on the document, but perhaps we ought to make clear what we were doing and therefore we ought to back up and take a motion on the amendment which is to add the wording, please.

**BAPTISTE:** To add the wording—let me get my notes—to provide for recommendations of revisions and under recommendation number four. So that this small committee, we'll edit it appropriately, but it would read something like this: To establish a representative committee to be determined by the chair to

establish procedures for implementing of the sections of the total document and recommendations for revisions.

**McCLURE:** Do you wish to speak to that?

**UNKNOWN:** I'll speak after they vote on that.

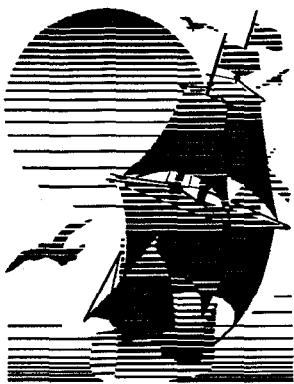
**McCLURE:** Let's vote on that amendment. All in favor please say, "Aye." Opposed, "No." Let's try again. All in favor, please say, "Aye." Opposed, "No." We're not ready to go to lunch, are we? All in favor

of the motion please raise the hand. Thank you. Those opposed, the same sign. It's carried.

**UNKNOWN:** Mr. Chairman, I believe that if we revise or amend the last point on this page here, that we really ought to do the same for the first two points, because as it is stated here, the expectation is that these two summits would implement, would discuss implementation of the document, and have no context in terms of revision or its impact. It seems to me that same revision ought to be done for

those first two points on the document as well. And I would move that amendment.

**McCLURE:** OK. Ready to vote on that amendment? All in favor please say—no, raise the hand. Thank you. Those opposed, the same sign. Well, we got closer to unanimity on that one than we did the first one. Now, Elder Jacobsen. You can see I'm hungry. Ready to vote on the main motion? All those in favor please say, "Aye." Opposed, "No." It's carried.



# Into the World of The 21st Century

By the year 2000, 70 percent of Adventists will live in Africa and Latin America; by 2005, there will be more Adventists than Jews.

by Jon L. Dybdahl

AT A RECENT MEETING OF THE AMERICAN Society of Missiology, I had a meal with major mission leaders of the Nazarene and the Assemblies of God churches. They asked me how mission was going in the Adventist Church. I replied that, in North America, the Adventist Church as a social organization is past its prime.

North America now sends less than half the missionaries it used to 20 years ago. In 1993, fewer than 35 missionaries were sent from North America, the 10th largest Protestant mission effort; in 1973, 69 missionaries left North America, then ranking Seventh-day Adventists at fourth among Protestants.

While tithe per capita in North America (adjusted for inflation) increased from \$353.22 to \$404.20 during the 40 years from 1950 to 1990, Sabbath school and mission offerings actually declined per capita for the same period—from \$125.73 to \$22.25.<sup>1</sup> The General

Conference suggests that, by the year 2000, 8 percent of our members will be in North America, 2 percent in Europe, 31 percent in Africa, 16 percent in Asia, and 39 percent in Latin America.<sup>2</sup>

## From Everywhere to Everywhere

My Nazarene and Protestant friends visibly breathed a sigh of relief and smiled. They proceeded to share openly their struggle to bring renewal, and the plateauing in North America of their denominations in the area of mission.

Of course, Adventists shouldn't despair about their expansion as an institution. Adventism is now growing at 5-plus percent per year; at that rate, membership doubles about every 11 years. The approximately 10 million members of today will increase to about 18 million by 2005. That's slightly more than the projected number of Jews in 2005, and only 4 or 5 million fewer than the projections for Sikhs.

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*Jon L. Dybdahl received his Ph.D. in Old Testament from Fuller Theological Seminary. He is chair of the department of world mission in the SDA Theological Seminary, Andrews University. Adapted from the Presidential Address to the ASRS.*

Furthermore, we are not seeing an overall decline in cross-cultural mission, but a radical reshaping of the whole Adventist missionary enterprise. The last decade has seen the rise of numerous new Adventist mission organizations in North America. What Adventists originally called "independent" or "self-supporting" ministries are now termed "supporting" ministries. We now know of 30 major Adventist mission-sending agencies. Some, like Maranatha (whose youth participants numbered more than 1,000 in 1995), do short-term mission projects of only a few weeks while other agencies like Adventist Frontier Missions (AFM) send 6-year-term missionaries with more training preparation than the General Conference gives. Adventist Frontier Missions already has branches in the Philippines and Papua New Guinea, and contributions, over the past four years, have increased at the rate of 50 percent per year.

Increasingly, Adventist missionaries go from everywhere to everywhere. In line with trends among other evangelical Christians, the already numerous missionaries from the Philippines, India, Singapore, and Malaysia will certainly grow. The 1,000 Missionary Movement, headquartered in the Philippines and funded mainly by Korean money, is a major player in the Asian Adventist missionary scene. The collapse of the Iron Curtain has opened up eastern Europe both as missionary-receiving (Albania now has missionaries) and missionary-sending countries.

While Adventists are globally growing more rapidly than most other denominations, Christianity as a whole is expanding. In 1996, Daniel S. Barrett, the most widely used statistician of global mission, counted about 1.95 billion Christians, which represent 33.7 percent of the world population. His forecast for 2025 is 3.06 billion Christians for a total of 36.9 percent of the world population. Islam, the second largest world religion, numbers about 1.13 billion today, but by 2025 should count

1.96 billion adherents, or about 24 percent of the world population. The number of foreign missionaries in 1996 is given as 398,000, which will increase to 550,000 in 2025. Missiologists believe that the largest amount of this increase will be missionaries originating in non-Western countries.

## From Hardware to Software

In 1996 I asked some 50 M.Div. students in my "Mission to the World" class how Global Mission differed from Harvest '90 and other such earlier mission plans. Only a few had a clear idea.

I had to explain that earlier evangelistic/mission programs emphasized the number of baptisms. Different church entities were encouraged to baptize a certain target number of people. The goal of Global Mission is church planting—specifically church planting among unreached people. Unentered population segments became the prime target. To use a fast-food franchise analogy, the Adventist Church switched from emphasizing the number of veggieburgers it sold to establishing veggieburger-producing franchises in places where there had been none before. The present Global Mission strategy discourages evangelists from going simply to the place where they think they can get quick, easy baptisms, and leads them to seek out places where the gospel has not been known.

Recently, I had a brief visit with a seminary student. He was not a rabble-rousing agitator, but a supportive senior seminarian with a concern about mission. He said, "I'd like you to help me evaluate a project I'm working on. I'm designing a series of one-page ads for major American magazines." He was proposing ads that would represent basic doctrinal beliefs like the Sabbath and the state of the dead, but would not mention the church. "I have been reading," he said, "about

Apple and Microsoft. I'm convinced we in the church have for years been working like Apple, and if we don't change we may be doomed as they seem to be." He went on to explain that Apple had a great operating system but wouldn't let others use it. To get the Apple operating system, you had to buy their "box" (computer/hardware). Microsoft sold its operating system and software to everybody. They let any "box" use it. As long as they could sell their operating system and software, they didn't care what kind of computer you had or who made it.

This serious seminarian was raising fundamental questions in a more explosive way than if he had deliberately planted a bomb on the Adventist 747. Do we see our software and hardware as an indivisible unit, like Apple, or can we make the "software" (Adventist beliefs and life-style) available and usable for people who already have their own "box" (hardware/organization)?

## From Christian Remnant to World Remnant

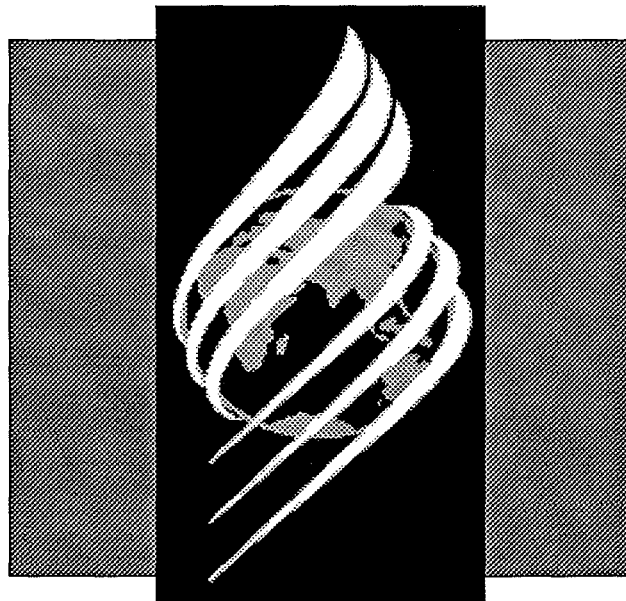
The issue for mission now and into the 21st century is how Christians are to view other religions. Are these religions false or true or somewhere in between? Can one find salvation in other religions? If so, on what basis? The answers given to these questions radically affect not only how one views Christian mission but also how Christian mission is practiced—if at all.

Unbeknown to many members, a small group of Christian missiologists interested in evangelizing Muslims has started a movement in a certain Muslim country. This movement accepts many major Christian beliefs, but if members were asked their religious affiliation, they would answer, "Muslim." This group has a distinctively Adventist segment which, the last I knew, numbered more than 1,500 mem-

bers. They believe in the Sabbath, tithing, baptism, prophecies of the Second Coming, and so on. If someone questioned their specific identity, they would say they are the *true remnant of Islam*. Called to defend their beliefs, they are able to do so from the Koran. Many leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church have, for the past several years, given the initiative their tentative support. While Adventist officials continue to discuss and consider the situation, the movement continues to grow at a high rate—winning literally hundreds yearly.

Adventist Islamicists have begun quietly to suggest that Adventism should not consider itself merely a remnant of the Christian church, but a true remnant in *all* world religions. While the details of this argument have been worked out only in relationship to Islam, the clear suggestion is made that scholars of other religions should make the same theological assumption. This whole situation raises profound theological and methodological issues which, in my estimation, should be considered a high priority for our faith community.

The theological rationale for the support of this Islamic movement to Christ springs at least in part from a new understanding of the remnant. I think this motif in Adventism will



continue to be explored, reshaped, and re-born even as we enter the 21st century. The remnant idea is so deep in the Adventist tradition and psyche that to toss it aside would be to lose too much of ourselves. Furthermore, the remnant motif is rich enough to be continually mined for new uses.

By and large, the remnant has been used to *narrow* the way we view religion, to lessen the number of true believers. But the failure of Old Testament Israel to declare God's glory among the heathen (Isaiah 66:1) and be a light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 49:6; 42:6, 7), made the remnant necessary to widen and broaden the scope of God's people. The remnant concept should expand rather than contract our vision and our mission. Has the time come to see Adventism as a reform movement among, rather than out of, other world religions? Should we look at ourselves as a world religion, rather than a branch of Protestantism?

## From Rationalistic Streak to Spiritual Mission

There is another major theological issue with which Adventists must deal as we enter the 21st century. I call it the *spiritual dimension of mission*. Many forms of Western Christianity—even evangelical ones—have a rationalistic understanding of Christianity. Missionaries from Europe and America planted primarily these kinds of churches. Call to ministry was a matter of education. Guidance was a matter of planning. Healing was a matter of medicine and doctors. World Christianity increasingly realizes that this brand of "faith" is a less than satisfying imitation of the real biblical item. The roots of this new viewpoint lie deeper than the surging charismatic movement. The reality of the demonic plays a part, but the increasing emphasis on prayer and intercession is crucial also. While I certainly would not want to endorse all this movement

teaches, we can learn from it. Adventism of both right and left has a very rational streak. Adventists find it hard to understand both charismatics and mystics, and are poorer because of it. To reach an often jaded secular society, we must have a firmer conviction about the reality of the spiritual realm. Non-Western Adventists have always understood this fact.

At the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, where I teach, we have recently been through a long and sometimes fairly shrill discussion that has led to the formation of a "School of Evangelism, Mission, and Ministry." In the end, all departments of the seminary were made part of the new school. I think it was a good decision. Most of us in the mission/evangelism area have chosen to not take personally characterizations of the two parts of seminary education such as "we content people (theology, Old Testament, New Testament, church history) teach them what to say, and you practices people (mission, evangelism, preaching, counseling) teach them where to stand when they say it." We realize that we may have in the past said equally simplistic and deceptive things.

Actually, missiologists should be teaching theology, and theologians (or biblical scholars) should teach mission. As Paul Piersen says:

Paul was the greatest theologian of the church because he first was the greatest missionary. His theology flowed out of his practice of mission. Similarly theological education must flow out of the same passion for mission. . . . [A]ll theological education. . . must be missiological. It will not be enough to add a course or two on mission. This calls for a reshaping of the theological enterprise around mission.<sup>3</sup>

It is my deep conviction that the church of the 21st century will not listen to or financially support a theology (or biblical study) that is not vitally connected to mission. On the other hand, the Christian faith community of the 21st



century will be ill-served and in fact betrayed by a missiology (or evangelism) that fails to reflect theologically on its task.

Our culture, our generation, and our training have made Adventist academics and professionals very articulate in asking questions and critiquing the status quo. I am not recommending that we lose this ability. However, I

am deeply convicted that we must also undertake the imperative task of creating and articulating a clear, positive vision of our mission. When a church articulates a common vision, people are changed, organizations are revitalized. We must have a vision, a story that makes us what we are. We must tell that story often and passionately.

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#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Gibson, Ann. "Divisional Winners in the Growing World Church," unpublished paper.

2. Statistics from a report prepared by the staff of GC Archives and Statistics, September 7, 1988.

3. Responses quoted in Elliston, Edgar J. *Missiological Education: Moving Forward From Where We Are* (Pasadena, Calif.: Draft published as a syllabus by the School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1994), p. 7.



# The Priority of The Particular

Adventist theology will increasingly focus on the stories Adventist tell, the concrete experiences of its members.

*by Richard Rice*

AS IT APPROACHES THE 21ST CENTURY, THE Adventist community may be widely recognized, but we are not widely understood. We need effective ways to express what we are about, especially what Adventists think. Actually, the current theological climate is uniquely receptive to expressions of distinctive religious visions and therefore holds great promise for effectively formulated Adventist theology.

## Uncharted Terrain

At the end of the 1960s, a number of influential thinkers argued that the task of theology is to show that the gospel satisfies contemporary criteria of meaning and truth. We have the contents of Christian faith on the one hand, the modern world on the other, and

the rational mind that brings them together.

Over the past 25 years or so, this configuration of the theological task has disintegrated. In fact, each element in this threefold design has been subjected to withering criticism. As many people now see it, the notion of the Christian faith, or the essential claims of the gospel, is an abstraction from the rich blend of ambiguous and provocative narratives, metaphors, and symbols that constitute the Bible as it reads. You can't wrap Christianity in a package of propositions to be intellectually assessed.

Likewise, the modern world—a vision of reality produced by unqualified confidence in scientific inquiry and unqualified optimism for the fruits of technology—is also an abstraction: an abstraction with deadening and deadly consequences. We can embrace it only by ignoring the vast sweep of human experience past and present, which has always been open to ranges of meaning inaccessible to mere rational inquiry, and by overlooking the devastating effects of our ceaseless manipulation of the environment.

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*Richard Rice, professor of theology at La Sierra University, received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. Among other books, he is the author of *The Openness of God* (Review and Herald, 1980), and *The Reign of God* (2nd ed., Andrews University Press, 1997).*

Finally and most emphatically, the rational mind is an abstraction. There is no one way of looking at reality, no integrated program of intellectual operations, no single set of solid assumptions that gives humanity access to truth, or Truth. And we privilege one perspective only by ignoring, if not dehumanizing, others, specifically those who stand outside the stream of thinkers who are Western, white, male, and straight. The very idea of the rational mind seems to ignore that there are other ways of thinking, that there are others who think, indeed, that there are others at all.

As this general vision of the theological task has collapsed, nothing has arisen to replace it. In fact, we cannot speak of *theology* today, we can speak only of *theologies*. In what passes for Christian theology there are no dominating figures, no accepted sequence of tasks, no common methods, and no agreed-upon agenda, only a bewildering barrage of rival claims for our attention. Expelled from the orderly landscape of several decades ago, we find ourselves in uncharted terrain. Only it's not a desert, it's a jungle. New concerns, new perspectives, new movements, new nomenclatures, new voices have sprouted up on every hand.

Let me pick up a single thread that appears here and there within the many activities and disciplines that surround us, and ask where it would take us if we used it as a guide to the future of Adventist theology.

## The Ascendancy of Persons

That thread is "the priority of the particular." I'm taking that phrase from Martha Nussbaum's book, *Love's Knowledge*.<sup>1</sup> She gets the idea from Aristotle. In contrast to Plato, who invested intellectual objects with supreme reality and ultimate significance, Aristotle denied that the particular is less real than the universal. Instead of following reason

into the realm of the universal, Aristotle argued, we reach truth by remaining exquisitely sensitive to the complex concrete realities we encounter in the phenomenal world.

Nussbaum applauds Aristotle. Instead of drawing reason away from imagination and emotion, she maintains, we need to bring them together. Morality is concerned with practical choice. It involves a response to the particular, which includes emotion and imagination and never loses touch with our questions about how to live.

I believe the transition Nussbaum calls for in ethical reflection appears in several areas of religious inquiry, including theology. Broadly speaking, it represents a major shift in the things that preoccupy us as sources of value and as objects of attention. It takes us from the abstract to the concrete, from the general to the specific, from the universal to the particular. This turn to the particular emerges across a wide intellectual front in recent years, including ethics, biblical studies, and philosophy.

With the emergence of medical ethics, the preoccupations of moral philosophy moved from tiresome debates about the meaning of ethical utterances (meta-ethics), and the relative merits of utilitarian and deontological ethical schemes (normative ethics), to the real-life challenges confronting people who are trying to relieve human suffering. In the opinion of some people, the move not only revitalized ethics, it saved it. We see the same general development in the rise of virtue ethics. Instead of conjuring up hypothetical conflicts among moral obligations, virtue ethics focuses on the concrete moral agent. Instead of asking, What should one do if . . . ?, it asks, How do virtuous people behave? It moves the question of moral goodness away from exceptional moments of dramatic decision-making, to the attitudes, emotions, and values that affect our lives on a concrete level all the time.

We see a somewhat similar shift in the area

of biblical studies. For a long time, biblical scholars concerned themselves with abstractions. They were preoccupied with what lay behind the biblical documents. They were concerned with such issues as literary and oral sources, layers of tradition, the motives and methods of redactors, as biblical texts moved through various stages in their long development.

In more recent years we have seen a shift to the concrete. Biblical studies now devotes considerable attention, not to the text as it came to be, but to the text as we have it. There are studies of the text as literature, as narrative, and as canon or Scripture. In other words, scholars are considering the biblical documents within the concrete life settings of the communities of faith from which they come and to which they continue to speak.

In related ways, many people are less interested now in what the Bible tells us to believe and more interested in what it means to live in harmony with the biblical story. They see the Bible as a guide for spiritual and moral development rather than a collection of doctrinal propositions.

## Faith Expressed in Narratives and Metaphors

We see the move from the universal to the particular in certain aspects of philosophy. Many philosophers have given up on the question of truth, or Truth, but are willing to discuss truths. For Richard Rorty, this takes the form of a rather thoroughgoing relativism. "There is no big picture," he asserts. We have only partial truths and we need to give them careful attention. Similarly, Robert Nozick argues that we should give up trying to build the comprehensive system. Carefully considered, individually established ideas, he maintains, are more likely to stand the test of time than vast overarching schemes.

Similar developments appear in constructive theology. Traditional Christian theologians were concerned with constructing doctrinal systems. They sought to extract from the Bible its essential teachings and arrange the results in attractive logical schemes. The desired result was a body of beliefs, logically coherent, aesthetically integrated, and powerfully convincing.

To many theologians in recent years, this quest for a well-organized body of beliefs pursues an abstraction. It overlooks both the stimulating, imaginative character of biblical literature and the concrete experiences of the community of faith. Accordingly, they turn their attention from universal religious truths to particular religious expressions, from Christian faith as an intellectual construct to Christian faith as it takes concrete form in human life. Though certainly not ignored, questions of truth take a back seat to questions of meaning. Theologians now devote less attention to religious beliefs, and more to the experience of believing.

We see this shift in numerous developments, including two revisionary views of theological method. Postmoderns and postliberals alike reject the Enlightenment view of human rationality as "objective, neutral, and dispassionate." Postmoderns argue that we still need to correlate the claims of Christian faith with standards of contemporary intelligibility. But these postliberals insist that Christian faith has its own "internal logic." It "defines its own language and thought-forms and practices."<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, theologians need not show that Christian faith meets the "demands of the modern mind." Their task is to express the faith within the terms and concepts that Christianity itself provides.

We also find this growing openness toward "internal" expressions of Christian faith in "narrative theology," whose proponents find a narrative structure in a number of important places.<sup>3</sup> One, of course, is the founding litera-

ture of the Christian community. The Bible is filled with stories, or narratives—a fact largely overlooked by historical-critical approaches to the biblical texts.<sup>4</sup> Another is human experience itself.<sup>5</sup> Our sense of self has a narrative structure. We become what we are over time, and we express our personal identity by telling our story. The same is true of our social identity. The most cohesive factor in a society is the shared narratives of its members.<sup>6</sup> Moral and ethical values, too, exhibit a deeply narrative structure. Stories of praiseworthy behavior are often the most important factor in shaping moral experience.<sup>7</sup>

Interest in narrative is part of a larger appreciation for the important role that symbols and metaphors play in our thinking. Everyone knows that figurative language is central to religious life and thought.<sup>8</sup> But metaphors exert an enormous influence in other areas, too, including philosophy<sup>9</sup> and ethics.<sup>10</sup> In fact, a growing body of scholarly work indicates that our experience is metaphorical through and through. Metaphors do more than describe experience, they structure it. As the title of one book puts it, we live by metaphors.<sup>11</sup>

The expanding interest in metaphors generally has stimulated interest in religious metaphors, where it recasts the central object of theological concern. If the most important elements in a religion are not concepts or ideas, but narratives and metaphors, then our attempt to interpret a religious tradition should focus primarily on the metaphors that shape and drive it rather than the beliefs that give it formal expression. Instead of explicating doctrines or constructing systems, therefore, many theologians today are exploring models and metaphors.<sup>12</sup>

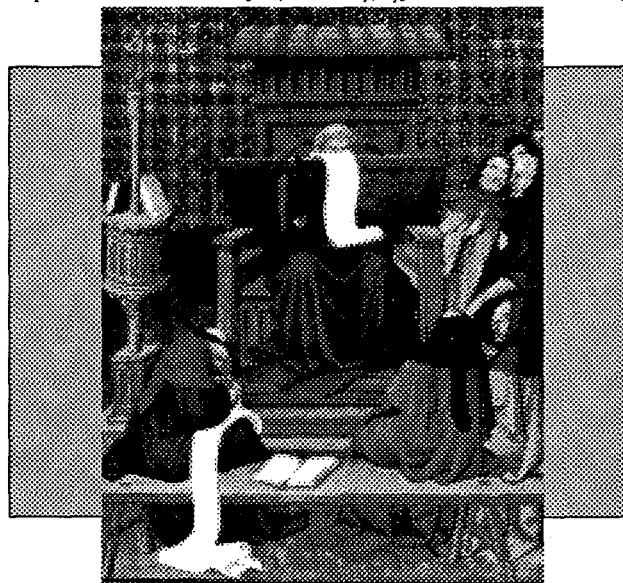
Sensitivity to lived experience is particularly evident in what are sometimes called “contextual” theologies—that is, in the works of liberation, feminist, and African-American theologians. While there are considerable differ-

ences and growing diversity among these movements, they share a common complaint: The dominant voices in the Christian tradition have ignored the concrete experience of specific groups of Christians, in particular the marginalized and the dispossessed. To hear the voices of authentic Christianity today, they argue, we need to attend precisely to those groups who are traditionally overlooked.<sup>13</sup>

Somewhat paradoxically, this turn to the particular also appears in the recent proliferation of systematic theologies<sup>14</sup> and the burgeoning interest in certain distinctly Christian doctrines, like the Trinity, which for many years attracted little theological attention.<sup>15</sup> No longer burdened with having to demonstrate the truth of their claims, theologians feel more free to explore the resources of the classical tradition. They are finding a wealth of meaning in time-honored Christian symbols and concepts.<sup>16</sup>

As a corollary development, people today tend to be more open to the distinctive visions that different religious communities provide. Instead of having to demonstrate that their beliefs and practices make sense in light of some generally accepted standard of rationality, religious communities can now find a hearing when they express themselves in

Adapted from “The Belles Heures de Jean, Duc de Berry,” by Jean Pol and Herman de Limbourg



forms that are most natural to their spirit and origins. In other words, it is acceptable today for theology to take the form of religious portraiture, rather than apologetics. Its principal task is to articulate a religious vision, not to establish certain cognitive claims.

These recent developments suggest several ways for us to "re-vision" Adventist theology in order to take advantage of this opening. In order to make our own turn to the particular, there are three interrelated changes we need to make.

One is to shift the primary focus of our concern from the structure of Adventist thought to the texture of Adventist experience. This means attending to the concrete Adventist community, to Adventist life as it is actually lived. It means Adventist theology will listen to all the stories that Adventists have to tell, from every continent and culture and every segment of society.

Shifting to the texture of Adventist experience also means focusing on something deeper than doctrinal formulations. Unless we tap into deeper levels of experience, our account of the community's faith will be inadequate and unsatisfying. To communicate the essential spirit of a religious community, we must reach beyond its formal statements into the concrete life experience of its members. We must explore the deep-seated hopes and fears, the attractions and apprehensions, the intuited values and commitments that are always felt but seldom articulated. In other words, we must explore the passions that shape and drive the Adventist experience and impart its distinctive contours.

Because these passions lie for the most part

beneath the level of reflective consciousness,<sup>17</sup> the demands of exploring them are great. (The best way, of course, is through imaginative literature, which portrays by intimation rather than direct analysis.) As I envision it, this stage of theological reflection calls for a description of the Adventist experience in the form of essays or personal sketches. What are the most enduring Adventist institutions? Who are the most influential figures in Adventist society? What are the defining moments in Adventist experience? Who belongs to the Pathfinder Club, the Dorcas Society, the church board? What happens in Sabbath school,

church school, summer camp, boarding academy? What is a Bible worker, evangelist, medical evangelist? What is it like to respond to a call during a week of prayer? to ingather during the dead of winter? to read *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* as a child?

If we give our primary attention to the passions of Adventism,

we will obviously have to depart from the traditional sequence of theological inquiry, and this is the second change involved in our turn to the particular. Systematic theologians typically pursue their work in three stages. They start with a discussion of theological method, which reviews the nature and purpose of Christian theology, and identifies the sources and criteria of theological claims. Next, they consider a series of standard doctrinal themes—revelation, God, humanity, salvation, church and last things. Finally, they "apply" their doctrinal reflections to matters of practical significance for the church, or for individual Christians.<sup>18</sup>

If we hope to present Adventism today in a

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*We must explore the passions that shape and drive the Adventist experience. Who belongs to the Pathfinder Club, the Dorcas Society? What is it like to respond to a call during a week of prayer, or to ingather during the dead of winter?*

way that brings to expression its true nature, its inner spirit, I suggest a three-stage project that reverses this traditional order. It would start with an account of the Adventist experience, then reflect on doctrinal issues, and conclude with a quest for overarching themes. So, it starts with the concrete and the specific—it gives priority to the particular—and then moves to more general characteristics, not the other way around.

The third change involved in our turn to the particular is especially hard for a systematic theologian to make, and that is to abandon the ideal of the perfect system, to give up the quest for tight, logical integration. Something always goes wrong when our highest priority is logical precision. Besides losing touch with the intricate textures of religious experience, we often slight the full range of concerns that characterize a religious community. Separated from these concerns, theology easily loses its bearings and takes on a life of its own. It soon becomes a theology for theologians.

## Not a Narrow Tower, but A Spacious Temple

**W**e can learn from Robert Nozick's comparison of two ways of doing philosophy:

Philosophers often seek to deduce their total view from a few basic principles, showing how all follows from their intuitively based axioms. The rest of the philosophy then [depends] upon these principles. One brick is piled upon another to produce a tall philosophical tower, one brick wide. When the bottom brick crumbles or is removed, all topples, burying even those insights that were independent of the starting point.

Instead of the tottering tower, I suggest that our model be the Parthenon. First we emplace our separate philosophical insights, column by column; afterward, we unite and unify them under an overarching roof of general principles or themes. When the philosophical structure

crumbles somewhat . . . something of interest and beauty remains . . .<sup>19</sup>

The theological "tower" is dominated by a concern for system. Its builders pursue the goals of logical precision and tight-knit integration. They also seek a foundation strong enough to support the entire structure of belief. In contrast, the objective of the theological "temple" is fidelity to the breadth and richness of a religious tradition. Its builders are primarily concerned with comprehensiveness and descriptive adequacy rather than logical precision or conceptual cohesion. Builders of the temple are willing to sacrifice something in the way of precision in order to achieve a richer, fuller account of the community's faith and life. Instead of trying to fit the pieces together in a tidy, logical package, their goal is to give attention to every important idea.

I suggest that we take the temple rather than the tower as our model for Adventist theology in the future. Instead of striving for a tight integration of all our doctrines, let us assemble our insights one by one, and then attempt some overarching unity as a final project. So, the unity comes last, if ever, rather than first.

This conception of theology will help us to avoid the liabilities of the tower model. When we force a single belief or concept to support the entire edifice of Christian faith, it depletes a community's resources. Other important topics will go unattended. Moreover, insisting that everything depends on a single theological idea often provokes theological controversy.

For example, certain Adventist scholars have emphasized a particular concept of biblical inspiration that cannot bear the theological weight they impose on it. Agreement on this one point of doctrine does not guarantee agreement on every other.<sup>20</sup> Nor is every doctrinal dispute ultimately traceable to divergent views of biblical inspiration.

Moreover, the insistence that only one, very

specific, concept of inspiration is acceptable to Adventists has had a negative effect on the life of the church. It has divided Adventist scholars, confused many of the laity, and sapped a good deal of the church's theological energy. Too much time has been expended in defending it. Embracing the temple model of theology would help us to avoid the narrowness of vision and the divisiveness and partisanship that the tower model engenders.

On the positive side, the temple model of theology encourages us to enjoy the full sweep of the theological landscape. By freeing us to view our beliefs in their independent grandeur—side by side, as it were—this model

invites us to explore a broad range of religious ideas. We need not be overly concerned about fitting them into a tightly unified system. Cohesiveness and symmetry are worthy theological goals, but the distinctive contours of each belief deserve attention, too.

In conclusion, the present theological scene presents us with a bewildering variety of developments and a number of disturbing trends. But among them are several encouraging signs and more than a few helpful resources. Adventists should take their cue from the growing interest in concrete religious experience and mold their theological reflections to the distinctive shape of Adventist thought and practice.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Martha C. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

2. Richard Lints makes these distinctions in "The Postpositivist Choice: Tracy or Lindbeck?" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 61 (Winter 1993), p. 659. For a helpful discussion of the postliberal-postmodern debate within current theological circles, see William C. Placher, *Unapologetic Theology: A Christian Voice in a Pluralistic Conversation* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1989). The most influential expression of postliberalism is George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984).

3. George W. Stroup gives a convenient overview of this theological development in "Narrative Theology," in *A New Handbook of Christian Theology*, Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price, eds. (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1992), pp. 323-327. For a fuller account of the movement, see Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology: Recovering the Gospel in the Church* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox, 1981).

4. The most influential source for narrative theology is Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in 18th and 19th Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

5. A seminal article for narrative theology is Stephen Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 39 (1971), p. 299-314.

6. Recall, for example, the role of the exodus narratives in Hebrew history and the place Homer's

epics occupied in Greek thought.

7. The works of James W. McClendon, Jr., and Stanley Hauerwas are often mentioned in this connection. William Bennett offers collections of stories for family reading as one way to remedy the widespread moral decay he sees in American culture.

8. No one emphasized the prevalence of symbols in Christianity more than Paul Tillich, who maintained that with a single important exception—that God is being-itself—all our statements about God are symbolic (*Systematic Theology* [3 vols.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951-1963] Vol. 1, pp. 238-239).

9. "It is pictures rather than propositions, metaphors rather than statements, which determine most of our philosophical conviction" (Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979], pp. 12, 13). Rorty argues that for the past several centuries the central concerns of Western philosophy have been dominated by the notion that the human mind is essentially a mirror of nature.

10. "Most of the reasoning we do about ethical issues, most of the decisions we make, and most of our judgments about other people are based on metaphors" (Mark Johnson, *Moral Imagination: Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993], p. 61).

11. Among the many intriguing works on this topic are George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal About the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Mark Johnson, *The Body*



in the Mind: *The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Stewart Guthrie, *Faces in the Clouds: A New Theory of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

12. Sallie McFague is responsible for some of the best known of these endeavors: *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

13. The literature in these areas is rapidly growing, and becoming increasingly diverse. Important liberation theologians include Gustavo Gutiérrez, Juan Luis Segundo, and Leonardo Boff. For an early overview of liberation thought, see Robert McAfee Brown, *Theology in a New Key: Responding to Liberation Themes* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978). For an early critique of liberation thinking, see Schubert M. Ogden, *Faith and Freedom: Toward a Theology of Liberation* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1979). Some prominent names among feminist theologians are Rosemary Radford Ruether (especially *Sexism and God-talk*), Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (especially *In Memory of Her*), Mary Daly, and Sally McFague. Others are Anne E. Carr and Rebecca S. Chopp. Schussler Fiorenza's recent writings exhibit a preoccupation with questions of theory. Well known black or Afro-American theologians are James H. Cone (*Black Theology and Black Power* and *Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream or a Nightmare?*) and Cornel West (*Prophesy Deliverance! An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* and *Race Matters*). Womanist theology expresses the concerns of black feminists.

14. Gabriel Fackre speaks rather dramatically of a recent "revival" in systematics as a "rebellion" against the "ad hoc advocates of the secular sixties" and the "latter-day proponents of postmodern ambiguity" (Rebecca S. Chopp and Gabriel Fackre, "Recent Works in Christian Systematic Theology," *Religious Studies*

*Review* [20 (January 1994), p. 7]).

15. So much has been written about the Trinity in recent years that people are now producing books to describe all the other books on the topic. See, for example, John Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

16. Thomas Oden is noteworthy in this regard. He has rejected Protestant liberalism in favor of what he calls "paleo-orthodoxy."

17. In some ways, the emergence of "Christian philosophy" also reflects this turn to the particular. Even though they examine the intelligibility of various religious ideas, these Christian philosophers affirm the intellectual value of the particular vision expressed in classical philosophy of religion. They occupy the level of experience that Wayne A. Meeks identifies as "the moral landscape—the picture of reality that, just beneath the level of conscious reflection, shapes our moral intuitions" (*The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993], p. 111).

18. This sequence of method-doctrine-application has several undesirable consequences. One is the tendency to give questions of method disproportionate attention. Another is the way it construes the relation between theology and the Christian life. The doctrine-ethics sequence assumes that thinking about faith is prior to living it and that correct thinking can produce authentic Christian existence. The facts of experience, however, support neither assumption. Attempts to deduce practical applications from theological formulas often conflict with the dynamics of living religion. As we have argued, the life of faith, both personal and communal, draws its strength from sources other than theological prescriptions.

19. Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 3.

20. I am indebted to Sakae Kubo for this observation.



# New Directions for The Old Testament

Holistic approaches to Scripture, and new explorations of old arguments, offer promising opportunities for Adventist scholars.

by Greg A. King

EVERY DAY, ON THE WAY TO WORK, I PASS THE house where the late Edwin R. Thiele lived. I first heard of Thiele's monumental contribution to Old Testament studies when I was a college student at Southern Missionary College. In my Old Testament Studies class, I learned about Thiele's dating system, and the story of how his scholarly work provided a chronology for the Hebrew monarchy. I read how his confidence in the reliability of God's Word provided the foundation he needed to engage in original research and resolve some problems that his professors thought insoluble.<sup>1</sup> Later, as I completed my doctorate and went on to my own work in Old Testament studies, I found Thiele quoted, endorsed, and disagreed with, but certainly not ignored.

Another area in which Adventist scholars

have made a noteworthy contribution is archaeology. The contributors include the late Siegfried Horn and a number of students and successors, whose reports are read at yearly gatherings of biblical archeologists and whose scholarship is widely respected outside the denomination.<sup>2</sup>

## Holistic Approaches

BUT what of other areas within the field of Old Testament studies? At the current juncture, several areas are taking a direction that offers splendid opportunities for the involvement of Adventists. For example, Adventists have traditionally advocated a holistic approach to the various books of the Old Testament; that is, taking the various Old Testament books as whole entities, instead of dividing them into very small fragments. This approach has always seemed to Adventists to hold greater promise for understanding and proclaiming the power, vitality, and freshness inherent within the message of the Old Testament.<sup>3</sup>

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Sometimes designated as "canonical" or "integrative,"<sup>4</sup> the holistic approach has recently become more popular. It stands in contradistinction to the method that has typically been used by scholars to interpret a specific Old Testament book. For instance, in a prophetic book, scholars would use such criteria as form criticism, theological perspective, style, and meter, and then attempt to determine which units were authentic and which were inauthentic. Often scholars would credit relatively little of the book to the prophet whose name it bore. Then, taking the units deemed to be authentic, they would interpret them, largely in isolation from one another, in order to determine the theological message of the prophet.<sup>5</sup>

Now, however, a number of scholars have moved away from this approach and embraced a holistic method. The starting point of study is the final form of the book. For these students, the book's theological message should be drawn from the entire book. This trend is visible in a number of recent studies. One of the most obvious examples of the contrast between the new methodology and the old is found in two strikingly different commentaries on Amos, both by renowned scholars. Writing several decades ago, Hans Walter Wolff set forth an elaborate and detailed hypothesis for the composition of the Book of Amos. He posited six stages, extending from the time of the prophet to the post-exilic era.<sup>6</sup> As might be expected, Wolff contended that the hopeful conclusion to Amos (9:11-15), as well as a number of other passages, did not originate with the prophet himself.

Taking an abrupt about-face at the first part of this decade, Shalom Paul asserts in his extensive commentary the unity and authenticity of the entire book. He maintains that no portion of the Book of Amos needs to be understood as coming from a time later than the prophet.<sup>7</sup> To discern the message of the

prophet, one must draw from the entire book. Intriguingly, both these volumes appear in the same Hermeneia commentary series.

Of course, scholars sometimes adopt the holistic approach for reasons other than those that have traditionally been given by Adventists. Some reason that since the canonical form of the book is the only one we have, it alone should be the basis for our interpretation.<sup>8</sup> We simply don't know much about the composition of the book, so we should take it as we have it. However, Adventists can be encouraged by the fact that an increasing number of scholars are taking a holistic approach for historical reasons as well. That is, they say that Old Testament prophetic books today have basically the same form they did during the prophet's lifetime.<sup>9</sup>

## Practical Issues

A second trend in Old Testament studies that Adventists have reason to welcome is the subordination of critical concerns to theological and practical issues. Adventists have long held that biblical scholarship is not an end in itself, but should make a practical and meaningful contribution to the life of the church. This second trend in Old Testament scholarship is a natural outgrowth of a holistic approach to Scripture. Earlier generations of academics tended to be preoccupied with identifying the original source to which a certain unit (or even a few words) of Scripture could be traced (whether the Yahwist, the Deuteronomist, Deutero-Isaiah, etc.). They also carefully reconstructed the supposed social and historical context of the unit. Recent scholars are more inclined to focus on the theological message of a given biblical book and its practical ramifications for the people of God.

One of the prime examples of this recent trend is J. Clinton McCann, Jr.'s excellent volume, *A Theological Introduction to the*

*Book of Psalms*. "I am interested," he says, "in what the Psalms teach—about God and God's rule, about humanity and its role, about sin and forgiveness, about vengeance and compassion, about salvation and the life of the faithful."<sup>10</sup> To those who might accuse him of a non-scholarly interpretation of the book, he asks, "What could be more *historically* honest and *critically* appropriate than to approach the book of Psalms the way its shapers intended—as *torah*, 'instruction'?"<sup>11</sup> In other words, the Psalms were not preserved to enable us to reconstruct the liturgical history of ancient Israel (as the form critics might suggest), nor were they simply valued as examples of beautiful poetry (as the rhetorical critics might imply). "Rather, the Psalms have been preserved and treasured because they have served to instruct the people of God about God, about themselves and the world, and about the life of faith."<sup>12</sup>

Adventists, who have insisted that scholarship must be relevant to the life of the community of believers can happily embrace this trend. We agree that Old Testament studies must seek to deepen the commitment of believers to the Lord as our Creator and Redeemer.<sup>13</sup>

Adapted from a detail of "Initial B, with King David Kneeling," by Zanobi Strozzi.



## Exploratory Revisions

A third noteworthy trend is the willingness to scrutinize, question, and challenge positions held to be settled by earlier scholars. Examples arise from two different areas of the discipline. In studies of the Pentateuch—the first five books of the Bible—few mainline scholars would have predicted serious challenges to the Documentary Hypothesis. The idea that the Pentateuch was composed of four diverse, originally independent sources, labelled J, E, D, and P, that were written over a period of centuries and were only combined into one document late in the Old Testament period, became so strongly entrenched it was often assumed instead of argued for. This situation has changed. The withering critique by the liberal scholar Rolf Rendtorff<sup>14</sup> has many scholars admitting that the Documentary Hypothesis at least needs modification.

Another example of a challenge to a widely held view comes from the field of archaeology. Bryant Wood, in an article that achieved international attention, contested the conclusions of Kathleen Kenyon concerning Jericho. To recognize the significance of his article for biblical studies, one must understand that Jericho has often been given as the prime example of the unreliability of the Bible's account of the Israelites' entry into Palestine. According to Kenyon's analysis of the data, there was no settlement at the site at the time the Israelites entered the land. On this point the biblical account could not be historically reliable. In a stunning challenge to Kenyon, Woods argues that the city was strongly fortified at the time when the Bible indicates the Israelite invasion occurred; that the city walls were likely toppled by an earthquake; and that the city was later burned.<sup>15</sup> Each of these conclusions is congruent with the biblical narrative describing Jericho's fall. Several scholars have attempted to refute Wood's points,

but good evidence continues to commend his position.

## The Old in the New Testament

A fourth trend that should attract Adventists is the increasing emphasis on intertextuality in biblical interpretation. Intertextuality refers to the citation of, allusion to, or reflection on an earlier text in a later passage of Scripture. Scholars have long written about the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament. However, they are increasingly observing and writing about the use of the Old Testament in the Old Testament.<sup>16</sup> In fact, a new commentary series specifically focuses on the intertextual study of Scripture.<sup>17</sup>

Seventh-day Adventist scholars can certainly resonate with this trend because we have a long tradition of comparing Scripture with Scripture; for example, we consider Genesis' declarations about Creation to be integrally connected to proclamations on earth's

origins found in the Psalter. The burgeoning study of intertextuality reaffirms the time-honored principle that Scripture is its own best interpreter.

Given the fact that these trends provide opportunities for Adventist Old Testament scholars, one might ask, What contributions are Adventists making? Have we helped advance these trends? In general, the answer is No. With a few exceptions, such as those of Thiele and our widely regarded achievements in the field of archaeology, the impact of Adventists on Old Testament studies as a whole has been almost negligible. However, it doesn't have to remain that way, for current trends that approach the Bible holistically, emphasize theological and practical issues, challenge widely held theories, and compare Scripture with Scripture, provide splendid opportunities for Adventists to plunge into the world of Old Testament scholarship. Today, the door is wide open for Adventists to make a lasting scholarly contribution, while simultaneously proclaiming the relevant message of the Old Testament to an age that desperately needs it.

### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. For his own recounting of the story, see Edwin R. Thiele, "The Chronology of the Hebrew Kings," *Adventist Review* (May 17, 1983), pp. 3-5.

2. For two recent positive references to Adventist archaeology in widely distributed periodicals, see William G. Dever, "The Death of a Discipline," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 21 (September/October 1995), p. 53; also, David Neff, "Why We Dig the Holy Land," *Christianity Today* (October 23, 1995), pp. 14, 15.

3. I find it interesting that even some of those who appreciate many aspects of the earlier fragmentary approach recognize that it has an inherent sterility and barrenness. For example, John D. W. Watts, in *Isaiah 1-33*, Word Biblical Commentary 24 (Waco, Texas: Word, 1985), p. xxiii, observes regarding the commentary by his mentor, Hans Wildberger, a volume for which he has great respect, that despite "the inevitable worth of his commentary in summarizing and evaluating all the results of historical-critical research to date, it does not succeed in presenting an understandable interpretation of the book. He has followed the method of historical exegesis, and his work presents the tremendous work

of that method. But it does not make the book come alive for the reader or student."

4. For a helpful survey of these so-called literary approaches to Scripture, see Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), pp. 13-45.

5. This method was used by Charles Taylor in "The Book of Zephaniah: Introduction and Exegesis," *The Interpreter's Bible*, George Arthur Buttrick, ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1956), Vol. 6, pp. 1009-1011, who held that in chapter two only vss. 1, 2a, 4-6, 7b, and 12-14 may be from Zephaniah. He also questioned the authenticity of the entirety of chapter three, and even raised doubts about portions of chapter one.

6. See Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, trans. Waldemar Janzen, S. Dean McBride, Jr., and Charles A. Muenchow, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

7. See Shalom Paul, *Amos*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

8. For example, see Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah* Anchor Bible 25A (New York: Doubleday, 1994).

9. For three different examples from the prophetic

corpus, see Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Amos*, Anchor Bible 24a (New York: Doubleday, 1989); Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, Anchor Bible 22 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983); J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity, 1993).

10. J. Clinton McCann, Jr., *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), p. 19.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 21.

13. For one example, see James L. Mays, *Psalms, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox, 1994).

14. See Rolf Rendtorff, "The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch," trans. John J. Scullion, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* 89 (JSOT/Sheffield Academic Press, 1989).

15. Bryant Wood, "Did the Israelites Conquer Jeri-

cho?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16 (March/April 1990), pp. 44-58.

16. For intertextuality within the Old Testament as a whole, see Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), and Danna Fewell, ed., *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1992). For intertextuality in relationship to a specific book within the Old Testament, see Alice Bach, "Intertextuality and the Book of Jeremiah: Animadversion on Text and Theory," in *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible*, J. Cheryl Exum and David J. Clines, eds. (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993).

17. *The Mellen Biblical Commentary: Intertextual*, from the Edwin Mellen Press. Several Adventist scholars, including William Shea, Richard Choi, John McVay, and I have each agreed to contribute a volume to this series.



# New Testament Studies Face 2000

Adventist New Testament scholars shape—and are shaped by—the church. It's time to share that experience with academia.

by Ernest J. Bursey

Religious communities contribute to biblical studies to the degree that they allow us to re-enter and re-experience the world of the past. While the methodologies and critical approaches employed in biblical studies have traditionally drawn on disciplines taught in the universities, it is the gift of religious communities to allow the texts to be seen in particular ways. Perhaps more now than in previous eras, particular perspectives of faith communities are acknowledged and even welcomed.<sup>1</sup>

Some New Testament scholars steeped in the perspective of their particular faith have had measurable impact on the study of the New Testament outside of their own denomination. To simply drop names, consider John Howard Yoder and William Swartley among Mennonites, Gordon Fee, a charismatic, and Raymond Brown, a Roman Catholic.

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With what perspectives can Seventh-day Adventists enrich New Testament scholarship? The obvious choices of Sabbath, law, and Eschaton might well be augmented by attention to the prophetic. The books of Matthew, James, and Revelation seem natural areas for Adventist contributions to New Testament scholarship. Robert Johnston, chair of the New Testament department of the SDA Theological Seminary, Andrews University, observes that the Adventist denomination itself might serve as a model for students of the early church: the expansion to a worldwide movement, a growing disparity in numbers between the mother North American church and the burgeoning membership in the Southern Hemisphere, and the onset of what looks like the early Catholicism of the post-apostolic church.<sup>2</sup>

Conversely, the interests of the academy effect the way Adventist New Testament scholars relate to their faith. A senior level Adventist scholar notes that

the apocalyptic in early Christianity will remain a focus of research even if the questions are phrased

differently [than the Jesus Seminar]. Given this, Adventism will continue to face the challenge of this research and will have to confront its own apocalyptic traditions with new insights. The Revelation Seminars so popular in some quarters are a source of embarrassment in others already. The apocalyptic sectarianism that characterizes Third World Adventism is becoming more and more problematic for those who do New Testament studies. How the fraternity of Adventist New Testament scholars reacts to the coming impasse will prove decisive for the future of the church in the long run.<sup>4</sup>

The largest group among Adventists with Ph.D. degrees in religious studies earned them in New Testament studies. To what extent have their contributions been fueled by our perspective as Adventists? What have my Adventist colleagues contributed to the larger field of New Testament scholarship, especially in the more promising areas? What sort of a profile do we as a group cast within the academy? Correspondingly, how have we fared in shaping the understanding of the church?

I offer my own incomplete listing of research and writing as a simple gesture toward a badly needed bibliographic effort on someone's part. In the meantime, please accept them as illustrative: the publication of Philo texts in the Loeb Classical Library series by Abraham Terrian; Larry Richards' earlier work on textual criticism, recently revived; Harold Weiss' ongoing study of the Sabbath in New Testament texts and communities; Bruce Johanson's continued work on text-linguistics and rhetoric, starting with 1 Thessalonians; B. Brinsmead's published dissertation on the Galatian opponents; Ron Jolliffe's work on Q, which continues to this very day; and the several New Testament contributors to the dissertation series published by Andrews University.

Several have parlayed their scholarly pursuits into popular books: Pedrito Maynard-Reid's work on poverty and wealth in James, published by Orbis; William Johnsson's work

on pilgrimage and purity in Hebrews and his popular introductions to Matthew and Hebrews; and William Richardson on the charismatic phenomena in Corinthians.

Among the formally trained New Testament teachers, perhaps the most prolific has been John Brunt. He has produced a series of highly accessible works on a wide range of topics, including hermeneutics, the Sabbath, eschatology, New Testament ethics, the role of women in the New Testament, divorce, as well as popular commentaries on Romans and Philippians. Virtually all were produced while carrying full-time teaching and/or administrative responsibilities on an undergraduate campus without the benefit of a sabbatical for nearly two decades. All this has left the rest of us humbled and mystified. He has ranged from a challenging dissertation on clean and unclean foods, which has never been published, to the assuring *Good News for Troubled Times*, the church's missionary book of the year in 1993.

A number have contributed significantly in both directions: Sakae Kubo's work on textual criticism, Greek language tools, and Pauline studies balanced by widely accessible books on ethics, Sabbath, and the Second Coming; Robert Johnston's form-critical work comparing the rabbinic parables with the parables of Jesus, as well as his recent commentaries on the Epistles of Peter and Jude; Robert Badena's published dissertation on Romans 10:4 in the Society of Biblical Literature series and his recent work on the Book of Revelation; Robert MacIvor and Norman Young's writings on parables; and Warren Trenchard's published dissertation on the depiction of women in the intertestamental literature and his recent publications of Greek language tools. Among the most prolific is Jon Paulien, with strong interests in the Johannine corpus. His two-octave span reaches from active membership in the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar ("Reading the Apocalypse: The Intersection of Liter-



ary and Social Methods Seminar") to being a major contributor to the volumes on Revelation produced by the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference. Like Brunt, he has written on more general topics.

An example of a person trained in New Testament studies who has contributed to his church in unexpected ways is Fred Veltman. Veltman's understanding of redactional methodology in the study of the Gospels stood us all in good stead when searching for someone to guide the church through the difficult rapids of the research on Ellen White's use of sources.<sup>4</sup>

There is an immense reservoir of talent and training among us. We have been given the best educational opportunities available at outstanding institutions. While still graduate students, many of us are warmly encouraged by our professors. Yet, when all the names and contributions were added up, it appears to me that Adventist New Testament scholarship has been and continues to be under-represented in the academy. What are the publications we have written that are routinely placed on the reading lists of graduate students? How many of us have contributed to major commentary series? When the academy wanted to understand the apocalyptic exegesis of David Koresh, did they turn to us? How many chairs or even tenured positions do Adventist New Testament scholars hold in non-Adventist universities or colleges? How often are we honored by our professional colleagues by serving as the chair of section meetings? Why have so many with such obvious gifts and promise not continued to be productive to the level of our graduate school counterparts?

These are not words of despair. I, for one, am honored to be a teacher. Every day I make use of the education I received at Yale for the benefit of my students. Others here can make a similar speech. We have committed ourselves to the service of the church. But, ironically, the impact of Adventist New Testament scholars on the church can be construed

as marginal, too. Note that I say marginal, but not irrelevant. For several years, our church has been focused on the study of particular books of the Bible. How many of us have been asked by our church to produce a series of lessons? Perhaps I have overstated and underestimated. I am open to your persuading me to see the matter differently.

I am not intending in the slightest degree to suggest that somehow we have failed to work hard or that, somehow, we are at fault. I am suggesting that we ought to articulate the factors that have led us to the place where we are if we are to talk responsibly about Adventist New Testament scholarship in the 21st century. To what extent have the conditions of our employment been a factor in inhibiting scholarship? What has blunted or stalled our contributions to the field of New Testament scholarship? Are these factors going to continue with the next generation of Adventist New Testament scholars? What needs to change for them to be able to make a more obvious impact in the intellectual academy, especially in this time of openness to the contributions of scholars nurtured in particular faith communities? These questions deserve our sustained attention.

Adapted from "The New Jerusalem," from the series "The Apocalypse."



I conclude with a final provocation and a final suggestion. Let me be provocative first: Can a mature Adventist scholar write a first-rate commentary on the Book of Revelation as a recognized gift to the academic community that has enriched us? Could a mature Adventist scholar in an Adventist institution write a first-rate commentary on the Book of Revelation? I

hope the answer to both of those questions is Yes. If not now, then a few years hence.

Finally, I suggest that the Adventist Society for Religious Studies plan a seminar on biblical apocalyptic, with participants drawn from scholars inside and outside the Adventist community. The papers and discussion should be published in time for the year 2000.

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#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

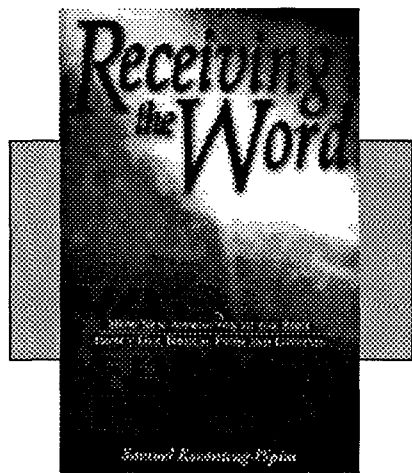
1. A. Malherbe noted that up to the 20th century, the field of classical studies determined the methodologies subsequently employed in biblical studies. That is no longer the case. The plethora of approaches come from a number of universes, especially the social sciences. For instance, the interdisciplinary work of John Dominic Crossan draws on "studies in cultural and social anthropology, medical anthropology, the sociology of colonial protest movements, the dynamics and structure of pre-industrial peasant societies, honor-shame societies, patron-client societies . . ." (Marcus Borg, "Recent Developments in North American Jesus Scholarship," *Qumran Chronicle* 5.1 [July 1995], pp. 67, 68). In more recent times, the readings of the academy have been broadened by the inclusion of non-white, non-male, non-Christian practitioners: i.e., the burgeoning number of Jewish New Testament scholars like Geza Vermes, Amy-Jill Levine, and others have allowed us to see Jesus and Paul as Jews. The work of the feminist New Testament scholar Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has widely popularized Jesus as the leader of an egalitarian and non-patriarchal movement.

2. While I was engaged in New Testament studies at Yale, our family attended the Humphrey Street SDA church within easy walking distance of the campus. The

church members' keen expectations of the soon coming of Jesus was light years away from the perspective of my academic colleagues engaged in the study of the Thessalonian correspondence while lacking empathy for an apocalyptic Paul. The connections were much easier for me, coming as I did from a community that fully expected the Parousia. Perhaps with adequate sociological and anthropological skill and some courage, I could have contributed to my fellow students' grasp of Paul by offering them the experience of contact with the Adventist folk at Humphrey Street. These thoughts did not occur to me at the time.

3. In preparation for the annual meeting of the Adventist Society for Religious Studies, a number of Adventist New Testament scholars in the United States and Australia were invited to comment on the intersection of New Testament studies and Adventist faith. Their contributions to the development of this paper are considerable, though I am responsible for its particular shape and focus.

4. The knowledge among church leaders of Ellen White's use of sources made my participation in the critical study of the Gospels much less risky than for Adventists contemplating denominational employment even 10 years before.



## Koranteng-Pipim: "Moderate Liberalism" Threatens Adventism

Reviewed by Norman H. Young

Samuel Koranteng-Pipim. *Receiving the Word: How New Approaches to the Bible Impact Our Biblical Faith and Lifestyle*. Berrien Springs, Mich.: Berean Books, 1996. \$10.95 paper. 386 pages.

A number of developments that are occurring in parts of the Adventist Church dismay Samuel Koranteng-Pipim. He discerns a growing tolerance in the church towards theistic evolution, homosexuality, premarital sex, the use of alcohol, jewelry, feminism, contemporary religious music, pluralism, and unhealthy life-style (pp. 105-113; 118; 172-174). He is also concerned at the lack of numerical growth in the western divisions of the Adventist Church (pp. 200, 201). Koranteng-Pipim believes that the cause of this malaise is the loss of the Bible's central place in Adventist faith and practice. He attributes this loss to the increasing acceptance of

the "historical-critical method" of biblical interpretation. He sees the issue, then, as not over how to apply an agreed-upon method of interpretation, but over which of two conflicting methods to apply to Scripture (p. 77).

Koranteng-Pipim urges Adventist leaders and scholars to adhere to the denomination's traditional hermeneutic of taking the Bible in its plain, grammatical, and historical sense (pp. 78, 214-223). He seems not to have noticed that James Barr has made a good case for the view that it is historical criticism and not fundamentalism that takes the text as it reads (see, for example, Barr's *Fundamentalism* [London: SCM, 1977]). Koranteng-Pipim qualifies his plain-literal-sense approach by pointing out that care must be exercised in recognizing the Bible's use of symbolism, poetry, figures of speech, parables, allegory, metaphors, and hyperbole (pp. 264, 265). He rightly emphasizes the necessity of seeing a text in its own historical, literary, and cultural setting (I think he is being informed by critical scholarship in saying this) before applying it to our own culture. That is, one must establish what a text

meant before attempting to say what it means. All this is commendable.

The author makes a good case in defending the plain-sense method of interpretation when rightly employed against the charge of "proof-texting" (pp. 28-30). It is also a fair comment to criticize those who tolerate all sorts of theological aberrations, but who show no tolerance of those deemed to be "fundamentalists" (p. 220). However, his own approach is hardly irenic. Any position that does not coincide with his views is categorized as satanic delusion and part of the predicted "Alpha" apostasy of the last days (2 Timothy 4:3, 4 is treated as prophetic of the Adventist Church today, even though contextually it applied to Paul's day) (pp. 188-191, 326-329).

The book is profusely footnoted and the writer's scholarship is not limited to Adventist authors, though the less-conservative wing of evangelical scholarship is not well represented. His frequent appeals to the Reformers is probably not warranted, since Luther and Calvin's attitude to the text was not one with which Koranteng-Pipim would be comfortable. It is unfortunate that the

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author spends most of his time damning other Adventist writers, and misses the opportunity for constructive dialogue with others. Equally regrettable, given his expressed concern for centralizing Scripture, is the absence of a thorough canvassing of the biblical data. The book does not spend much time with the biblical texts.

He is confident that the sensitive interpreter will not err by over-literalizing the biblical literature. This may not be as straightforward as he seems to think. Take, for example, his own treatment of the biblical view of hell. Koranteng-Pipim opposes any view that sees the fires of hell metaphorically (pp. 160, 161), yet presumably he does not himself take in their plain, literal sense: the outer darkness, the worm that does not die, the eternal ascending smoke of their torment, the worshippers of the beast who have no rest by day or by night, the gnashing of teeth, or the everlasting punishment.

The author assumes that the Bible was without error at the time of its original writing. These now-lost originals were error free in all areas, whether theological, historical, or scientific. He allows that some minor distortions have crept into the Word during its scribal transmission, but these to his mind are few in number and mostly able to be eliminated by comparing the various extant manuscripts (pp. 227, 228). He probably downplays the ambiguity and importance of many of the textual variants in the manuscript tradition. This leads him to offer rational explanations for some celebrated but minor discrepancies in Scripture (pp. 279-304). One would like to have seen a discussion of some of the more profound issues such as the relationship between the Synoptic

Gospels and John.

Koranteng-Pipim accepts that human fallibility is present at each historical point of the biblical data, except the first. It is certainly true that the human propensity to error is involved in interpretation of the text, as it is in the analysis of manuscripts to establish the original Hebrew or Greek text, and likewise in the scribal transmission of the text. But Koranteng-Pipim doesn't recognize that fallible humanity is also involved in the original writing of the text. He believes that here the divine superintendence blocked all human imperfections.

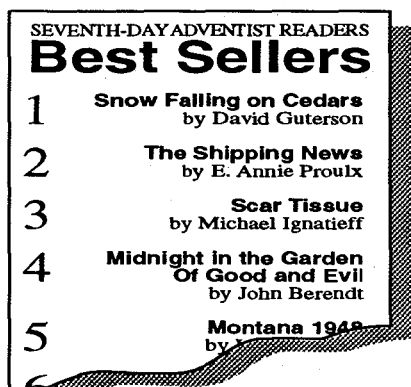
The fact is, if an error-free text were so vital to our salvation, it would be just as important in transmitting the text without error as it was in writing the original text. The inerrant autographs are an entirely hypothetical construction based on no manuscript evidence or biblical text. One wonders—given the author's adherence to the inerrant autographs—how the author manages to maintain his commitment to Ellen White, where we possess the "autographs." The reason for the autographs hypothesis grows out of a misunderstanding of inspiration—as if God were an author in the normal sense of the term, and therefore, as God, incapable of making an error. It also points to a misunderstanding of the purpose of Scripture, as if its authority depended on some *total* divine control of the human writer.

The author is quite able to flex his own interpretation to demonstrate that the Bible does not approve of slavery or patriarchy "as morally legitimate practices for his people" (p. 304, note 12). Yet his commitment to the plain, literal meaning of the Bible prevents him

from seeing how immoral and contrary to the gospel is the tradition of choosing the ordained preachers of that gospel on the basis of gender (pp. 119-142). It does not require an adherence to the historical-critical method of interpretation to be offended by that.

Apparently on the basis of a comparison with Acts, he concludes that the tongues phenomenon in 1 Corinthians 14 is human language (p. 268). This is close to what is meant by the "proof-text method." The plain reading of the text and not the influence of the charismatic movement (as Koranteng-Pipim claims) is what leads most scholars today to see the experience in the Corinthian congregation as different from the phenomenon reported in Acts 2. This is the danger inherent in his interpretative principle number five—"the consistent principle." Differences in the biblical data are forced into a harmonious mold as one practices the admonition of Isaiah 28:10: "line upon line, here a little and there a little" (this text, in fact, has nothing to do with principles of hermeneutics, despite Koranteng-Pipim).

*Receiving the Word* is an earnest appeal to take the Word of God seriously. Koranteng-Pipim does not hesitate to criticize Adventist publishing for being more interested in profits than the Word, or Sabbath Bible classes for studying the lesson pamphlet rather than the Scriptures. Such an appeal to hear the Word is timely, but this book's approach is more polemical than winsome. It leaves us with a narrow choice: either a form of Adventist fundamentalism or a radical liberalism. In fact, the world of understanding the Bible, like most worlds, is more diverse than that.



My dad used to tell me about the guy who would hit his thumb with a hammer, because it felt so good when he stopped. That's the way some of us felt after reviewing books from the New York Times Fiction Best Sellers list in the previous issue of Spectrum. To recover our equilibrium, we decided to review books we really liked, books we would consider excellent with a Christian audience in mind, books we would highly recommend to friends. We opened these second reviews to either fiction or non-fiction books published in 1990 or after. The choices include some previous best sellers, as well as more hidden treasures. Of course we have different opinions about the relative merits of one another's choices—that's part of the fun. But all of these books have a level of insight and use of language that impressed the reviewer. It was a rewarding experience to spend time with a book we

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## Adventists Review Their Favorite Contemporary Books

by Scott Moncrieff

really liked, and to try to communicate some of that book's special quality in our reviews. We discovered that it is often easier to write clever things about a book you despise than

to appropriately praise what you admire. But don't stop with what we had to say. Go out and borrow or buy a few of these books of good report and settle into your easy chair.

### *Snow Falling on Cedars*

*Snow Falling on Cedars*, by David Guterson (Vintage, 1995)

Reviewed by Norman Wendth, Atlantic Union College

You can't tell a book by its title. *Snow Falling on Cedars* doesn't sound like a murder mystery, but it is one. Carl Heine, a not-so-simple fisherman on the Pacific northwest island of San Piedro, has drowned under "suspicious circumstances." As the novel opens, fellow fisherman Kabuo Miyamoto is on trial for his murder, and Ishmael Chambers, editor and only reporter for the *San Piedro Review*, is trying to make sense of the trial. Most of the time the reader follows the proceedings through Ishmael's eyes.

David Guterson knows how to please a crowd, and you can happily read this novel as you would

any popular whodunit. *Snow Falling on Cedars* offers us so much more, however, that to call it a "mystery" is misleading. Rather than limit the story to the methodical search for rational knowledge of the crime, as in a Sherlock Holmes tale, Guterson quickly broadens our vision to encompass social and moral questions. For example, the accused fisherman is nisei, and the trial occurs a scant decade after World War II. Not only is the San Piedro community, which includes a significant Japanese-American component, struggling to come to terms with the war's aftermath, but Ishmael also finds himself less and less able to separate private issues of personal innocence and guilt from his professional covering of the trial. He has lost both an arm and a lover to the war, and finds his memories affecting how he interprets the events of

the trial. The readers must consider issues beyond Ishmael's, too. Can San Piedro bystanders avoid guilt for evil observed? Can love ever be "guilty"? What are appropriate responses for victims of tragedy and loss? Before the story ends, Guterson has led the reader through a roller-coaster of moral and emotional struggles that don't end until most readers recognize their own private dilemmas somewhere in the story.

And "most readers" definitely includes Seventh-day Adventists. Many of us struggle with a (too?) highly polished sense of guilt, yet limit our guilt to obvious sins of commission. Bystanders—maybe even collaborators—are innocent; sins of omission or neglect don't even register on our moral seismographs. *Snow Falling on Cedars*, however, teaches a sensitivity our subculture is only

just beginning to recognize that it lacks. Perhaps we have protected ourselves against more than evil; perhaps our deepest sin is not being fully enough engaged in life. We must know our neighbors before we can love them.

Moral tales are out of fashion, of course. A postmodern world seeks to understand rather than judge, and moralists are avoided for their presumed harsh inflexibility. It is therefore all the more remarkable that *Snow Falling on Cedars* was on the best-seller list for so long. When that happens, Adventists—even those trying to escape guilt—should take notice. Popular novels give people what they know they want; literature shows people that they want more than they know. *Snow Falling on Cedars* is a ripping good yarn. It is also literature.

who cannot forsake all others, and has two little girls, Bunny and Sunshine. Suddenly he finds himself painfully released from his marriage by a fatal automobile accident, and, with the help of a newly resurfaced maiden aunt, makes the decision to return to his ancestral home, Killick-Claw, Newfoundland.

Quoyle, the aunt, and the children restore and move into the aunt's girlhood home, a large green, foundationless house cabled to a bare point of Newfoundland rock. Quoyle hires on with the eccentric crew of the local newspaper, *The Gammy Bird*, and begins his assignment of covering auto wrecks and the shipping news. As he drives to and from work, Quoyle finds himself more and more frequently giving a lift to "a tall and quiet woman" by the name of Wavey Prowse.

Proulx's poetic prose, laden with a rich and particular vocabulary, redeems the barren Newfoundland setting as surely as Quoyle's newfound home redeems him: "Quoyle, turning, could look down to the cup of harbor, could turn again, look at the open sea, at distant ships heading for Europe or Montreal. Liquid turquoise below. To the north two starched sheet icebergs. There, the smoke of Killick-Claw. Far to the east, almost invisible, a dark band like rolled gauze."

Proulx then peoples this stark but enchanted locale with a cast of memorable characters (endowed with names such as Beety Buggit, Tert Card, and Diddy Shovel) and lets us in on their lives and the tapestry of stories with which their lives are woven together. Quoyle and the reader become enfolded in this small shipping and fishing community. On the one hand it is prone to "inventive violence" and sexual abuse. On the other it tolerates kindly human foibles and sticks together in the face of an inhospitable environment, letting no member go unaided.

## The Shipping News

*The Shipping News*, by E. Annie Proulx (Simon & Schuster, 1993)

Reviewed by Meredith Jones Gray, Andrews University

"Here is an account of a few years in the life of Quoyle, born in Brooklyn and raised in a shuffle of dreary upstate towns," begins E. Annie Proulx's *The Shipping News*. It is a modest beginning for a novel which unfolds the story of a life-changing journey and a heartening metamorphosis of the protagonist.

Quoyle is, on the outside, an antihero. A huge, clumsy "loaf" of a man with an abnormally large chin that he is constantly trying to cover with his hand, he was ridiculed and abused as a child and, as an adult, succeeds at nothing. One of the headlines with which Quoyle mentally labels his life says it all: "Stupid Man Does Wrong Thing Once More." But we discover that Quoyle is, on

the inside, a man of great sensitivity, capable of profound passion and compassion, gifted with the eye of an artist and the heart of a poet.

As the story begins, Quoyle is barely holding down an on-again, off-again job as a small-town newspaperman. His only true friend has moved away to California. He makes a disastrous marriage to Petal Bear,

*This is a story about love, redemption, and resurrection, beautifully and enticingly told. Readers will go away celebrating their humanity and the magical powers of love.*

This is a story about love, about redemption, about resurrection. It is beautifully and enticingly told. By the end Quoyale has been transformed from misfit to a whole hu-

man being. Readers will go away sorting through the layers of the story and celebrating their own humanity and the magical powers of love.

the nails in his mouth." Of his honeymoon in Venice we are told, "We had the whole day ahead of us and for that whole day, I felt we could never be harmed or hurt or diminished by the life ahead." And at one point he wistfully admits, "I am still addicted to impossible wishes." (As soon as I can find someone to translate that last quotation into Latin, or perhaps Russian, I will have a family crest.)

## Scar Tissue

*Scar Tissue*, by Michael Ignatieff (Chatto & Windus, 1993).

Reviewed by Beverly Matiko, Andrews University

Perhaps I have read a novel that moves me more and that matters to me more than Michael Ignatieff's *Scar Tissue*. If so, I have forgotten. Appropriate, this recess of recall, as much of Ignatieff's book is about forgetting—the unwilling surrender of memory, of others, and ultimately the self.

*Scar Tissue* begins by acknowledging a memory battle: "I do not want to remember her last hour," the narrator tells us. The illness and death of the narrator's mother, bequeathed by heredity "dark starbursts of scar tissue" in the brain, becomes the novel's focus. (This condition is referred to elsewhere in the novel as "premature senile dementia.") While describing the paring away of his mother's self, the narrator, a professor of English, traces his own concurrent spiral of losses.

While witnessing the disintegration of his mother's body and mind, the narrator becomes obsessed with defining selfhood. He is not the only one on a quest. Ignatieff creates a story of two brothers, sons of a soil scientist and an amateur artist, who seek to solve their own mysteries in different ways. The narrator mines literature (King Lear), philosophy (St. Augustine), and art (Willem de Kooning). The physician brother immerses himself in medical literature, the hospital ward, and the laboratory. Ultimately the "answers" come from an intersection of realms,

through the painstakingly typed words and fragile moments both brothers share with Moe, a man dying of motor neurone disease.

Ignatieff's characters, and subsequently his readers, wrestle with difficult questions. How do we endure the death of a loved one? How do we live with the haunting knowledge that from birth we ourselves are dying by degrees? Why are we so tormented by life's few certainties—its tenuity and brevity?

These questions hardly sound like the starting point for pleasurable reading. Enter what is stunning about Ignatieff's novel: the beauty and force of his language. He infuses an exploration of death with breath-taking, life-affirming prose. The narrator describes his father building the family home: he is "stripped to the waist on a ladder banging in shingles, singing in off-key Russian, the songs garbled by

I heard Michael Ignatieff speak at a literary festival in Wales a few years ago. This Toronto-born writer, now living in London, was moderating a discussion on nonfiction and in particular family histories. I felt at that point that I was in the presence of an amazingly compassionate and enlightened writer. Now that I have read one of his novels, I am prepared to trust my first impressions all the more.

*Scar Tissue* reminds me again of well-crafted fiction's mystery and power, of its ability to be a repository and conveyer of truth. Since first reading *Scar Tissue* several weeks ago, I have bought every copy I can find. They are being handed out and mailed to people I love. Rarely have I believed with such conviction that I am sharing the best.

## Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil

*Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, by John Berendt (Random House, 1994)

Reviewed by Andrew Woolley, Southwestern Adventist College

Do you understand the South? It's a question that Shreve, a Canadian, asks Quentin Compson, his Mississippi roommate at Harvard, in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom*. In some ways, it's the same question John Berendt tries to answer in *Midnight in the Garden of Good*

*and Evil*. Berendt has moved to Savannah to find his own version of the South. Yet, as all Southerners know, all Southerners are created equal, but some Southerners are more equal than others. Savannah is just such a place, so steeped in the southern past that it can look down on Charleston as being too progressive.

The ostensible story of the book is one of a trial of a local antiques dealer for murder. The plot is based on an historical event; the antiques dealer has national prominence. The

plot is constructed with the tightness of a Grisham novel. The story of the trial, however, is not really the focus of the book. In many ways, the plot of the book doesn't begin until page 175. Instead, Berendt captures the atmosphere and life of Savannah, its architecture, its squares faced with stately homes, its past which so much still structures the social life of the city. The early half of the book is made up of vignettes and character sketches, some of them important for the later story, some of them told for the sheer interest and enjoyment of the telling. Berendt tells them with a Dickensian accuracy of detail and forgiveness of foibles. An old man walks his dog every day for 20 years—without a dog. There's the woman of 6,000 songs, a piano player who travels the state for every wedding, funeral, garden party, and bar mitzvah that requires music. Other stories take us deeper into the heart of Savannah. One man resents film companies using Savannah as a location and hangs out a Nazi flag so that every shot will be ruined. A black drag queen called the Lady Chablis crashes a debutante ball.

## Montana 1948

*Montana 1948*, by Larry Watson  
(Washington Square Press, 1993).

Reviewed by Douglas Jones, Andrews University

The title of Larry Watson's short novel *Montana 1948* offers setting and time, but it does not hint at the morality play that's tightly spun into young David Hayden's remembrance of growing up. The son and grandson of sheriffs, the nephew of the local doctor, David senses the importance of his family's role in the community, but he's not prepared for the aftermath of abusive author-

The antiques dealer must have his annual party, even though he's on trial; the local citizens must attend the party. One central incident is a midnight trip to a cemetery with a local seer, a moonlit journey into a garden to place a hex on the enemies of the defendant. The details of the trail become more sordid, breaking up any clichés of moonlight and magnolias one might harbor. Proceeding into the darkness, Berendt maintains his detached observation and sense of humor. Along with him, we learn that Savannah has had a rich and weighty culture which has collapsed in on itself in its isolation.

*Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* has been on the non-fiction bestseller list for more than a year. Ironically, its popularity has brought visitors to a city that shuns tourism, increased attention to a past which would just as soon lie sleeping. With style and charm, the book evokes Savannah as Savannah evokes the past: letting the viewer have glimpses into the mysteries of the garden, yet confirming that no matter how much one understands, one cannot live within its limits.

ity that's almost legendary in his family.

Essentially a coming-of-age story, *Montana 1948* pits justice against family ties. When David's uncle Frank is rumored to have sexually molested native American women in his medical practice, David's father, the sheriff, has to decide how to deal with the allegations. The novel examines the bonds of brotherhood effectively, and it portrays a loyalty that is disabling. The sheriff tells his wife, "I think the problem's been taken care of. Frank said he's going to cut it out."

"Oh, Wes-ley! Her words came

out in a moan . . . 'What?' my father replied, his confusion apparent and sincere. 'What is it?' . . . My mother's voice became so low and tender it seemed better suited for an expression of love than what she actually said. 'That's not the way it works. You know that. Sins—crimes—are not supposed to go unpunished.'"

And therein lies the morality play. David's father's dilemma is apparent. He is the one whose moral course will wreck the family. If he pursues justice (as his position requires), the Hayden family honor will shatter. Watson sets up a fragile balance. *Montana 1948* is about conscience—the conscience of a man, of a family, and ultimately of a nation.

Watson forces his readers to examine the Hayden family's past and its effect on the present. Of course, the present is paramount for a child; therefore, David's impression of the immediate situation—he must rely on overheard conversations to piece together the sordid details—drives the book emotionally. David finds himself, though, possessed of too much knowledge, and he's ashamed of his desire to know more about something so horrible, "but I was on the trail of something that would lead me out of childhood." Throughout, the narrative assumes an urgency that underscores David's sense of justice, disbelief, and disgust.

Although the novel deals with sensational crimes, violence, and tragedy, *Montana 1948* is a quiet book in many ways. Watson's style is restrained and respectful, yet his images are striking, unforgettable, and truthful. The young narrator's sense of disbelief as he senses his family's honor unraveling before him adds to the poignancy of the story. And his expectation of his father to do right fuels the tension.

Watson's book is reminiscent of other recent novels; notable among them are Richard Ford's *Wildlife* and Michael Dorris's *A Yellow Raft*



on *Blue Water*. Both set in Montana, the two novels portray a young person's moral commitment to family in the face of bewildering circumstances. Like these other fine

## Absolute Truths

*Absolute Truths*, by Susan Howatch (Ballantine Books, 1994).

Reviewed by Winona Howe, La Sierra University

Frank Harris, turn-of-the-century author and editor, once mentioned an acquaintance "who was an English clergyman, and yet, wonder of wonders, a Christian." It is this nexus between clergyman and Christian that Susan Howatch explores in her six-volume series about spiritual and temporal conflict among Anglican churchmen, a series that has been compared to Anthony Trollope's *Chronicles of Barsetshire*. Howatch lacks Trollope's humor, however, and a further difference between the two is that sexual relationships are an important aspect of the current novels, an approach that was not allowable in Trollope's Victorian times.

*Absolute Truths*, the final volume of the series, focuses on Charles Ashworth, the bishop of Starbridge. Ashworth's life should be perfect: his professional achievements are numerous, he enjoys an enviable marriage, and he does not neglect his spiritual life. But, as Job could have told him, perfect happiness is likely to be both precarious and brief. Ashworth never loses his children, livelihood, or health, but he is rocked by one disaster after another: problems with his adult children, reverberations of long-past events and errors, ongoing rancorous wrangling with the dean of Starbridge Cathedral (repeatedly described by Ashworth as "my enemy"), and the final catastrophe, the

novels, *Montana 1948* is a powerful study of right and wrong, loyalty and justice, played out in the wide-open and lonely spaces of the soul.

death of his adored wife, Lyle, shortly followed by his discovery of her secret diary.

At this point in the book I was thinking: I've read this book before. In a fictional context, the surviving spouse finding evidence that makes the happy marriage become (in retrospect) a sham, or the survivor's pilgrimage to find another mate with whom he or she can be happy is fairly stereotypical. *Absolute Truths*, however, surprised me. The basic situations may have been familiar, but their development definitely was not. The diary, for example, does not contain information about Lyle's secret life and loves; instead, it is a spiritual diary in which she alternately prays to God and rages against him, and records her concerns over her husband's dangerously wrong perceptions of his family and his perilous complacency about his spiritual life.

Ashworth's life, following this discovery, is not then just a record of how he worked things out with his enemy, arrived at a healthier balance between himself and his sons, and located the most appropriate woman among his female acquaintances, should he indeed choose to remarry. Each of these quests is informed by a far more important quest: refinding the spiritual path from which he had unintentionally wandered. This means that he must exchange his judgmental approach for Christian understanding, and become truly (instead of nominally) Christ-centered, recognizing that only through Christ can one find "that kingdom of values, those absolute truths, which gave all creation meaning."

It's clear in *Absolute Truths* that religious rank is meaningless without inner spirituality. It's also clear that achieving that state is neither simple nor automatic; belonging to the right church (or even being employed by it) is no guarantee of true spirituality. *Absolute Truths* is a thoughtful book that challenges any assumptions the reader may have made about the ease of living a truly Christian life.

## Typical American

*Typical American*, by Gish Jen (Plume Contemporary Fiction, 1991)

Reviewed by Renard Donesky, La Sierra University

*Typical American* tells the story of several Chinese immigrants to the United States and their subsequent Americanization. The book focuses on Ralph Chang, or Chang Yifeng, as he was known in China. Ralph's parents, wealthy Chinese in the pre-revolutionary days, send him to America to study engineering, with the hope that he will return to China and bring honor and increased

wealth to the family. On shipboard, Ralph sets forth his goals: cultivate virtue, bring honor to the family, do five minutes of calisthenics a day, stop eating when others do, and have nothing to do with girls. Most of these goals collapse under the pressures of life in America. The novel, then, studies changing values in cross-cultural situations.

Many of Ralph's challenges are prompted by the differences between American and Chinese values, especially regarding money and gender roles. For example, Ralph soon comes to believe that in America, prestige comes not from

an academic degree but from wealth: "Money. In this country, you have money, you can do anything. You have no money, you are nobody. You are Chinaman. Is that simple." With that belief, Ralph forsakes his work in academia and starts a chicken restaurant—his chance at the American dream. His initial success leads to increased greed and he begins cheating on his daily receipts to lower his taxes.

He moves from a rat-infested, one-bedroom apartment in the city, to a luxurious home in the suburbs. But these physical "upward" moves come at the cost of failing moral values.

As Ralph changes his business goals, his family goals also become increasingly problematic. Ralph continues to believe that a Chinese man is the ruler of the family: "I'm the father of this family! Do you hear me? The father, not the son!"

However, the women in his family (his sister, Theresa, his wife, Helen, and his two daughters) adapt themselves to American gender roles, at least to some degree, as they too become "Americanized." Theresa studies to become a physician and eventually passes her medical

boards. She begins to earn her own money and concomitantly wishes for increased control of her own life. She eventually has an affair with a married Chinese-American. Helen undergoes similar changes. Initially she subsumes her wishes to Ralph's every desire. Often he tests her understanding of their respective roles: "At home, the husband would command, the wife obey." But as Ralph becomes increasingly obsessed with money, Helen begins a flirtation with another man, accompanied by an increased desire for equality in the home.

Ralph's Americanization, then, continually tests his values. How much will he adapt? What Chinese values will he maintain and which relinquish? The resulting tragedies clearly bring Ralph's fall into focus.

*Typical American* is not just a study of a minority group (whether Chinese or immigrant). It's theme—moral values in relation to adaptation and acculturation—is relevant for every person living in a world which seeks us to adapt to its mores. But it's also funny, engaging, and very well-written—one of the best books I've read in the past five years.

David Brock, a conservative journalist, and former senator and current Episcopal clergyman John C. Danforth. Two *Wall Street Journal* political reporters, Jane Mayer and Jill Abramson, have written what reviewers generally agree is the most detailed analysis yet, the *Age of Reason's* response to Danforth's *Age of Faith*. Their book delves into the strengths and weaknesses of both characters with the gusto of William Faulkner, and when the authors weigh the two individuals in their balance of apparent objectivity, Clarence Thomas is found wanting.

What intrigued me most about their book, though, is the way their dispassionate, carefully reasoned prose raises issues from the realm of religion. It must be the feminist in them that makes Mayer and Abramson cluck with disapproval when they describe Thomas's well-documented fascination with pornography. The Christian Coalition might strike the more self-righteous pose when it comes to this topic, but a holier-than-thou stance can also come from the other end of the political spectrum, especially when sexual harassment is the context.

When Mayer and Abramson chronicled the extent of the Religious Right's involvement in the nomination and confirmation of Clarence Thomas, they probably did not realize they would make my Adventist blood run cold; they were just exposing an agenda. They reveal how conservatives such as Gary Bauer, James Dobson, and Pat Robertson molded public opinion with well-timed propaganda and attack ads against liberals who might oppose Thomas. Although the Religious Right spent a great deal of energy encouraging American blacks to support Thomas, they did not see the appointment in racial terms at all. It was simply another step in working toward a Supreme Court majority congruent with their agenda, and their well-practiced

## Strange Justice: The Selling of Clarence Thomas

*Strange Justice: The Selling of Clarence Thomas*, by Jane Mayer and Jill Abramson (Houghton Mifflin, 1994)

Reviewed by Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Walla Walla College

O.K. So I complained that David Baldacci's *Absolute Power*, a novel of sex and intrigue in the highest circles of Washington, D. C., wasn't nearly as interesting as stories about the "real" Washington. For my money, the various accounts

of the Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill saga provide many more layers of fascination than the rather predictable tale Baldacci spins. Is the Thomas/Hill story pure "political pornography," as one reviewer put it, or is it something more complex, a layering of politics, morals, sociology, psychology, literary language, and religious values? It depends on who is telling (and who is reading) the tale.

Varying accounts have been rendered by Timothy Phelps (journalist-as-hero), novelist Toni Morrison,

strategies were both efficient and effective.

Learning about the success of these Christian soldiers in molding the opinions of a public that might have objected if it had figured out what was going on, I did not have to make a very big leap to imagine how such an event might coincide with Adventist end-time expectations. An apocalyptic scenario with the Christian Coalition as the bad guys is a little bit intriguing and a

little bit scary, capable even of producing that not-quite-delicious sensation of "fear analogous to terror" associated by Edmund Burke with the sublime. Since the sublime triggers the most powerful emotions that humans are capable of feeling, and since nothing is so purely sublime as the apocalypse, is it any wonder that this story is so fascinating? Political pornography, indeed. Truth is infinitely stranger than fiction.

Age bliss-ninny. His rowdy style inevitably veers into the incorrect and would never do as a vespers meditation. Often in these accounts, he is afield with a shotgun or fishing rod in hand, and lordy, the things he eats! But with biblically redolent turns such as "forty years wandering" and references to Rilke and Kierkegaard, Harrison isn't really after Larry Lunker, wise trout of the deep. Whatever the topic—the moronic aspects of ice fishing; a passacaglia on getting lost—Harrison can't help but shape it into "stories in the same dimension as life at its most severe, words that cannot be outflanked by experience" as another outdoorsman, Ted Hughes, poet laureate of England, says of popular ballads.

Fear not, it's easy reading. Harrison uses vignettes to power along with cinematic drive. (Harrison's fiction occasionally makes it to the big screen: *Legends of the Fall* and *Wolf*, most recently.) The landscape is ever near: the north woods of Michigan, Sand Hills of Nebraska, Absarokas in Montana, and never scarred by strip-mining for object lessons. It's like fresh eyes on that second book.

Fair warning: this is a collection of book reviews, magazine columns culled from 25 years. It even includes excerpts from Harrison's master's thesis!

## Just Before Dark

*Just Before Dark*, by Jim Harrison  
(Clark City Press, 1991)

*Reviewed by Dan Fabrbach, Editor,  
New York City*

For my money, some of the best American writing today is by men and women who spend time outside, for whom landscape, along with the life and history of it, becomes a character: Tom McGuane, Richard Ford, Barry Lopez, Pam Houston, Terry Tempest Williams. They are the payoff for a childhood of Sam Campbell.

An Adventist upbringing promises lifelong learning from God's "second book." But those covers snap shut early, around the age you realize what stories rocks can tell, or that Darwin's finches really are out there on Galapagos. The issues of earth age and species adaptation are hardly the toughies, but they seem to arrest deeper thought. So two roads diverge, Adventist preachers latch onto the beauty of nature, the scientists explore what's really going on, and seldom their paths do cross.

This stunted inquiry and experience of creation has consequences. Adventism leaves a century, during which humans have awfully fulfilled the command to be fruitful, multiply, and dominate the earth,

with a noticeable limp.

The current batch of nature writers show what Adventism is missing. For a reader new to the field, Terry Tempest Williams, a devout Mormon, is a good start. But for the unvarnished stuff, I recommend Jim Harrison, a Michigan outdoorsman, poet, and novelist. In *Just Before Dark*, Harrison admits that although he has "spent over forty years wandering around in the natural world," he is not certain what he has learned. I take that as encouraging. Harrison says he avoids hiking trails as "an insult to the perceptions" and in the short works that make up this collection of essays, there's plenty of bushwhacking through swamps and swales and not much swooning on mountaintops. Harrison is no New

## Young Men and Fire

*Young Men and Fire*, by Norman Maclean (University of Chicago, 1990).

*Reviewed by Scott Moncrieff, Andrews University*

It's hard to find an excellent contemporary book, a book you are bursting to praise—especially if your usual reading goes from Defoe to Woolf, leavened with a weekly in-

terlude of *Sports Illustrated*. After killing two days reading a "just OK" book, I was fearing endless trips to the public library and Barnes and Noble, searching for the elusive gem I needed. But then a good samaritan recommended *Young Men and Fire*. I think it is a great book.

On August 6, 1949, a fire at Mann Gulch, Montana, killed 12 men of a 15-man "smokejumper" firefighting crew. Author Norman Maclean (A

*River Runs Through It*) tries to render justice to this tragedy by recreating it as accurately as possible—a task of enormous complexity. The book has twin interests, each uniquely fascinating: the fateful story of young men who suddenly found themselves scrambling up a steep slope with a wall of fire in close pursuit; and the story of how a man in his 70s and 80s patiently assembled the details of the tragedy over many years, and turned them into a masterful story.

The tragedy immediately became controversial because one of the three survivors, foreman “Wag” Dodge, had at a crucial moment created an “escape fire”: after igniting a patch of grass, he lay face down in the ashes in a fuelless bubble of protection as the main fire roared by around him. The other two survivors raced upslope to the

ridge just ahead of the fire. The rest died in the flames on the slope. A lawsuit raised by one of the victims’s fathers asserted that Dodge’s fire had cut off the escape route of the others.

The complexity of the subject requires all Maclean’s knowledge as backwoodsman, firefighter, scholar, and storyteller. And he gives it everything. He collects documents, studies photographs and diagrams, consults fire scientists. He visits the remote site of the fire several times, and brings the two remaining survivors back to study their recollections. Piece by piece, detail by detail, he assembles a convincing and detailed account of every key moment, the life and death choices, the final race from death.

He writes of men who, in their final moments, had one all important goal: to make it to the top of that

ridge. No time for idle musings about the meaning of life; just one clear purpose. Their direct line is complimented by Maclean’s circuitous journey, circling around and around the events of August 6, wherever he can find a clue, patiently putting details together. Their work was a matter of minutes; his, of years. And through his patient attention to their final moments, Maclean performs a redemptive act for the dead. Their brief lives, which would otherwise be forgotten, are given a momentous meaning through his story.

Maclean states that “in this cock-eyed world there are shapes and designs, if only we have some curiosity, training, and compassion and take care not to lie or be sentimental.” In the shape and design of *Young Men and Fire*, the author unforgettably achieves his standard.



## Board Appoints Committee to Examine WWC School of Religion

*compiled by Mitch Scoggins*

On May 5 the Walla Walla College Board of Trustees established a nine-member committee, comprising members of the board of trustees, to examine the Walla Walla College School of Religion. The board formed the committee in response to growing concerns, many rumor-driven, over the theological orthodoxy of members of the religion faculty. The mission and exact guidelines of this committee, however, were left unclear.

At a meeting of the faculty and staff convened the evening after the board took its action, W. G. Nelson, president of Walla Walla College, said, "I hate to tell you, but I think that they will make up, to some degree, the methodology that they think seems appropriate. But keep in mind this. I don't care what they decide; you have to understand that all they'll do is come back and make a recommendation to the board. And the board will make the determination as to what things they perceive to be appropriate. . . ." The committee, while urged to work quickly, was not given a specific date to report its findings. The committee, comprising four laypersons and five church employees, will elect one of its members to serve as chairperson.

The members of the subcommittee include Ron Anderson, Washington layman; Alf Birch, president of the Oregon Conference; Wilfred Geschke, Oregon layman; John

Kattenhorn, Idaho layman; Esther Littlejohn, Washington laywoman; Steve McPherson, president of the Idaho Conference; Bryce Pascoe, secretary of the North Pacific Union Conference; Carlyle Raymond, Oregon pastor; and Dave Thomas, Upper Columbia Conference pastor.

"Could someone get fired as a result of this process?" Nelson asked himself in the meeting of the faculty and staff. "I can't make a guarantee that it couldn't happen. My sentiment is that we're a long way past that. I don't know what to tell you except this. The very first thing that would happen is that they'd have to come back with a recommendation . . . There would have to be some basis to that recommendation, and in fact [there are] legal specifications as to how we deal with things in our office. . . . The substance of that fact would have to have been substantiated. We have due process."

"We've come a long way," said Nelson. "The only thing I can tell you is that I believe in the goodwill of the people. I believe they are committed to looking at more than simply the issue of a particular person. Beyond that, my real expectation is that what they will come back to us and do is to say, 'We think there are some areas where there are some statistics in the constituency about certain issues.' I can conceive that they will tell us how they believe that communication could be set up to avoid these

*A synopsis of recent reports tracking developments in the school of religion at Walla Walla College, from stories by Alison Tait, Nikia Furman, and Tompaul Wheeler in the Collegian, the Walla Walla College student newspaper.*

problems in the future."

In an interview after the meeting, Nelson told Walla Walla College newspaper reporters, "You have to believe in the ultimate fairness of people. We are committed to the truth."

The Walla Walla College School of Religion is not under fire from all sides. At the 1997 Alumni Homecoming Banquet, held on the 24th of April, two weeks before the college board met, Dr. Bruce Hamm presented a \$25,000 check to the School of Religion. The donation, collected from church constituents, was raised in one week and was called an initial donation. Hamm, in his short presentation speech, said that more funds were on their way and called the \$25,000 donation "the tip of the iceberg of support." At an alumni meeting the following Sunday, the alumni association voted their unani-

mous support of the Walla Walla College School of Religion.

Dr. Doug Clark, head of the school of religion, was overwhelmed by the donation. "Professors are supposed to be able to craft words and sentences, but I cannot find the words to

express the gratitude I have for this donation." The department hasn't yet decided how to best use the donation, but, according to Clark, the possibilities include, student scholarships, faculty research, and community outreach programs.

## ASRS Urges Church to Combat "Clash of Tribes and Cultures"

At a recent meeting of the Adventist Society for Religious Studies (ASRS), the principal professional organization for teachers of religion in Adventist colleges in North America, the body appealed to the world church to react against tribalism and cultural clashes. The meeting, held in New Orleans November 21-23, 1996, was attended by nearly 100 ASRS members. Pedrito Maynard-Reid, professor of religion at

Walla Walla College, initiated the action from the floor. The following resolution was adopted:

"Voted: In view of the tragedy in Rwanda in which members of the Adventist Church are alleged to have been involved, The Adventist Society for Religious Studies calls upon the church and particularly its leaders to uplift Christ against the clash of tribes and cultures that is tearing the world and our community apart."



"Raphael/Michelangelo"



"Giotto/Michelangelo"

## Greg Constantine, "Messing With the *Corpus Callosum*"

The images published in your September 1996 issue (*Spectrum*, Vol. 25, No. 5) are the latest series of works following a previous "generation" of paintings of self-portraits of artists combined with their most famous portraits (of other people). The "MASK/PICASSO" and "VERMEER/INGRES" are combined images from the history of art that curiously create a single new personage. I refer to these images collectively as "messing with the *corpus callosum*" because the merging actually occurs in the brain rather than the eye. The two become one. I have even given these a practical application in the combined portraits of my daughter and her groom, and my son with his bride (as wedding gifts). The obvious scripture comes to mind "*the two will become one flesh*" (NIV)—and they do, without losing their individual identities. Concurrent with the secular paintings from the history of art, I have been working on a sub-series dealing with Christ/God the Father combines of which two were printed in September: "RAPHAEL/MICHEL-ANGELO" and "GIOTTO/MICHEL-ANGELO." These images are also taken from the history of art and I'm

certain anyone will see the connections when I quote John 14 where it says, "*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father*," (John 14:9, NIV) and "*I and my Father are one*," (John 10:30, NIV). These two works were the focus of my intent for the *Spectrum* article. Needless to say, theologians are able to talk "around" these texts and not fully explain them. Neither can I, but presenting the images in this way (which are unforced extensions of my other works) causes one to cogitate again on the issue of Christ's and God's Oneness. The "GIOTTO/MICHEL-ANGELO" (face to face) is awkward, I realize, but refers to Brancusi's "THE KISS," where a male and female embrace each other in this way in order to see "eye to eye"; it reveals their agreement, which is mental and not just physical.

Perhaps, too, Christ was not intending the visual similarity when he said, "*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father*" as much as he was intending to refer to their "*seeing eye to eye*." I believe visual art stimulates thinking by itself, particularly when words of explanation are *not* provided, so I herewith apologize for these words, which

*Greg Constantine discusses his art, and readers write about creation and evolution, Adventist colleges and teachers.*

probably hinder in exactly this same way.

Although I have never felt the urge to purposely create art with religious content, I have not suppressed it when it grew out of my work in the studio. When it did surface, I did not withhold it from my gallery dealers, who happen to be Jewish, and they have been more

than willing to exhibit the work (and sell it). They merely refer to the images as coming from a Christian, just as my other images come from one who teaches art history.

Greg Constantine  
Artist in Residence and  
Research Professor of Art  
Andrews University

## It's Time to Creatively Align Our Different Theories of Origin



I read with interest Randy Neall's article, "Pilgrims in the Hills of Carolina" (*Spectrum*, Vol. 25, No. 5). I was especially surprised at the strong reaction to Neall's questioning—to the point of closing down a church fellowship. This is a fairly serious precedent if one were to consider how many churches might be closed down if we—Seventh-day Adventist Christians—were to actually, and calmly, look at the facts of the geological column without such strong, reactionary prejudice.

The issues involved here appear to be either/or—either a creator God or the geological column and the longer periods it implies. I would like to suggest there may be a third alternative. The real truth may include both. For some years I have tried differing models that would tie together the Creation story and the geological column. Your article by James Hayward, "The Many Faces

of Adventist Creationism: '80-'95" (*Spectrum*, Vol. 25, No. 3), was especially encouraging, as I have played with each one of the models mentioned. I grew up in a traditional Adventist home, went to church school, graduated from Walla Walla College with a degree in biology, and earned an M.Sc. degree in geology from Washington State University. Very early on I was convinced of the validity of the geological column as a time indicator (relative time: the oldest bed is on the bottom) and have tried to fit the column into our picture of the history of the earth. For a long time I tried to analyze at what point in the

column the Flood might have taken place. I find that lately I am tending to think of where one could fit the Creation story into the geological column. The traces of humankind in the column are limited only to the dust of the surface, and it would be so tempting to have our planet visited in the not so distant past and a new age initiated which instilled within humankind the potential to become sons and daughters of the Creator God. And I could live with a Creation story that allowed for life on earth prior to the fateful week, but I haven't been able to reconcile death as a way of life before the Creation, the fall of humankind, and the entrance of sin. So, back to the drawing board.

As for death before Creation: Most of my picture of the world just after Creation is taken from the descriptions of the splendor we view in the New Jerusalem. However, Ezekiel's description of a newer Jerusalem (Ezekiel 47) is hauntingly similar to John's in Revelation, but includes fishermen and their nets, implying death for some forms.

One of the hardest things to do is separate the facts of Creation as told in Scripture from the pictures we traditionally hold of Earth's beginnings. The Bible talks of God as Creator from Genesis to Revelation, and even a casual look at the amazing design and inter-relationships in the world around us will encourage this view. But I know of no place in the Bible where the *time* of Creation is even remotely referred to. As Adventists, we are weaned on time. The time of Creation, the time of the investigative judgment, the time prophecies, and even the time of sundown on Friday night. Perhaps the time has come to use some of the creative thinking we were given to bring together what seem to be opposing points of view.

Bruce Rafuse  
Port Hardy, British Columbia

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## Diversity of Opinion Must End Once the Truth is Discovered

I read with interest James Hayward's article, "The Many Faces of Adventist Creationism: '80-'95" (*Spectrum*, Vol. 25, No. 3). Having been a student in the biology department at Andrews University during the 1980s and familiar with many of the events and individuals discussed (Bill Hughes, Hayward, and Asa Thoresen were members of my thesis committee), I was impressed with the factual way events during that period were reported.

I am concerned, however, that Hayward's closing comments could be mistaken by some to imply that diversity is intrinsically good, and perhaps more scientific, than containment of "the growing diversity of opinion." In fact, this is not what I was taught at Andrews University in classes by Hayward or Hughes. In my search for truth, the process becomes deductive, resulting in elimination of untenable theories. The result is a decrease in diversity of opinion as data is gathered, theories are eliminated, and truth is approached. The ultimate assumption of any scientific search for truth is that there is one single truth out there; the innumerable ways of being wrong just need to be eliminated first. True science does not tolerate diverse opinions after the truth has been discovered. How much diversity of opinion would be tolerated in the physics departments of Adventist schools on the subject of the earth's shape, or the atomic make-up of matter?

Within the context of Adventist academic institutions, students should be presented with the best scientific and theological models we as a church have to offer in explaining the evidence. Under this

quite reasonable constraint, honesty and evidence can and should reign paramount, but one has to

question how genuinely "open" (if that means treating all theories as equally valid) the discussion can or should be.

Timothy G. Standish  
Associate Professor of Biology  
Union College

## Adventists Seem Confused When God Speaks Through Science

I was mystified by two letters entitled, "Maybe God Created Fossils," and "If Creation Took More Than a Week, Adventism Is Gone" (*Spectrum*, Vol. 25, No. 5). Are some Adventists still as confused about reality as they were when I asked similar questions in my youth?

At Loma Linda University, I attended outstanding lectures by Dr. Jack Provonsha, who had dared to look beyond the brief, confusing Creation stories of Genesis 1 and 2. He proposed that Genesis may refer to a "second edition" creation, while only hinting at the colossal event and its universal impact. God did, however, preserve a testimony in stone which confirmed a prior creation that was destroyed by former global catastrophes. The idea that fossils were created by God to confuse us is not worthy of comment.

Adventists agree that the Earth will be destroyed by fire coming down from heaven. An identical event was recently previewed for the entire human race when a comet collided with Jupiter. Was it a coincidence that the Hubble Space Telescope was repaired and fully operational just in time to record the collision? Even the smallest of the comet's fragments was sufficient to destroy all life on this planet if it had impacted the Earth. Somewhere in our galaxy, the "Judgment Day Comet" may be streaking through space with an arrival time known only to God. The Creator is practically shouting his presence and intentions via the current explosion of scientific discovery. Is anybody listening?

Vernon P. Wagner  
Huntington Beach, California

## We Can't Consolidate Colleges, But We Can Limit Redundancy



I agree with the premise (*Spectrum*, Vol. 26, No. 1) that if we were starting our college system from scratch now we would certainly have fewer colleges. But the reality is that each of our colleges has loyal alumni and other supporters. It is not feasible to close more than one or two of our colleges, if any. A solution is to avoid the duplication of majors and programs that each college tries to support independently. This is too expensive and inefficient

at a time of lowered resources. Why, for example, do we need to offer a dozen bachelor's degrees in physics? The same question applies to other programs. We also offer duplicate graduate programs. Why do we have three or four master's degree programs in biology?

Let's start getting our North American colleges working together to eliminate inefficient duplication. Lower tuition would result. Our schools are currently all but closed to the poorer members among us. With enhanced and cheaper programs, we could attract more stu-

dents, including those gifted ones who are currently schooled elsewhere. We could choose certain programs for each school, and divvy up our course offerings for all our schools appropriate to each of their locations, strengths, and needs. Clearly this would require very careful planning and cautious implementation.

We have let our colleges do their own thing for too long. It's time to get cracking on something better.

Lance T. Hodges  
Grand Terrace, California

## *Spectrum* Renders "Due Public Praise" to Maxwell and Stafford



Three cheers for *Spectrum*! The articles on model teachers Graham Maxwell and Otilie Stafford (*Spectrum*, Vol. 26, No. 1) bring due public praise to these two icons of Adventist education, and only an independent publication would have had the freedom to do so.

Just as the Republican Party has been taken over by the radical right, so Adventist church leadership has been cowed into publicly espous-

ing only the legalistic, rigid, arbitrary, nonreasoning view of God and of the great controversy. Some of the publications now appearing in the Adventist Book Centers make me cringe. How can our loving God be pictured by so-called believers as such a vicious, arbitrary, unforgiving being? It boggles the mind.

The message of Graham Maxwell is still alive and well in his Sabbath school lesson studies and his "God in All 66" series. It is obvious from Delmer Davis's memoir that Dr. Maxwell hasn't changed since those years when he taught at Pacific Union College. His "larger view" of the loving and lovable God, and of the true breadth of the great controversy, is so rational and so thoroughly grounded in Scripture and in the Spirit of Prophecy that the old, forensic, the-penalty-must-be-paid-so-God-is-waiting-to-zap-you view seems to belong in the Dark Ages.

My spiritual survival depends upon a weekly infusion of Graham Maxwell's biblical, scholarly wisdom. I appreciate your tribute to this giant.

Catherine Lang Titus  
Glendale, California

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