

SPECTRUM

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How Does
God View
Suicide?

Care for the
Dying

Surviving Death
by Allegory

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How Inclusive is
Our Hope? *F. Guy*

Why We
Aren't Funny

Music Lessons

Early Adventism's
Leon Trotsky

SPECTRUM

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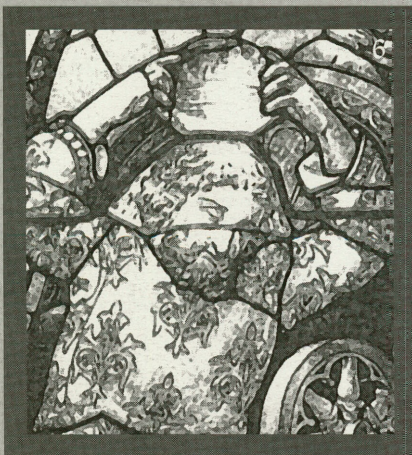
About the Cover Art:

This work titled "Light Within" is a meditation on the human condition, death, destruction, and pain. As the fragments of the collage are mended together, the image is offering comfort and peace.

About the Artist:

Beatriz Mejia-Krumbein is Art Department chair and director of the Brandstater Gallery at La Sierra University in Riverside, California. She uses figurative expressionism and a variety of media to create artwork that is often described as brimming with passion and angst.

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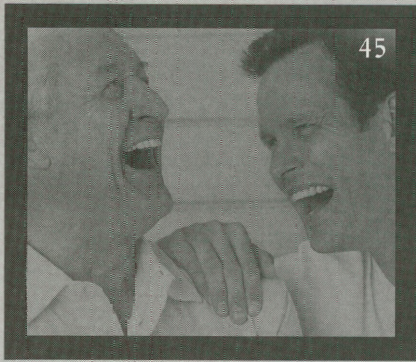
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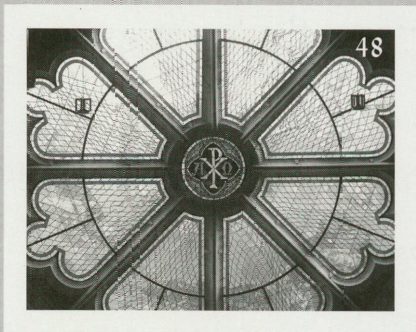
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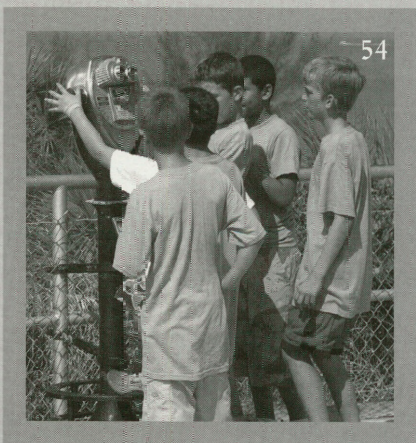
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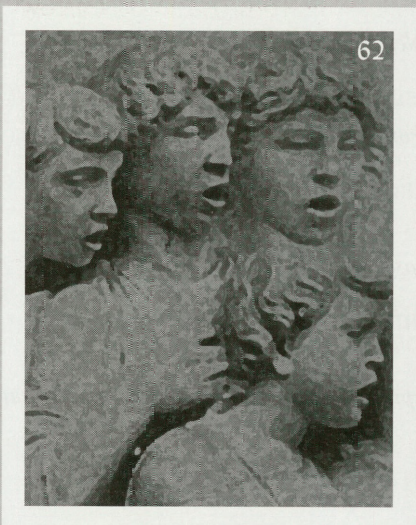


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Beyond the Sea

It was the call in the middle of the night that every parent dreads. There's been an accident...the father of my son's friend was on the line. His daughters were in the car, too. All the kids were alive. Mine was at the University of California, Davis, Medical Center with a crushed femur. In the emergency room, the other injuries were noted—the broken ankle, the severed tendon in his right hand, the concussion. But he was alive.

Thus began my reminder of the love that can emerge in the face of tragedy as our family and the church community put its arms around my husband, son, and me and loved us through the shock of tragedy, celebrating with us the miracle of life's persistence.

It is similar to the love story told in the movie *The Sea Inside*, which won the Oscar this year for best foreign-language film. Based on the true story of a Spanish man who dove into the ocean and broke his neck, the movie focuses on the end of his life, when after twenty years of lying in bed, able only to move his head, he wanted to die. It depicts the various ways the people around him handle his request—the sister-in-law who cares for him now that his mother has died, the brother, father, nephew, neighbor, and the attorney hired by the death-with-dignity people, who is herself in the beginning stages of a fatal disease. Although the premise of the story is very sad, by telling how each of these people loves this man, the movie manages to be uplifting, inspiring with the intensity of their love.

Death and its threat to life affect people around it in a powerful way. It can bring them together with intense love, but it can also divide. This year, our reminder of that began with Terri Schiavo. By the time she passed away, not only was her family divided, so, too, was the United States. The public conversation about death shifted but continued with the passing of Pope John Paul II. The topic is sure to return when the U.S. Supreme Court begins its consideration of Oregon's law for assisted dying.

Much of the conversation has been about the personal decisions at the end of life. Naturally, we feel that our ideas about these decisions are the correct ones. It

is others whom we judge as wrong. In the moment we judge others, the event that could bring us together, divides. A great opportunity for love is lost.

That is why we return to the discussion of life's end in this issue. Yes, we've talked about it before in significant ways. (See Jack W. Provonsha's "Keeping Human Life Human," reprinted on pages 36–39, from vol. 2, issues 3, 4, summer/autumn 1974.). We've added material on suicide in general, something more prevalent in our society than we might imagine. And we've included specific stories and homilies about the topic to help us remember the love that can unite us in the face of tragedy.

As we gathered this material we were particularly pleased to hear from Winona Wendth, who wanted to write for us about humor. Just what the Irish would have ordered when the subject is death: the healing power of laughter. So we added her article to this issue.

There was a hearse in front of the country church. Parked cars lined the nearby roads that led to Carrowmore, the Megalithic Cemetery in Ireland's County Sligo. Struck by the poignancy of passing a funeral mass on the way to view graves dating back to 1500 B.C., I asked the docent who had died. He gave me a quizzical look. I noted the large crowd that had obviously gathered at the local church and asked if some dignitary had passed away. "It doesn't matter who 'tis," he replied, "we give folks a good send off."

Here, at *Spectrum*, we aim to do the same for discussions.

Bonnie Dwyer
Editor



The Dangers of Talking about Sex

By Ezrela Cheah

In the small world of Adventism, everything comes full circle. It was a risk management lecture by consulting Adventist attorney Phil Hiroshima about the devastating effects of sexual abuse on minors that prompted Michael Weston to file suit against Monterey Bay Academy (MBA) for what happened to him when he was a student there in the 1980s.

Now Hiroshima is defending the school in litigation that has five plaintiffs and that stunned alumni and the school when filed on December 31, 2003. The filing date is significant because the suit takes advantage of a little-known California law that lifted the statute of limitations on sexual abuse lawsuits only during the year 2003. The law was passed in 2002 during the height of the Catholic Church's sexual abuse crisis.

In addition to MBA, two former teachers, Ronald Wittlake and Lowell Nelson, were named in the suit. The *Santa Cruz Sentinel* ran a story about the case on January 11, 2004. Four days later, Ronald Wittlake was found dead in his home, having shot himself in the chest.

The five alumni—John Juarez, Kendall Dealy, Michael Weston,

Reinhold Tilstra, and Vince P.—allege that during their time at the school in the 1980s, they were sexually abused. Joseph P. Scully, the lawyer representing the five, reports: "I heard an amazing tale of Adventist teachers nude sunbathing with boys on a sundeck, drugs and alcohol provided by teachers in the dormitory, and sexual abuse and sexual assault."

Hiroshima admits that the allegations are serious if the events actually took place and says that the Church wants to get to the bottom of what happened. He says the administration of MBA was unaware of the events taking place, and dealing with events of twenty years ago makes it difficult to get accurate information.

Settlement talks are underway in the case. Should they fail, the case will be tried in court this summer.

Prior to his suicide at age fifty, Wittlake had worked for Lancaster, California, High School, teaching special education independent studies. Having graduated from MBA, he returned to teach music there from 1981 to 1989.

Scot Mathis, who attended from 1984 to 1986, reports having a positive experience during that time. "Mr. Wittlake was younger than most of the faculty, and related well to the students. He was sometimes enlisted as an advocate when someone had gotten in trouble. After I

left MBA, a friend who was still attending told me that Wittlake had supplied him with alcohol."

Feelings among many of the alumni regarding the accusations leveled against Lowell Nelson, previous MBA biology teacher, are often strong. He is mostly remembered as easy to talk to, humorous, jovial, well liked, and interesting, though he also supposedly had unique idiosyncrasies. Many students recall good times with Nelson and his wife during choir activities and in their home. One alumnus cried when she heard the news and expressed a disbelief in the possibility of such allegations.

Dave Lyons, an MBA student from 1977 to 1981, remembers Nelson as a good teacher—he was fun and understanding toward kids. Says Lyons: "I did hear him tell a dirty joke to some male students once and thought it was cool that he could connect with us. Now I realize that it was inappropriate, especially at an Adventist-Christian school.... He was very open about the human reproductive system when we got to that chapter in biology, but I thought that much of the information was good to discuss because we were all curious about the other gender."

However, plaintiffs allege that Nelson performed sexual activities with them on his sundeck, where he sunbathed nude, and others testified

in depositions of inappropriate touching and sexual stimulation by Nelson.

"I don't think that enjoying nude sunbathing makes one a molester," says one former class officer. "It must have made an impression, though, because I remember little else the teacher said while teaching. I heard him talk about the virtues of sunbathing nude for health reasons. I remember avoiding visiting the Nelson home in fear of surprising him during one of his tanning sessions."

The fact that Nelson did indeed share his sunbathing activities with students, at least ten to twelve per year, is verified by Nelson in his depositions, according to Scully, although Nelson denied any associated sexual conduct.

A lawyer who knows the Nelson family well currently contracts with a school system to represent their teachers in work-related suits. The lawyer explains how lawsuits like this can go either way: "As an attorney who has represented over a hundred school teachers, I know these types of cases are very sensitive.... I have represented school teachers who have been accused of similar offenses. While sometimes the accusations are true, sometimes they are false."

The lawyer goes on: "Unfortunately, accusations of this type are so inflammatory that even when a teacher is later determined to be innocent, it is difficult for them to ever recover their good reputation. It is also difficult for a teacher to defend himself or herself against charges that are so stale."

Nelson currently teaches at Weimar College.

Due to the number of plaintiffs, the popularity of Nelson, the passing of Wittlake, and the lengthy time gap, many mysteries remain at this beachfront Adventist school. If Ad-

ventist Risk Management can settle this case, it will have closed the door on litigation from this particular California law.

Ezrela Cheah graduated from Southwestern Adventist University in May 2000 with a bachelor's degree in education and currently lives in Portland, Oregon.

Back to the Manual

By Bonnie Dwyer

For the 70 percent of church members who are women, the approach of another General Conference Session begs the question of whether anything will be done this time to address issues of gender inequality that mark operations of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Probably not, is the short answer. Whether that is good or bad depends on one's perspective of where the appropriate place is to address such issues. Should they be left to the local church and conference or should they be a matter for the world church to consider?

One item in the agenda section on the Church Manual calls for consideration of a proposed amendment to the wording of objective number two of the Department of Women's Ministries (page 118). It currently reads, "Affirm that women are of inestimable worth by virtue of their creation and redemption, and equip them for service in the church." The phrase *and offer women's perspectives on church issues* would be added to that sentence. That's the only agenda item that specifically addresses women.

During the past year, the creation of the General Conference Ministries and Services Review Commission ignited intense discussion in General Conference headquarters over the

role of women, particularly at the General Conference itself, because the commission recommended delegating the work of nine departments—including children's ministries, family ministries, and women's ministries—out to the divisions.

There was an outcry as a result that, in practice, those departments were the only way for women to serve at the General Conference and that moving them out to the divisions would almost eliminate women from the work of the General Conference.

The commission's report to Spring Council turned into a three and one-half hour debate that ended with the "receiving" of the Commission's report and passing it on to a new standing commission, which will evaluate church operations over the five-year period that begins after the world church's business meeting this summer. No one has been named to chair the commission.

So women will not be an issue in St. Louis. The work of the delegates will be to look particularly closely at details in the Church Manual and make adjustments—whether minor changes of phrasing to bring the book up to date or discussion of larger issues, such as an alternative baptismal vow.

Election of one-hundred-plus officers will also take a considerable amount of time at the session. The agenda includes the newest addition to the list of twenty-seven fundamental beliefs, as well as recommendations affirming the importance of the reading of Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy. Thirty-nine items in all will be considered.





THE BIBLE

Naaman bathing in the Jordan River, from a stained glass window in Gloucester Cathedral, Gloucester, England.

Discussed: jokes, flattening of Scriptures, leading ladies,
Eowyn, evil witch king, pomegranates and figs, doing laundry, social
boundaries, entitlement

Surviving Death by Allegory or Sitting with a Bible Story

By Chris Oberg

I have tried to sit still with the story of Naaman in 2 Kings 5 and resist the urge to summarize, to conclude, or to reduce the narrative to a single theological point before it even has the chance to be heard or reimagined. Resisting a speedy summary goes against the grain of our Christian tradition. We deserve the critiques that label us *impatient*, *premature*, and at times *self-serving* in our storytelling. Why are we so eager to announce the same conclusion over and over again? This is like saying Amen before you've heard the sermon or applauding before the postlude, or tuning out before the punch line because you know how the joke will end.

Peter Hawkins of Boston University calls this a flattening of the Hebrew Scriptures, and he says that it happens at least a couple of different ways. At times, we assume the stories are precursors of later New Testament events rather than genuine events in themselves. At other times, we allegorize ad nauseam, so that everything, for example, in the Exodus story—the manna in the wilderness, the

cloud by day and pillar by night, the rock that released fresh water—all are commonly interpreted to mean Christ. In the story at hand, when Naaman emerges from the dirty Jordan clean, we are to understand that the healing waters really signify grace in general and the sacrament of baptism in particular. Is there any chance, Hawkins muses, that Naaman can survive death by allegory?



When we tune out early, the joke is on us. So I have tried to sit still with the story this week. Listen to what can be heard when one sits still with the characters and literary devices:

1. The story begins with a leper and ends with a leper.
2. A foreigner is restored, and an Israelite smitten.
3. A humble female servant aids a great army commander.
4. If one female helper weren't scandalous enough, a second woman is required to convey the message from the first woman.
5. A king throws a tantrum, revealing in front of his guest that he is powerless.
6. A prophet steps in for the king, which begins a long series of undercuts for the powerful Naaman. Instead of receiving royal treatment from the court, he is sent to a prophet; instead of a prophet greeting him and waving a magic hand over his skin, he gets a servant who tells him to take a bath; instead of receiving an expected order to be healed and then bathe, the prophet sends him to wash in dirty water. It is a big man who must now go down into the waters. All of this for one of the winningest warriors of the Syrian army.
7. If I sit still a little longer, I see the story in its 2 Kings context with a cluster of miraculous events that involve the new prophet Elisha, and the story confirms that this new prophet is authentic because he has proven himself as a miracle healer. He can indeed replace Elijah; the nation of Israel will not be left without a prophet.
8. Finally, while sitting still one can notice that Yahweh appears in the very first verse and remains until the end.

When we sit with a story, we allow it to alert us, to alter us, for there is power in personal stories of life-changing encounters with the divine. This is what story theology is about, and it is powerful because we can identify with a character, we recognize a plot, and we resonate with the presence or absence of God—all of which leads us to contemplate the possibility of ourselves in the story. The story can be internalized; it can become personal. This is how you and I slip into the pages of our canon at times almost unnoticed even to ourselves.

This Naaman story alerts me at several points. I cannot go without noticing that the slave girl is the heroine, for without her one sentence of well wishing we would not have a story to tell. She put this entire

narrative into motion; she is the catalyst for the cleansing, for the confirmation of the new prophet, and for the witness that, once again, God stands with the people. Oh, how I love a leading lady in the Scriptures. We get so few that I admit I feel triumphalistic almost instantly.

This Hebrew slave calls to mind one of J. R. R. Tolkien's characters, Eowyn, the niece of Theoden, king of Rohan. Are you still with me? Somewhere in book five and in movie three all the good men are gathered in yet another battle to save Middle Earth from evil. Each battle is costly, which is why Theoden has forbidden his niece to do battle. And being forbidden is the best reason for any young person to proceed.

Toward the end of the Battle of Pellennor Fields, one warrior picks a fight with an evil witch king—a horrible, frightening character five times the size of the warrior. After exchanging several blows, the evil king pins the warrior to the ground and exhales this curse: "You fool, no mortal man can kill me. Die now."

The evil king raises his sword just as the warrior reaches to remove the head armor. With one pull of the hand, the armor falls to the ground and the warrior responds, "I am no man." And Eowyn takes out the evil king. My living room fills with screams of delight every single time this heroine emerges.

Yes, perhaps women readers can agree, we are alerted first of all by a female heroine who rescues Captain Naaman. And perhaps we are alerted by her status as a servant. Who among us doesn't like it when a servant saves the day? I am drawn in, for I am not a king, I am not a ruler or a commander, not a CEO or a top dog of anything. And neither are most of you. Maybe this is one reason why we slip into the lines of this narrative with ease. She is an unlikely heroine and so are we—and we like that.

This character alerts me on another level, for she is a lamb among the wolves. I see her witness. I see her desire to bring healing to the household and announce the presence of her God, but I don't understand how she got to the place where she could whisper a prayer for her captor while still in enemy territory.

How homesick she must have been to eat pomegranates and figs from her grandmother's tent, to hear her daddy sing late into the night or celebrate Shabbat like everyone back home. She served the captain's wife, and most likely served the captain, too, and probably many men in the ranks of the army. At least they didn't have leprosy.

The captain's contagious disease would not have been tolerated in her homeland. In Israel, the captain would be condemned to live outside the camp or city,

forbidden to make contact with others. But here she finds herself sleeping in the same house as the man with the sores—doing his laundry and scrubbing his dishes—and everything he touched he contaminated.

Somehow in the midst of this, she is able to hope for a healing that even her own people didn't understand. She hopes that Israel's God might bring healing within the enemy nation that Israel itself didn't enjoy. This is the only Old Testament leper ever cleansed from leprosy. How did she know to hope for such a thing? How did she know her God was that big?

Although her circumstances are very different from the many people who followed Jesus, I see in this Hebrew girl the kind of disciple that would make Jesus relax. He would say of her, "She gets it!" She wouldn't have needed the instructions for the road that Jesus gave when sending out the seventy-two (Luke 10). Their instructions are scattered in almost a dozen canonical and extracanonical locations. They can be found in various forms with unique editorial and theological frameworks. However, it is possible to identify the core of the instructions and to trace them to the earliest Jesus tradition.

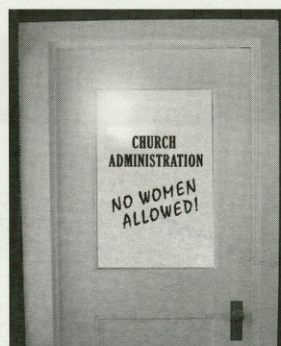
The core might sound like this: Go into a household, eat their food, bring health to those who need it, and announce the presence of God's Kingdom. Something happens when you walk into the houses of neighbors or strangers and you sit eye-to-eye with them around a table. Something happens when you accept food and you eat it together. You enter into a pattern of receiving and giving. You obligate yourselves to the needs of others, almost binding yourselves together. When you look eye-to-eye and share the same bottle of wine, social boundaries disappear. Physical goods are shared, and so is power. Mutuality and reciprocity emerge around a table. And you begin to see a kingdom without barriers between people. Yes, Jesus would say of her, "She gets it!"

I invite you to sit with the story. Sit with Captain Naaman. What he needs most is healing, yet what he wants to do least is what he is asked for the healing to be complete. Entitlement is difficult to surrender. Sit with the story and think about ideas like freedom, patriotism, allegiance. What would it be to pray for a healing on an enemy nation's army captain?

Most of all, sit with the God, who outwaits the sick, the proud, and the unconvinced. Sit with this God for awhile and perhaps you will exclaim with the Psalmist, "Weeping only lasts for a night, but joy comes in the morning."

Chris Oberg pastors the Calimesa, California, Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Some doors are still closed to women...



because Adventist women still can't serve as ordained ministers. And that's too bad. For them and for us.

Men's Club?

When we deny people's spiritual gifts, a terrible thing happens. We cripple the body of Christ.

Doesn't the church need the gifts of ordained men *and* women?

Isn't it time to open this door?

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HOPE, HELL, AND HUMOR



Discussed: hope, Castro, college students, satire, Billy Collins, rural humor versus city humor, Hunter S. Thompson, honesty, Victorian propriety, a better world

Why We Aren't Funny: The Case for Adventist Gonzo Journalism

By Winona Wendth

When Rafael A. Penalver, Jr., the president of Key West's San Carlos Institute, addressed a gathering of professional and avocational humor writers last January, he thanked members of the audience for their bravery, as well as for their craft. Having lived in Cuba in the late 1950s, he knew firsthand the tremendous influence humor can have on political life, and the tremendous consequences politics can have on the humorist.

He noted that the first periodical to bite the Cuban dust under Castro was not the standard press, nor was it an academic or religious journal. The first periodical to be denounced, confiscated, and destroyed was *Zig-Zag*, the successful satirical publication in Havana.

Later *Dédéto*—a relatively “safe” humor magazine founded in 1968, about the time many Seventh-day Adventist college “underground” newsletters were circulating on campuses—was confiscated in 1987 and temporarily removed from the magazine stands for breaking the unwritten rule of publishing a caricature of Castro, in this case, a drawing by Cuban cartoonist Ajubel.

Even though the cartoon had breezed

by the censors all the way up to the top, the very, very top pulled it. Clearly, Castro had no sense of humor—at least not when it came to himself. No distance, we might be tempted to say—a weak political ego, maybe.

So why doesn't Castro have a sense of humor, when, for example, even Don Rumsfeld does? America's secretary of defense didn't try to pull Hart Seely's *Pieces of Intelligence: The Existential Poetry of Donald H. Rumsfeld*, off the shelves at Barnes and Noble bookstore, for example, or garble “The Late Night with David Letterman.”

Jon Stewart has yet to be blocked from the airwaves. *The Onion* is easily found on counters at Starbucks and on the Web.

Why is it, then, that even the most



The Onion is available at theonion.com.



tendentious politicians in the United States can tolerate humor and satire when Fidel Castro, apparently, cannot? On the other side, how could he get away with shutting down those pesky periodicals—just because he can't laugh at himself?

Well, to begin, Castro is an attorney—so we can expect only so much: he enjoys puns and cartoons of political opponents, I understand, and that's about it. "But seriously, folks," the problem, here, is money—not so much the lack of it, although, generally speaking, poverty and satire go hand-in-hand only among the educated, as the way in which it's distributed.

Communism in Cuba is a closed economic system that circulates money among various bureaus and services of the government, which owns everything. In America, very few draw their paychecks directly from Rumsfeld or, even George W. Bush—the IRS notwithstanding. Almost everyone in Cuba is—or has close relatives—on the government payroll.

Frightened or dependent people are rarely funny and typically do not have the time or energy to make the effort to, as Oscar Levant remarked, hop out of bed, brush their teeth, and sharpen their tongues on their way out to sell plantains to their cousins. One false rhetorical move, and there go the plantains, off to the nearest *oficial del policia*.

What does this have to do with the Seventh-day Adventist Church? Well, look around—you don't see very many funny people in here. Punsters, yes. And, of course, the inveterate tellers of recycled Baptist or professional jokes. But the funniest Adventists tend to be the college students who still have permission from the dean of students to publish the annual April Fool's issue in the campus newspaper, probably the most carefully monitored issue of the year.

The students are always protected—they pay tuition for that protection these days, and when enrollment is down, they're more or less in the driver's seat. But it's different for those on the college payroll: one false move and here come the conference officials; worse yet, there go the donors. Neither of these constituencies is known to have a well-honed sense of humor. Add reactionary college administrators, and life can become positively grim.

No distance, we might be tempted to say—weak political egos, maybe. "Irony," says novelist Blanche McCrary Boyd, "comes when you can stand back far

enough to see yourself and still get the joke." For most of us, too much is at stake; we can't get outside of ourselves; we don't get the joke. No false moves.

Why is a comic false move more damning than others? People in power know that you can't muster logic against the comic; all you can do is complain. You can't call facts into play against notions that are neither logical nor factual. There is no defense against humor. Even the most fatuous and pubescent humor cannot be stood up to—the best you can do is roll your eyes heavenward and hope it goes away. And in the case of satire, your eyes don't roll: your vision snaps into focus and you are forced to look at things you really didn't want to see.

You suspect that others will see them, too. A regime that argues itself into existence and supports itself not through sensibility but only sense is in big trouble when people start to get clever—the only response is to stop them, altogether. And in Cuba, for example, the best way to do this is to cut off—or threaten to cut off—their supply of plantains.

So the people are afraid, but the Cuban government is afraid of the people. Woody Allen could handle this as family drama and make us smirk—but Cuba, propaganda notwithstanding, is not one big family. And neither are we—not really.

The point? Economics develop sociology, which, in turn, creates a culture. Yes, I know whom this sounds like—a nineteenth-century thinker with only a so-so sense of humor. This brings us to another point: The nineteenth century, the cradle of the Church, was not a very funny time. "Irony is the humorist's job," says Gary Trudeau. But the Romantics were generally not inclined toward humor or irony.

In a recent address to writers and poets, U.S. Poet Laureate Billy Collins pointed out that Wordsworth almost permanently reoriented poetry—"the Romantic tradition substituted landscape for sex and humor." This was good fortune for us—we could forget about both and spend our energies hiking in the woods. We were caught up in nineteenth-century selves in the broadest cultural sense. We repressed what made the eighteenth-century wits witty and refocused our attentions on keeping our bodies, minds, and politics healthy, chaste, and contained.

Also, rural and urban humor are not the same: "Live From New York!..." prepares us for an entirely different experience from "...brought to you from Minnesota Public Radio." Urban humor is time-sensitive, sharp, riddled

with put-downs—it's quick and relatively easy. Rural humor just sort of lopes along, pulling everyone in, and embarrassing almost anyone in its way; it takes a while—and a lot of narrative sensitivity and talent to do it right.

Few of us would argue that we have entirely shaken the bonds of Victorian propriety—in many aspects of our lives and work. Add to this the large percentage of religionists in our community—a grossly disproportionate percentage until very recently. And like those beautiful men and women who build and secure their identities on their public personae, it seems that religionists rarely laugh at themselves.

Furthermore, because we are, or have been until recently, a rural or suburban church we tend to believe that making fun of people is unkind. But few of us have the time or talent in most cases to tell those Lake Wobegone stories that work so well for Garrison Keillor or those tremendously long lead-ins that work for Molly Ivins. And however painful, ridicule is an important political weapon.

Ridiculing the helpless or weak is not funny, but when the powerful complain that their feelings are hurt, a humorist or satirist needs to consider that all we're waiting to hear is "You were right; I was wrong; I should apologize." When was the last time you heard that at a conference committee meeting or Wednesday night church business session?

Humor is a corrective, and as Rosenblatt says, "we should not capitulate too early." The powerful need provocation before they apologize; they need more than that before they correct the mistakes they are apologizing for.

So Adventism as a sociology rises out of a discourse—several discourses, perhaps—that simply may not be funny, or may not allow for easy humor, especially irony or satire. The economics of today and the culture of our great-grandparents may have foreclosed on any genuinely corrective humorous literature, and not many writers in the Church are willing to take the risks that come along with this kind of project.



Cartoonist Gary Trudeau takes "pea-shots" in his strip *Dooniesbury*.

In distinction to lack of irony among a people who cannot—or do not—recognize legitimate places outside their own system at all, let alone as places from which to take what Gary Trudeau calls "pea-shots at passers by...in order to attract attention to folly," we do have a growing corpus of cynical humor—humor that incorporates what Charles

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Scriven has called “hope for escape,” at best—not Molly Ivins’ “pessimism of the intellect [but] optimism of the will.” Many of us have given up and just take pea shots at each other, with little hope for transforming the system that seems to generate so much folly.

Ironically, what is probably the deepest-set reason for why Adventists are not funny—not humorists—is that humor not only presupposes a shared sensibility, and is therefore somewhat undemocratic in its audience awareness, it also assumes the possibility of a better world. It assumes that pointing out folly will help remove, or at least relieve it. Cynicism, and the desperate “hope of escape” have no project; humor does. But what do we do when our theology tells us rather straightforwardly that the World is getting worse and worse, and that there is little we can do except evangelize or develop palliative social programs.

In a healthy society, humor is a public utility, says Roger Rosenblatt: it provokes, it attempts to correct, it holds out a promise for a better world—at the very least the world in which we immediately live. However, for many of us who remember the social revolutions of the 1960s and the hopes we had to engage our denominational parents in conversation that would eventually liberate theology from nineteenth-century tradition—or at least reconsider their relationship, there is little left *but* cynicism and the “hope for escape.”

Like the plantain-sellers in Havana, we are fearful because too much is at stake—however, little we have can be lost in one or two overly clever turns of phrase. Eventually someone at the very top might get bent out of shape. We are told that someone’s feelings could get hurt; we are told that what is genuinely corrective humor is ultimately going to be hurtful to the powerful.

We are told that direct and specific speech is incendiary. This is all true. But this is what someone needs to do today. Humor provides a deeply moral perspective; its *prima facie* cleverness often hides that from all but the most careful readers or listeners, but that’s often what we want.

The effective and moral humorist believes in the possibility of something better, in the possibility that the right people, and right-thinking people, can help find something better. Humorists believe that they have a project, and that they have a community of friends and readers who “get it.” Humorists are risk-takers who have the luxury of not having to worry about their objects’ withholding their next paychecks; humorists know that discovering the truth may be

more important than defending the facts, and that maybe the world can, in fact, get better.

In a sense, humorists are heretics.

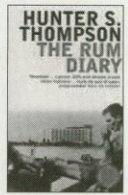
One of America’s best and most effective humorists died this winter. Tom Wolfe called Hunter S. Thompson “the century’s greatest comic writer in the English language” (*Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 22, 2005). Incorrectly regarded as the man who coined the term *gonzo journalism*, Thompson was known for getting at the truth possibly before he collected all his facts; he was bulldoggish at grabbing his projects and not letting go until he had shaken every bit of truth out of them, throwing them on the ground and saying, “Here it is—look at what I brought you.” Focus: grisly, maybe, but effective.

Louis Menand got it right when he said that Hunter’s work “belonged to a time when journalists believed that fearlessness and humor and honesty could make a difference; and it’s sad to be reminded that the time in which such a faith was possible has probably passed” (*The New Yorker*, Mar. 7, 2005).

One wonders if “the time in which such a faith was possible has probably passed” among those in the Church for whom conversation with and correction of those in power has not been successful, among those who still want to believe that fearlessness and humor and honesty can make a difference. Who need to laugh at some of this mess—and at them/ourselves.

What we need, here, is a little gonzo journalism. Not whiny exposés or eye-rolling inside jokes or cynical “Oh, wells,” but bulldoggish get-at-the-truth-and-entertain-us-well writing. Writing that takes a risk, comes down on one side, names names, and keeps us laughing—even though it may make someone hyperventilate.

Just as “sunshine is the best disinfectant”—exposing and deactivating that nasty mold in the grout of institutional bureaucracy and governance—humor can be a very effective scrub brush. We might not actually be ready for real gonzo journalism, but it’s time to think hard about learning how to stand far enough away to see ourselves—so we can start learning again how to get the joke.



The late Hunter S. Thompson was known—incorrectly—for coining the phrase, *gonzo journalism*.

Winona Wendth is the director of College Advancement at Kettering College of Medical Arts, in Kettering, Ohio.

Fear and Loathing in Roseville

We were at Max's Café at the Roseville Galleria Mall, sitting outside on the patio watching mothers with small children make their way to the play area. It was a business lunch intended to help us make a decision on the appropriateness of humor in *Spectrum*.

For Adventists, food always helps with the decision-making process or the creative process—or at least it gives a good reason to go out for lunch. We recognized that the gonzo journalism that we sought came out of the sixties drug culture, but we were confident of our superior ability to be funny without drugs, alcohol, or Roy Branson, although the ontological side of our discussion would be seriously diminished without a theologian at hand. Where was Rick Rice when you needed him?

We were undaunted, although temporarily distracted, by the menus and the need to choose sandwiches. That should have been a sign that it was totally the wrong time of day for this discussion. Wrong place, too. Midnight in a college dorm somewhere would have been transcendent.

Five pages of satirical writing were under debate. Would the reputation of *Spectrum* be compromised more by printing or not printing them?

Alex was the one who had spent hours in front of the computer writing. He was giving a very persuasive speech in favor of printing, and he couldn't believe that we would "sell out to the lowest common denominator" and not print the copy. He was particularly incensed when people would give reasons like their mother wouldn't like it, or readers might complain. Editorial decisions were editorial. They couldn't be compromised by economics.

At which point we paid homage to Winona Wendth and the economic argument that she raised in the piece that we did plan to run on humor. Perhaps she's right: we can't afford a sense of humor—especially if we can't include jokes about the General Conference. Isn't that one exalted purpose of humor—to speak truth to power?

The bit about 3ABN debuting a new show called "Queer Eye for the GC Guy" would have to go. It was

way over the top, although the allusion to the end being near for gray slacks and blue blazers was funny. But it wasn't worth risking our reputation. The bit about Pacific Press releasing a new book by Ellen G. White called *Messages to Old People*—in a large print edition—that could stay. But we couldn't have any jokes about Adventist drinks, or make fun of specific people like Clifford Goldstein. We needed to make more fun of ourselves.

We needed footnotes. Could humor be done with footnotes?

Sandwiches and salads arrived. It was all vegetarian. No poking fun at anyone for choosing pastrami.

Julie started to make a speech. The waitress interrupted.

There was silence. Clearly we were not as skilled at conversational combat as, say, John Webster and David Larson.

Can gonzo journalism exist if there are no gonzos? No laughs, tough crowd. Tough assignment.

No dessert, either. We had maxed our weight watchers points and run out of time. Shouldn't this decision be made by the editorial board? Or, couldn't we find a sponsor for the humor?

Perhaps if there were a large donation, we could sow a billion *Spectrums* with jokes as plentiful as Little Debbies at camp meeting. Perhaps then we wouldn't be afraid of our shadow side. Or not.

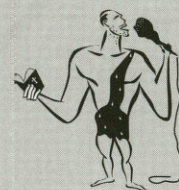
What about putting the humor on the Web site? That wouldn't be as dangerous, would it?

Great solution. That is where a billion people could read it. But if we included coding that prevented it from being printed, no one could pass it out at a board meeting and damn those irreverent people at *Spectrum*.

So that is how five pages of satire were banished to the spectrum-magazine.org Web site to await discovery by Adventist college students around the world. Or not.



To see the full, banished five pages of satire, go to spectrummagazine.org



Discussed: hell, universalism, prayers, death of the wicked,
the incarnation, moral ambiguity, radical seriousness, worst-case scenarios,
John Donne, paradox, ontological blunders

How Inclusive Is Our Hope?

By Fritz Guy

Do Christians, including Adventists, have a vested interest in hell—that is, in the limitation of salvation to a special group along with the eternal damnation of everybody else? If we were to discover that God’s love could in fact save all of humanity, not just a small minority, would we be overjoyed, like the shepherd, the housewife, and the father in Jesus’ stories (Luke 15)? Or would we be dismayed, like the prophet Jonah, unhappy because God was “ready to relent from punishing” (Jon. 4:2)?



Is it possible to be authentically Adventist and at the same time genuinely hope not only for the communication of the gospel to the whole world, but also for the ultimate salvation of every human being? Could this be our vision, our goal? Could we imagine an eschatological scenario with a “lake of fire” that symbolizes the final end of evil and the ultimate triumph of love, that obliterates everything contrary to the good but does not obliterate persons created in God’s own image?¹ Could there be, in other words, an Adventist version of universally inclusive hope—a “hopeful universalism”—that does not claim to *know* that in the end all humanity will be saved, but nevertheless has good reason truly to hope this will be so?

Most Adventists, like most other Christians, would hesitate to say Yes to this question. In this sense, the idea of a universally inclusive vision and hope would be unorthodox: it is not part of the consensus of the Adventist community. The important question, however, is not whether such an idea is orthodox, but whether it is the most adequate understanding of the Christian gospel that God is love. And surely anyone “who has not felt deeply the attraction of universalism can scarcely have been moved by the greatness of God’s love.”² We may disagree over what kind of universalism, if any, is theologically *correct*; but we should all find the idea of complete, universal salvation spiritually desirable.

Universal Intention

It is certainly God’s intention to save the whole world. Because the character of God is love—this is the central content of the Christian gospel, and also the focus of the great controversy between good and evil—and because God is the source of all reality, there is no reasonable doubt about the universal scope of God’s love.³ It is unthinkable that God’s love should be restricted to a fortunate minor fraction of humanity, with another, larger part being excluded.

On the contrary, God loves everyone, everywhere, all the time. God’s love includes absolutely all humanity, intending the ultimate good of salvation—that is, reconciliation to God and eternal life, comprising a present experience of acceptance and security, and an everlasting future—for every person who ever lives on the earth. This is indeed “the one purpose of God.”⁴

Not only is this a theological necessity, the inescapable implication of a Christian understanding of the character of God, Scripture explicitly and repeatedly attests it:

- A divine word brought by the prophet Ezekiel assured the covenanted people of God’s continuing concern: “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live” (Ezek. 33:11).⁵
- Explaining the Parable of the Diligent Shepherd as an illustration of his own concern for children, Jesus said, “It is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost” (Matt. 18:14).
- According to the Pauline letters collected in the New Testament, God’s intention for human salvation is as wide as the human need: God wills to be “merciful to all” (Rom. 11:32).
- According to a Pauline sermon, this means not only that God “commands all people everywhere to repent,” but also that in Christ God “has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17:30–31).
- The most famous sentence in the New Testament is also the most important, because it is the most succinct and powerful statement of the gospel: the everlasting good news is the fact that the whole world of humanity is the object of God’s love. “God loved the world in such a way that he gave his unique Son...in order that the world might be saved through him” (John 3:16–17, translation supplied).
- The confirming testimony of the Spirit is that “the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world” (1 John 4:1).
- The goal of Christ’s mission is “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9–11).
- God “has made known to us the mystery of his will...as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph. 1:9–10).



- Prayers for all kinds of persons, including those in high places, are always appropriate because God “desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4).
- A diligent, disciplined ministry is inspired by the knowledge that God is “the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe” (1 Tim. 4:10).
- The fact that God has not yet come again to humanity in the person of Jesus the Messiah—a fact that has been an object of concern for believers and an occasion of ridicule for unbelievers—is to be understood in light of the fact that God is patient, “not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9).
- The purpose of the incarnation of “all the fullness of God” in and as Jesus the Messiah was “to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross” (Col. 1:19–20).
- The reason why Jesus “for a little while was made lower than the angels” was “so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone” (Heb. 2:9).
- In the Johannine literature, Jesus is introduced as “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29) and identified as “the atoning sacrifice...for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).
- In the Pauline literature, the same point is made in the language of self-sacrifice for others, “We are convinced that one has died for all...He died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them” (2 Cor. 5: 14–15), and in the language of liberation, Jesus the Messiah “gave himself as a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:6).

So it is clear that the divine act of atonement “is universal in its outreach and intention” and that “all are called to liberation and salvation.”⁶ The good news of Jesus Christ is good news for all of humanity—indeed, *for all* of creation. There is no limit to the scope of God’s love.

Positive Universalism

In view of the preeminence and universality of God’s love, it is hardly surprising that Christian faith has frequently affirmed universal salvation, although it has usually been a minority view. Sometimes identified by a phrase from the Greek text of Acts 3:21, which is translated literally as “the restoration of all things,” the doctrine of universal salvation has been known

technically as the doctrine of *apocatastasis* (from the Greek *ajpokataavstasi*). It goes back at least as far as the early Christian theologians Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215) and Origen (ca. 185–54), and was also taught by Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 330–95) and Theodore of Mopsuestia (ca. 350–428), among others.⁷

Later advocates included Anabaptists, Cambridge Platonists, Pietists, and the English devotional writer William Law (1686–1781).⁸ In modern theology, universalism was advocated in the nineteenth century by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) and Albrecht Ritschl (1822–89), and in the twentieth century by Paul Tillich, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jürgen Moltmann, and an impressive list of others.⁹ This sort of list does not, of course, mean that the idea of universal salvation is actually correct; but it does suggest that it is not wholly unreasonable.

The vision of universal salvation is eloquently expressed as a part of Christian hope: “There can be no dual destiny in this hope, if there is to be hope at all. No ultimate division between persons who are sheep and persons who are goats, those who participate in God

and those who are condemned to hell, is admissible if the divine power is to be ultimately sovereign and the divine love the ultimate quality of that power.”¹⁰

There are several theological grounds for this rejection of the traditional idea of an ultimate division in human destiny. One is the moral ambiguity of all humanity and thus the moral similarity (albeit not identity) of all humanity. This similarity eliminates the possibility of any sort of spiritual elitism:

It is unthinkable
that God’s love
should be restricted
to a fortunate
minor fraction of
humanity, with
another,
larger part being
excluded.



Our experience tells us that God is related as creative ultimacy to all humans—and to all creatures alike—and that the differences between our responses to this relation—in our being, our loving and our creativity—are at best relative differences. Whether we speak of faith or of works, commitment or love, we can never discover an ultimate division between ourselves and others. Even more, experientially, if we be honest, we know unequivocally that together we share tragically in the nonachievements and the waywardness that is characteristic of even the worst of us.¹¹

In short, if *I* can be saved, in spite of the moral ambiguity that I know pervades my whole existence, how can I suppose that *anyone* is excluded from salvation? I may be different from some of the rest of humanity, but am I really that different? Am I that much better? Is my understanding of God that much closer to ultimate Truth, and are my moral and spiritual choices that much superior?

Another reason for affirming that all will ultimately be saved and that no one will finally be lost is the idea of salvation by God's grace as expressed in the Christian gospel:

Moreover, the gospel assures us from its side that all alike need mercy at the end if they are to be saved at all, that God's love reaches to the unworthy as well as to the worthy, and so in principle to all. It would be ironic indeed if the gospel preached a love that transcends all differences, divisions and faults, a mercy that was greater than all sin—and then established a new and more ultimate division between faith and unfaith (unfaith being sin) which the divine love could not overcome.¹²

If salvation is indeed a gift of grace, as all Christians agree, can it really be limited to those who jump high enough behaviorally or spiritually, or who jump through the correct hoops ritually and theologically? No. "If grace is true, it is true for everyone." And it is true unconditionally. "Nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God. Not even us." As a friend put it, "either we are saved by grace or we aren't."¹³

A third reason is the interrelatedness of humanity. No one, as John Donne famously put it, "is an island."¹⁴ That is, "a person is not an isolated monad whose happi-

ness, or lack of same, is independent of other persons;...it is simply not possible that one should destroy every chance of future happiness in oneself without, at the same time, undermining the future happiness of others as well."

Nor is it acceptable to suppose "that God simply 'obliterates' from the minds of the redeemed 'any knowledge of lost persons so that they experience no pangs of remorse for them.'" This simply "reduces God's victory over sin to a cruel hoax; his hollow 'victory' consists not in his making things right, but in his concealing from the redeemed just how bad things really are. Though utterly defeated in the end, God simply conceals from us the enormity of the defeat."¹⁵

A fourth reason is the problem of theodicy. The reasoning here is that "for God to be good to a created person, God must guarantee him/her a life that is a great good to him/her on the whole and one in which any participation in horrors is defeated within the context of his/her own life." This means that the person "must recognize and appropriate meanings sufficient to render [his/her life] worth living." Furthermore, God must "be good to each created person." Indeed, "it would be cruel for God to create...human beings with such a radical vulnerability to horrors, unless Divine power stood able, and Divine love willing, to redeem."¹⁶

Having felt the power and persuasiveness of God's love, can we suppose that its deliberate rejection is a live option for anyone? And could not the gospel triumph over human perversity? Perhaps we can envision even greater possibilities of grace in Jesus' metaphor than we have usually recognized:

To man there remain eternally two ways. And the one that is crowded is still the one that leads to destruction; and many there be that find it. But at some point on that road, be it far or near, each one finds also something, or rather Someone, else. It is a figure, stooping beneath the weight of a cross. "Lord, where are you going?" asks Everyman. And the answer comes: "I am going to Rome, to Moscow, to New York, to be crucified afresh in your place." And no man in the end can bear that encounter forever. For it is an encounter with a power than which there can be nothing greater, a meeting with omnipotent Love itself.



This love will take no man's choice from him; for it is precisely his choice that it wants. But its will to lordship is inexhaustible and ultimately unendurable; the sinner *must* yield.¹⁷

Any thoughtful Christian must surely be impressed not only by the moral sensitivity of this vision and the force of these arguments, but also by the fact that they can be supported by numerous biblical assertions. In any serious consideration of God's love for humanity—the extravagant, suffering love, which, after all, is the essence of the Christian gospel—these assertions cannot be ignored. They seem to go beyond the affirmation of God's *intention* to save all humanity to suggest the *accomplishment* of that intention:

- Elaborating the significance of Jesus' resurrection, the apostle insisted, "For just as all die in Adam, so also all will be made alive in Christ" (1 Cor. 15:22).
- That is to say, regarding the crucial fact of justification, "as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all humanity, so one man's right action leads to right life for all humanity" (Rom. 5:18).¹⁸
- So "the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all humanity" (Tit. 2:11).¹⁹

On the basis of these assertions of Scripture, one can come to the plausible conclusion that "God will ultimately succeed in realizing his purposes for history and for all mankind." For the "good news" is precisely that "God loves the ungrateful and wicked."²⁰

The idea of universal salvation, therefore, is not to be dismissed glibly, much less disdainfully. "Many [Christians] today believe the salvation of all to be both Christian and compelling."²¹ Its primary attractiveness is not its eschatological optimism ("We're all going to be saved"), or its possible seductiveness as a moral opiate ("So we can do whatever we feel like doing"), but instead its radical seriousness about the scope of God's love and the power of God's grace ("God will not let us go").

Christianity, including its Adventist version, has no legitimate interest in populating hell.

Human Choice

Yet this "positive universalism" is not a live theological option for many Adventists and other Christians

because it remains difficult to escape the conviction that "as long as we think in the context of love and freedom there are always two possibilities"—possibilities that are ultimately ontological as well as existential.²² Thus, every person "in the course of his still-ongoing history has to reckon absolutely and up to the very end with the possibility of reaching his end in an absolute rejection of God, and hence in the opposite of salvation."²³ This is the horrendous but real possibility of "definitive destruction."²⁴

We can hardly ignore "the New Testament insistence that our response to the gospel determines for us the outcome of the final judgment."²⁵

The universal love that intends salvation for all also at the same time confronts every person with a genuine choice regarding the meaning of present existence and the nature of the ultimate future. This love loves so extravagantly that it is willing to risk eternal anguish rather than turn its beloved humanity into an object to be controlled by the will of another, even a divine Other. "Precisely because salvation consists in a personal relationship of love, it cannot be forced upon anyone. Love can only exist when it is freely given and freely received."²⁶

Just as it is God's love that intends, wills, and works for the salvation of all humanity, it is the same love that respects human freedom, even to the extent of allowing humanity to do the utterly irrational and perverse—that is, to reject the love that has created, sustained, and redeemed it. But if that happens, God recognizes and respects that rejection in virtue of the very love that has been rejected.

If salvation is indeed a gift of grace, as all Christians agree, can it really be limited to those who jump high enough behaviorally or spiritually, or jump through the correct hoops ritually and theologically?



It is highly inappropriate, therefore, to think in terms of a “paradox between God’s love and justice” resulting from the conflicting ideas that God’s love wants all to be saved, while at the same time “God’s justice requires all the disobedient to be punished.”²⁷ This seems simply wrong. Although it is a universal truth that “the wages of sin is death,” the good news is grounded in the even greater truth that “the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

To reject the grace that sustains one’s existence is a monumental ontological blunder; it doesn’t have to be “punished” by a new divine act, for its own consequences are intrinsic, inevitable, and decisive. However it is conceived, hell “is not a *punishment* for turning one’s back on Christ and choosing the road that leads to destruction. It is *where the road goes*.”²⁸ It is “the self-chosen state of alienation from God and not an additional punishment inflicted by God upon the sinner.... It is freely-chosen, radical self-isolation and, therefore, quite literally, the sinner’s undoing.”²⁹ So we can be confident that “God does not take vengeance”; the worst that can happen is that God “leaves evil to its own, limited logic.”³⁰

In contrast, it has been argued with equal conviction that “an infinitely resourceful God will ultimately win the cooperation of all rational free creatures.”³¹ As a matter of fact, “much of what God does in relation to us is agency-enabling and thus could not count as coercion.” Even “if this should mean God’s causally determining some things to prevent everlasting ruin,” this is “no more an insult to our dignity than a mother’s changing a baby’s diaper is to the baby.”³² Furthermore, it has been argued that a rejection of God’s love is not in fact a morally free choice:

What might qualify as a motive for someone’s making a fully informed decision to reject God? Once one has learned, perhaps through bitter experience, that evil is always destructive, always contrary to one’s own interest as well as to the interest of others, and once one sees clearly that God is the ultimate source of human happiness and that rebellion can bring only greater and greater misery into one’s own life as well as into the lives of others, an intelligible motive for such rebellion no longer seems even possible. The strongest conceivable motive would seem to exist, moreover, for uniting with God. So if a fully informed person should reject God nonethe-

less, then that person... would seem to display the kind of irrationality that is itself incompatible with [truly] free choice.³³

So a fully informed, and therefore morally free and significant, rejection of God may not be experientially possible, even if it is theoretically possible.

Whatever the outcome of our theological considerations regarding human freedom, however, the fact remains that Scripture repeatedly refers to eschatological judgment. This divine activity is best understood not as an arbitrary determination of eternal destiny but rather as a realistic disclosure of it. In the Torah and the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures, as well as the parables and the letters of the New Testament, the dominant picture is not of a single human destiny of universal salvation, but of a dual destiny of being and nonbeing, eternal life and eternal oblivion:

- “The hour is coming,” Jesus said, “when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28–29).
- More specifically, in Jesus’ Parable of the Last Judgment, those who refuse to respond to human needs “go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matt. 25:46).
- So Paul wrote that God “will repay according to each one’s deeds: to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury” (Rom. 2:6–8).
- Jesus noted that “the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it,” while “the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matt. 7:13–14).
- According to the Revelation to John, there will be some who experience the presence of God and some who experience the “second death,” some who are finally holy and some who are finally unholy, some who are inside the heavenly city and some who are outside (Rev. 21:7–8; 22:11, 14–15).



The force of these scriptural statements can hardly be missed. Might it be possible, however, to regard the judgment language and pictures of Scripture as dramatic and powerful warnings and exhortations rather than previews of future events? Could this language have been intended to point to the twofold fact (1) that human behavior can have profound and terrifying consequences, ultimate as well as proximate, and (2) that humanity is held morally responsible and called to account for its actions?³⁴

If so, the function of Scripture references to judgment is not to predict a necessarily dual destiny for humanity but to underscore the eternal consequences and significance of human decisions, to warn against the possibility of eternal loss. On the principle that “the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional,” the vivid pictures of final destruction might be understood as descriptions of the “worst case scenario” rather than history written in advance.³⁵

This “conditionalist” interpretation would obviously be radically different from the traditional “predictivist” one, but it certainly is logically possible; and it might be encouraged by a recognition of the highly metaphorical nature of the most prominent scriptural references to ultimate destruction. It might also turn out to be no more radical a reinterpretation of Adventist faith than was the abandonment of the early Adventist shut door theology or the shift from law to grace following the General Conference session of 1888. For a community of faith as well as for its individual members, “life is a series of experiences that continually challenge the beliefs we hold sacred.”³⁶

A review of Adventist history shows that “from the beginning Seventh-day Adventists have been prepared to modify, change, or revise their beliefs and practices if they could see a good reason to do so from the Scriptures.”³⁷ This is precisely why the current statement of Fundamental Beliefs includes in its preamble the explicit acknowledgment, “Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when

the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God’s Holy Word.”

Universal Hope

God’s passionate love for all creation and the corresponding intention to save all humanity certainly imply the universal possibility of salvation, and this must logically entail, in some sense, the possibility of universal salvation. The eternal reality is that “Jesus is the expression of the radical unwillingness of God to abandon sinners.”³⁸ Although it is true that “the wages of sin is death,” it is just as true—and the thesis of the Christian gospel—that “the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). “God stands at the door and knocks, and if we don’t answer, he looks for an open window.”³⁹

The option of rejecting God and life, furthermore, is thoroughly irrational. God, our loving Creator, “wills for us exactly what, at the most fundamental level, we want for ourselves,” namely, “that we should experience supreme happiness, that our deepest yearnings should be satisfied, and that all of our needs should be met... How, then, are we to understand human disobedience and opposition to God?”⁴⁰

Yet we are unable to affirm “positive universalism” and its confident prediction that all humanity will ultimately be saved—partly because human beings often do make thoroughly irrational choices that contradict their own best interests, but mostly because we just do not have the kind of knowledge that is presupposed by that sort of prediction.

This does not, however, preclude universal hope and the possibility that all humanity will be saved. This distinction possibility and predictability may be subtle, but it is significant. On the one hand, the turning of hope into prediction led to the Great Disappointment of Millerite Adventists in 1844. On the other hand, the fact that the salvation of all humanity cannot be confidently affirmed does not mean that it cannot be a gen-

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uine Christian hope. Indeed, one of the reasons universal salvation cannot be confidently predicted is also the reason why it cannot be confidently precluded: we do not have the requisite knowledge.

The idea that universal salvation remains a proper hope has been maintained not only most prominently by Karl Barth, but also by such diverse post-Barthian figures as the Reformed theologians Emil Brunner in Switzerland and G. C. Berkouwer in Holland, the Roman Catholic theologians Karl Rahner in Germany and Hans Urs von Balthasar in Switzerland, the Lutheran Helmut Thielicke in Germany, and the Anglican Brian Hebblethwaite in England.⁴¹

Although it is still true that “human freedom can be neither broken nor neutralized by divine freedom,” it is also true that human freedom “may well be, so to speak, outwitted. The descent of grace to the human soul is a free act of divine love. And there are no limits to how far it may extend.”⁴² There is, therefore, a sense in which it is reasonable to say that “the sinner *must* yield,” without implying some sort of coercion. The traditional language of romantic love—recall God’s luring of Israel symbolized in the story of Hosea—recognizes an external force that is “enthraling” and “captivating” without eliminating real personal freedom. Indeed, it can be plausibly claimed that it is this kind of love that creates true freedom.⁴³

We must also remember that although eschatological judgment is not arbitrary divine decision making, neither is it just a matter of tallying up the score and announcing the results in the way the court clerk reads a verdict in the American judicial system. Judgment is also God’s own, and therefore potentially creative, act:

If the process of Christian dying were nothing more than a “freezing” of what we have already accomplished (or failed to accomplish!), then the gospel would hardly be good news and we should approach death and judgment with horror. But strictly speaking, God’s final judgment can only be the final future fullness of God’s forgiving, life-giving judgment in the cross and resurrection of Christ. It cannot be merely a neutral “taking stock”; it is an expression of God’s real victory over sin and death, in which anything and everything which has been done in love is saved and perfected by God. Thus, God’s final act is a life-giving judgment which forgives, heals, purifies, and bestows fullness and therefore, finality upon human life, that final identity for which it was created and toward which it is directed.⁴⁴

So God’s judgment, too, is grace; it is part of redemption, part of the total process of universal atonement and reconciliation.

Although there is no reason to reject the scriptural narratives of the suicide of Judas (Matt. 27:3–10; Acts 1:18–19), or to wonder why he has become a symbol of personal betrayal, we simply do not know what went on in his mind as he ended his life. Was his suicide in any sense an act of repentance as well as remorse?

Nor do we know how his life as a whole was judged by the God who loves and wants to save every member of the human family. The matter is not for us to decide, or even to wonder about for long, but only to recognize as something we do not and cannot know. And the same is true in regard to every other villain of history and of our own acquaintance. But we can remember “the radical unwillingness of God to abandon sinners.”

Although the ultimate salvation of all humanity can never be a certainty but only a hope, for the person who has experienced God’s love, it can perhaps be an “unshakable hope,” a hope that is morally and theologically impossible to abandon.⁴⁵ Would it be reasonable to conclude that “to hope for one’s own salvation and not for the salvation of all would be utterly un-Christian, since Christ died for all men and women,” and that in this context “there can be no particularism of hope; hope loses all sense and all force if it does not imply...an ‘all of us’ or an ‘all together’”?⁴⁶

Although the rejection and contradiction of God’s universal love remains a theoretical possibility, it is surely the strangest, most inexplicable—indeed, the most irrational—of all possible human actions. For “if God is our loving Creator, then he wills for us exactly what, at the most fundamental level, we want for ourselves, he wills that we should experience supreme happiness, that our deepest yearnings should be satisfied, and that all of our needs should be met. So if that is true, if God wills for us the very thing we really want for ourselves, whether we know it or not, how then are we to understand human disobedience and opposition to God.”⁴⁷ But if it were ever actualized, then some of humanity would not experience eternal life in God’s presence.

Yet the reality of God’s love would still mean what it has always meant: that God wills what is best for all



creation, including salvation for all humanity, and that God does not abandon sinners. If this is God's will and persistence, shouldn't we have it in mind when we pray, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10)? Shouldn't our hope be this inclusive? Shouldn't we be less like Jonah and more like the shepherd, the housewife, and the father in Jesus' stories?

Notes and References

1. Rev. 20:10–15; see Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1911), 673.
2. Stephen H. Travis, *Christian Hope and the Future* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1980), 129–30.
3. For more detailed argument of this point see Jan Bonda, *The One Purpose of God: An Answer to the Doctrine of Eternal Punishment* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 74–111; Fritz Guy, "The Universality of God's Love," in *The Grace of God, The Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism*, ed. Clark H. Pinnock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 31–49.
4. See Bonda, *One Purpose of God*.
5. See also Ezek. 18:23:

6. Donald J. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* (San Francisco: Harper, 1978–79), 1: 165, 168.
7. See Origen, *On First Principles* 1.6.2, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, repr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 4:260–61.
8. A brief but comprehensive account of the development of universalism is provided by Richard J. Bauckham, "Universalism: A Historical Survey," *Themelios*, 4/2 (1978–79): 48–54.
9. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. H. R. Mackintosh, 2 vols., repr. (New York: Harper, 1960), 2:711–22; Albrecht Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, repr. (Clifton, N.J.: n.p., 1966), 125–39; Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1951–63) 3: 406–9, 415–19; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), 272–73; Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (New York: Harper, 1974), 130–34, 177.
10. Langdon Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind* (New York: Crossroad-Seabury, 1976), 298; see also Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951–63), 3: 408.
11. Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind*, 298.
12. *Ibid.*, 298.
13. Philip Gulley and James Mulholland, *If Grace Is True: Why God Will Save Every Person* (San Francisco: Harper, 2003), 18;

Further Reading on Universalism

See, for example, John Baillie, *And the Life Everlasting* (London: Oxford, 1934), 237–45; John A. T. Robinson, *In the End, God*, 2nd ed. (London: Fontana-Collier, 1968), 108–23; Nels F. S. Ferré, *The Christian Understanding of God* (New York: Harper, 1951), 242–49; John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (New York: Scribners, 1966), 322–23, 325–26; Gordon D. Kaufman, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Scribner's, 1968), 305–6, 459n, 471–72; William Barclay, *William Barclay: A Spiritual Autobiography* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 58–61; Langdon Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind* (New York: Crossroad-Seabury, 1976), 298–99; John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life* (New York: Harper, 1976), 242–61; *idem*, *Evil and the God of Love*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper, 1978), 341–45; Marilyn McCord Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), 51, 127–28, 156–57, 175–77, 199–202.

Two recent, book-length expositions of positive universalism by less well-known authors are Thomas Talbott, *The Inescapable Love of God* (Universal,

1999), and Philip Gulley and James Mulholland, *If Grace Is True: Why God will Save Every Person* (San Francisco: Harper, 2003). A significant difference between the two books is that whereas Talbott endeavors to show that the New Testament itself is universalist, Gulley and Mulholland regard the New Testament evidence as mixed but take the universalist passages as affirming their own spiritual experience of God as "unlimited patience, infinite love, and eternal faithfulness" (12). For a vigorous discussion of Talbott's views and his response, see Robin A. Parry and Christopher H. Partridge, eds., *Universal Salvation? The Current Debate* (Carlisle, Cumbria, U.K.: Paternoster, 2003). This book is an excellent introduction to the subject from an evangelical perspective. Gulley and Mulholland have published a second book, *If God Is Love: Rediscovering Grace in an Ungracious World* (San Francisco: Harper, 2004), attempting to answer the question, "What could our world look like if we took seriously God's love for all people?" (xi).

Bruce Wilcox, in a conversation in the late 1990s.

14. John Donne (1572–1631), “Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions: Meditation XVII.”

15. Thomas Talbott, *The Inescapable Love of God* (Universal, 1999), 192–93. The internal quotation is from William Lane Craig, “Talbott’s Universalism,” *Religious Studies* 27 (Sept. 1991): 306.

16. Marilyn McCord Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), 156–57. See also Michael Peterrson et al., *Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, 3d ed. (New York: Oxford, 2003), 148–49.

17. John A. T. Robinson, *In the End, God*, 2d ed. (London: Fontana-Collier, 1968), 133.

18. My translation.

19. My translation.

20. Gordon D. Kaufman, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Scribner’s, 1968), 471–72; Gully and Mulholland, *If Grace Is True*, 64.

21. William Barclay, quoted by Gully and Mulholland, *If Grace Is True*, 223.

22. Dale Moody, *The Word of Truth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1981), 514.

23. Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Crossroad-Seabury, 1978), 443.

24. G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1972), 413, citing Albrecht Oepke, “*apollumi*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76), 1: 396.

25. Hans Schwarz, “Eschatology,” in *Christian Dogmatics*, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jensen (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 2: 578. See also I. Howard Marshall, “The New Testament Does Not Teach Universal Salvation,” and Jack Sanders, “A Freewill Theist’s Response to Talbott’s Universalism,” in Robin A. Parry and Christopher H. Partridge, eds. *Universal Salvation? The Current Debate* (Carlisle, Cumbria, U.K.: Pasternoster, 2003), 55–76, 169–87.

26. John R. Sachs, “Current Eschatology: Universal Salvation and the Problem of Hell,” *Theological Studies*, 52 (1991): 233.

27. See Schwarz, “Eschatology,” 2:578.

28. Stephen H. Travis, *Christian Hope and the Future* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1980), 121; emphasis added.

29. Sachs, “Current Eschatology,” 235.

30. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 138.

31. Adams, *Horrendous Evils*, 51, summarizing an argument of John Hick.

32. Adams, *Horrendous Evils*, 157.

33. Talbott, *Inescapable Love of God*, 186.

34. Emil Brunner, *Dogmatics*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1949–62) 3:418–20.

35. Ellen G. White, ms. 4, 1883, in *Selected Messages from the Writings of Ellen G. White*, 3 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1958–80), 1:67; compare Jer. 18:5–11. See also, for example, Matt. 25:41, 46; Rev. 14:9–11; 20:7–15; and compare Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1911), 662–73.

36. Gully and Mulholland, *If Grace is True*, 30.

37. Neal C. Wilson, “A Word to the Reader,” in George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day*

Adventist Beliefs (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2000), 8.

38. Sachs, “Current Eschatology,” 244.

39. Gully and Mulholland, “If Grace Is True,” 19.

40. Talbott, *Inescapable Love of God*, 185.

41. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 4 vols. in 13 (Edinburgh: Clark, 1936–69), 2/2 and 4/1, passim; 4/3: 461–78; and *The Humanity of God* (Richmond, Va.: Knox, 1960), 60–62; Brunner, *Dogmatics*, 1:334–39, 352–53; 3:415–24; idem., *Eternal Hope* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954), 170–84; G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of*

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42. Balthasar, *Dare We Hope*, 221, quoting Edith Stein.

43. See especially Hos. 2:14–15: “I will now allure her...and speak tenderly to her...I will give her her vineyards, and make the Valley of Achor [the site of Achan’s sin and the ensuing disaster] a door of hope. There she shall respond as in the days of her youth.”

44. Sachs, “Current Eschatology,” 251–52.

45. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 435.

46. Sachs, 243; Balthasar, *Dare We Hope*, 81.

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CHOICES ABOUT DEATH AND DYING



Adventist Eschatology and Assisted Suicide for the Dying

By Scott A. LeMert

One of the most debated ethical issues of our time has been the topic of end-of-life health care and when to allow death to take place without the intervention of artificial life support. The debate is now beyond the realm of living wills; it has moved into the discussion of legal assisted suicide for the terminally ill. This article will briefly examine the history of this subject in the state of Oregon and then reflect on the response of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to the sociological and theological debate.

Fifty-one percent of Oregon's voters originally voted for the state's Death with Dignity Act in 1994. This citizen's initiative was the first of its kind in the United States. Three years of legal wrangling followed, during which the Oregon Legislature forced another vote and the ordinance passed again with 60 percent of the state's voters approving. The measure outlines a legal process whereby a terminally ill person with full cognitive abilities can petition his or her physician to prescribe a lethal dose of barbiturates, which allows the patient to terminate his or her own life at the

time and place of the patient's choosing.

During Oregon's public debate, three books on this subject reached national best seller status: *Final Exit* (1991), by Derek Humphrey; *How We Die* (1993), by Sherwin B. Nuland; and *Tuesdays with Morrie* (1997), by Mitch Albom. *Dying Well* (1997), by Ira Byock, has also been widely read. Barbara Coombs Lee's work, *Compassion in Dying: Stories of Dignity and Choice* (2003), also warrants serious study.

Public debate continues, and the varied voices are just as passionate as in con-



tention over abortion. The judiciary has added complexity to the issue because physicians can be sued for “unnecessary pain and suffering” if they fail to act out of fear that additional pain medication might cause death, but also for “injudicious prescribing” in cases where intensive palliative care can be determined to have hastened death.

On February 22, 2005, the U.S. Supreme Court accepted an appeal by the federal government to hear the case of *Gonzales v. Oregon*. The question before the Court is “does the Controlled Substances Act give the [federal] D[rug] E[nforcement] A[gency] authority over the use of prescription drugs, regardless of Oregon law.”¹ In 1988, U.S. attorney general Janet Reno determined that the federal government had no jurisdiction over such state law. In 2001, her successor, John Ashcroft, reversed the government’s

ees’ responses to those wishing to use the provisions of the Death with Dignity law. The Oregon Conference policy reads as follows:

Seventh-day Adventists believe that all human life is a gift from God and therefore sacred. Those who face the end of life deserve to be respected and comforted. One of the primary goals of Seventh-day Adventist ministers is to provide pastoral care at every stage of life, including death. While they are not to support or participate in the legal act of assisted suicide, every reasonable effort to offer compassion and preserve trust should be pursued.⁶

Pastors and members have been invited to the bedside of terminally ill persons who have decided to cut

We remain incognizant that dying is not a problem to be solved; it is a mystery to be lived.

position, which the current attorney general, Alberto R. Gonzales, has carried forward.

In 2003, forty-one Oregonians availed themselves of the legal provision to hasten their own deaths, up from thirty-eight in 2002. Since 1997, a total of 171 people have used the Death with Dignity law. Out of one thousand dying patients in Oregon, about ten activate legal provisions for the necessary barbiturate prescription, with only one actually following through.² Of this final group, 90 percent also received hospice care.³

Why would public opinion favor a law that only one in one thousand will use? “Being in control and not dependent on other people is the most important thing,” states Linda Ganzini, a psychiatrist at Oregon Health and Science University, in Portland.⁴ Author Barbara Coombs Lee believes that the law restores hope and increases endurance; “I can tolerate this [dying] if I know I don’t have to.”⁵

Ironically, although 68 percent of the state’s population is unchurched, Oregon has one of the highest per capita concentrations of Seventh-day Adventists in the United States. Passage of this law has stirred passions on both sides of the issue among church members. Portland’s Adventist Medical Center and the Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists have written statements into their policy manuals that guide employ-

short the duration of their suffering and are treating these suicides as eventful public good-byes. When faced with the prospects of an agonizing death, local church members question the morality of the choices before them. They ask, “Is it really God’s will that I suffer like this?” “If I shorten my final moments how will God judge me?” “Will my last unpardoned sin be my own death?” With intensive palliative care easily crossing into terminal sedation, members ask, “Where is the moral line?” “If I refuse treatment that could have given me a few more days, have I, in essence, committed my own suicide?”

It is here, I believe, that the Church’s eschatology has played an unintentional role. It has been common for members to expect Christ’s soon return to rescue them from experiencing the saga of the first death. Deathbed rhetoric echoes clichés such as, “they were ready,” or “their time was up,” “they were laid to rest early,” or “God knew that it was best to take them now.” A “good death” has been deemed one in which the dying person had an opportunity to make things right and not be caught with one last, unpardoned sin. The focus of the Church’s attention at the deathbed has largely been on making things right, the promise of the Second Coming, and the nature of man’s unconsciousness immediately after death.

When a death within our community is imminent, the elders are called. We conduct an anointing and talk about the expected miracle. It is neat, well rehearsed, and theologically crisp. We want a quick death or a wondrous miracle. We speak very little about how the family, the dying person, or even the clergy will handle our frequent failure to stay the Angel of Death. We perform our ecclesiastical rituals and we leave. The dying person utters his or her last confession and then waits the final countdown. For most people, dying involves entering into a dark, emotional unknown. The tragedy is that most of our members die alone with people standing all around!

Although we have a well-developed eschatology concerning the Investigative Judgment, the return of Christ, the two resurrections, and the final annihilation of the wicked, the Church has no defined theology on the pilgrimage of dying. As a community, we have only a small vocabulary for giving intrinsic and substantive definition to the physical and spiritual experience of final passage.

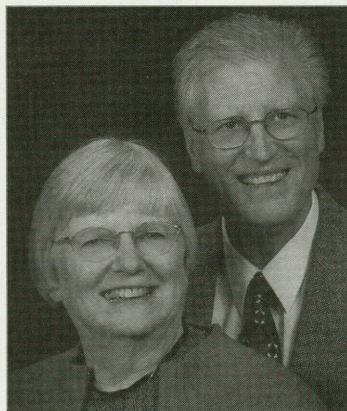
A pastor in Portland can advertise a seminar on the subject of the biblical truth about life after death, and

scarcely a person will come. Yet a Tibetan Buddhist monk can advertise "Embracing the Final Journey," and the house will be packed. Is the world asking questions we are failing to answer?

The truth is that our final personal terminus may be one of the most important passages of our entire life's sojourn. We have explored conception, birth, infancy, adolescence, adulthood, and aging. But we usually stop short of discussing "the final journey." Although death is a natural part of the human experience, dying is the silent door, the hidden secret. However, life is not about theology; it is about living and dying. Death has many scenarios and we die as individually as we lived.

Our culture has removed dying from the community. In 1949, 51 percent of all deaths took place at home. Now, only 20 percent do.⁷ "Modern dying takes place in the hospital, where it can be hidden, cleansed of its organic blight, and finally packaged for modern burial."⁸ Death with dignity is largely a myth. We tend to wish to die in the style we lived—self-reliant, sophisticated, well groomed, and vibrant. But dying is seldom that accommodating.

Dying is dirty, smelly, unsophisticated, gaunt, and



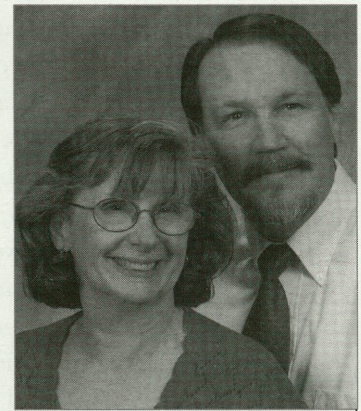
Pastor Roy & Bennie Gee

AU '66

Auburn Gospel Fellowship

"A SAFE PLACE FOR GOD'S GRACE"
10:45 A.M. Sabbath

TWO CONGREGATIONS ONE HOLY CHURCH



Pastor Rick & Nancy Kuykendall

AU '80

First Congregational Church of Auburn

"STRIVING TO BE AN ENLIGHTENED CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY"
10:00 A.M. Sunday

710 AUBURN RAVINE ROAD, AUBURN, CA 95603 • 530.885.9087

"How good and how pleasant it is to live together in unity!"

painful. But more than anything, many times it is lonely. It is lonely because of our inability to acknowledge our own mortality and the paralyzed ability of others to respond to our needs. Our conversation is often, "so, how are you doing," followed by, "oh, not so bad." In essence, we are enablers faking the final exit. We remain incognizant that dying is not a problem to be solved; it is a mystery to be lived.

We know little of *ars moriendi*—the art of dying. A good death is not painless, but meaningful. Perhaps Leo Tolstoy's work, *The Death of Ivan Ilyitch*, still describes our plight. Ivan lay dying on the couch amidst all of the pleasant niceties, which included the usual ecclesiastical "hope" talk. It was a psychological torture of much dignified formality. Ultimately, Ivan wanted to cry out, "Stop your foolish lies." Those gathered around were experts on death and impressive funerals, but they knew little about dying.

Victor Frankl in *Man's Search for Meaning*, maintains that "physical discomfort and deprivation, no matter how extreme or brutal, do not cause suffering. The true root of all suffering is loss of meaning and purpose of life." Friedrich Nietzsche wrote, "He who has a *why* to live, can bear almost any *how*."

Our modern pharmacopoeial minds tend to think only of improved dying through chemistry. But *ars moriendi* is *ars viviendi*; the art of dying is the art of living.⁹ Dying disorders our aseptic fantasies. We will not define death; dying will define us. In dying we face our limits, and the final good night is seldom gentle. Dying gives us the ultimate sense of time.

There is a difference between death with dignity and dying with purposeful equanimity. Dying strips us of our outer dignity while it assays our true veritable inner personage. We need neither sentimentalism nor romantic fantasy. Mortality is ours, and the brevity of beauty will give way to the patient pertinacity of death.¹⁰ It is here where we must humbly meet ourselves. We rob ourselves when we fast-forward through this final legacy.

All dying people go through their own investigative judgment of regret/fulfillment, angst/peace, abandonment/community, embitterment/release, and narcissism/maturity, but the task is most often tra-vailed behind the private door of silence. Is it moral for us to let anyone journey this experience alone? To "die well" one needs to be surrounded by comforters who will journey through the final definitive lessons on meaning and spirituality.

However, we tend not to be a listening community.

Hospice caregivers frequently notice that once a terminal prognosis has been given, family and friends gradually move away from the patient. Our culture does little to prepare us with the skills or compassion to truly coalesce with the dying. The actual death event is more rehearsed; it is more defined. Assisting the physical and emotional needs of the dying demands resources that we may have never developed. We, too, often simply let them go alone. We send flowers, wish pleasantries, and dutifully attend their funeral. But when they really needed us, were we there?

Should we be surprised to find, or justified to judge, those who find no more meaning in life and request modern hemlock pills for "self-deliverance," as Derek Humphry calls them? Are we Kavorkians by default? In retrospect, Oregon's Death with Dignity vote appears to have been more a cry for help than a threat of mass communal suicide. The Master once said, "When I was sick you visited me"; might he have really meant, "and when I was dying you bravely took time to journey with me."

Perhaps it was said best by the dying Morrie Schwartz when on that last Tuesday his shallow voice requested of Mitch one last petition: "hold [me]." And then he added, "[you] touched me, [pause]...here [pointing to his heart]...this is how we say goodbye."¹¹

Notes and References

1. *Portland Oregonian*, Feb. 23, 2005, A1.
2. *Ibid.*, A11.
3. *Ibid.*, June 12, 2003, A1.
4. *Ibid.*, A1.
5. *Ibid.*, Nov. 8, 2003, E1.
6. Policy Book of the Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, entry 1970, revised June 20, 2002.
7. Sherwin B. Nuland, *How We Die* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 255.
8. *Ibid.*, xv.
9. *Ibid.*, 268.
10. Will Durant, *Heroes of History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 82.
11. Mitch Albom, *Tuesdays With Morrie* (New York: Broadway Books, 1997), 184-85.

Scott A. LeMert is assistant to the president of the Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. He presented an earlier version of this article at the Annual Meeting of the Adventist Society for Religious Studies, Atlanta, Georgia, in November 2003.

A Statement of Consensus on Care for the Dying

For people whose lives are guided by the Bible, the reality of death is acknowledged as part of the current human condition, affected by sin (Genesis 2:17; Romans 5; Hebrews 9:27). There is “a time to be born, and a time to die” (Ecclesiastes 3:2). Although eternal life is a gift that is granted to all who accept salvation through Jesus Christ, faithful Christians await the second coming of Jesus for complete realization of their immortality (John 3:36; Romans 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:51–54). While waiting for Jesus to come again, Christians may be called upon to care for the dying and to face personally their own death.

Pain and suffering afflict every human life. Physical, mental, and emotional traumas are universal. However, human suffering has no expiatory or meritorious value. The Bible teaches that no amount or intensity of human suffering can atone for sin. The suffering of Jesus Christ alone is sufficient. Scripture calls Christians not to despair in afflictions, urging them to learn obedience (Hebrews 5:7–8), patience (James 1:2–4), and endurance in tribulations (Romans 5:3). The Bible also testifies to the overcoming power of Jesus Christ

(John 16:33) and teaches that ministry to human suffering is an important Christian duty (Matthew 25:34–40). This was the example and teaching of Jesus (Matthew 9:35; Luke 10:34–36), and this is His will for us (Luke 10:37). Christians look in anticipation to a new day when God will end suffering forever (Revelation 21:4).

Developments in modern medicine have added to the complexity of decisions about care for the dying. In times past, little could be done to extend human life. But the power



of today's medicine to forestall death has generated difficult moral and ethical questions. What constraints does Christian faith place upon the use of such power? When should the goal of postponing the moment of death give way to the goal of alleviating pain at the end of life? Who may appropriately make these decisions? What limits, if any, should Christian love place on actions designed to end human suffering?

It has become common to discuss such questions under the heading of euthanasia. Much confusion exists with regard to this expression. The original and literal meaning of this term was "good death." Now the term is used in two significantly different ways. Often euthanasia refers to "mercy killing," or intentionally taking the life of a patient in order to avoid painful dying or in order to alleviate burdens for a patient's family or society. (This is so-called active euthanasia.) However, euthanasia is also used, inappropriately in the Seventh-day Adventist view, to refer to the withholding or withdrawal of medical interventions that artificially extend human life, thus allowing a person to die naturally. (This is so-called passive euthanasia.) Seventh-day Adventists believe that allowing a patient to die by foregoing medical interventions that only prolong suffering and postpone the moment of death is morally different from actions that have as their primary intention the direct taking of a life.

Seventh-day Adventists seek to address the ethical issues at the end of life in ways that demonstrate their faith in God as the Creator and Redeemer of life and that reveal how God's grace has empowered them for acts of neighbor love. Seventh-day Adventists affirm God's creation of human life, a wonderful gift worthy of being protected and sustained (Genesis 1-2). They also affirm God's wonderful gift of redemption that provides eternal life for those who believe (John 3:15; 17:3). Thus they support the use of modern medicine to extend human life in this world. However, this power should be used in compassionate ways that reveal God's grace by minimizing suffering. Since we have God's promise of eternal life in the earth made new, Christians need not cling anxiously to the last vestiges of life on this earth. Nor is it necessary to accept or offer all possible medical treatments that merely prolong the process of dying.

Because of their commitment to care for the whole person, Seventh-day Adventists are concerned about the physical, emotional, and spiritual care of the dying. To this end, they offer the following biblically based principles:

1) A person who is approaching the end of life, and is capable of understanding, deserves to know the truth about his or her condition, the treatment choices and the possible outcomes. The truth should not be withheld but shared with Christian love and with sensitivity to the patient's per-

HOW TO START AN AAF CHAPTER

Members of the Association of Adventist Forums are invited to form local chapters by following three steps:

1. Convene at least five AAF members and plan some activities. These may be as simple as meeting now and then in homes to discuss a thought-provoking video, article, or book, and they may be as complex as organizing major conferences.
2. Forward to the *Spectrum* office in Roseville, California, the chapter's constitution. Model constitutions for local chapters are available upon request.
3. Forward to the *Spectrum* office in Roseville, California, contact information for the chapter's leaders that can be listed in the association's journal and posted on its Web site.

The purpose of local chapters, each of which is financially and administratively independent, is the same as the AAF and *Spectrum*: "To encourage Seventh-day Adventist participation in the discussion of contemporary issues from a Christian viewpoint." AAF officers are able and willing to assist local chapters.

sonal and cultural circumstances (Ephesians 4:15).

2) God has given human beings freedom of choice and asks them to use their freedom responsibly. Seventh-day Adventists believe that this freedom extends to decisions about medical care. After seeking divine guidance and considering the interests of those affected by the decision (Romans 14:7) as well as medical advice, a person who is capable of deciding should determine whether to accept or reject life-extending medical interventions. Such persons should not be forced to submit to medical treatment that they find unacceptable.

My views are reflected in the few principles the GC adopted: tell the truth, respect choices, alleviate pain, be fair. I have been deeply influenced by the hospice movement to help people die well, but not to kill them. I still think this is the right approach.

—Gerald Winslow, drafter of the GC statement

3) God's plan is for people to be nourished within a family and a faith community. Decisions about human life are best made within the context of healthy family relationships after considering medical advice (Genesis 2:18; Mark 10:6–9; Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 5–6). When a dying person is unable to give consent or express preferences regarding medical intervention, such decisions should be made by someone chosen by the dying person. If no one has been chosen, someone close to the dying person should make the determination. Except in extraordinary circumstances, medical or legal professionals should defer decisions about medical interventions for a dying person to those closest to that individual. Wishes or decisions of the individual are best made in writing and should be in agreement with existing legal requirements.

4) Christian love is practical and responsible (Romans 13:8–10; 1 Corinthians 13; James 1:27; 2:14–17). Such love does not deny faith nor obligate us to offer or to accept medical interventions whose burdens outweigh the probable benefits. For example, when medical care merely preserves bodily functions, without hope of returning a patient to mental awareness, it is futile and may, in good conscience, be withheld or withdrawn. Similarly, life-extending medical treatments may be omitted or stopped if they only add to the patient's suffering or needlessly prolong the process of dying. Any action taken should be in harmony with legal mandates.

5) While Christian love may lead to the withholding

or withdrawing of medical interventions that only increase suffering or prolong dying, Seventh-day Adventists do not practice "mercy killing" or assist in suicide (Genesis 9:5–6; Exodus 20:13; 23:7). They are opposed to active euthanasia, the intentional taking of the life of a suffering or dying person.

6) Christian compassion calls for the alleviation of suffering (Matthew 25:34–40; Luke 10:29–37). In caring for the dying, it is a Christian responsibility to relieve pain and suffering, to the fullest extent possible, not to include active euthanasia. When it is clear that medical

intervention will not cure a patient, the primary goal of care should shift to relief from suffering.

7) The biblical principle of justice prescribes that added care be given the needs of those who are defenseless and dependent (Psalm 82:3–4; Proverbs 24:11–12; Isaiah 1:1–18; Micah 6:8; Luke 1:52–54). Because of their vulnerable condition, special care should be taken to ensure that dying persons are treated with respect for their dignity and without unfair discrimination. Care for the dying should be based on their spiritual and medical needs and their expressed choices rather than on perceptions of their social worthiness (James 2:1–9).

As Seventh-day Adventists seek to apply these principles, they take hope and courage from the fact that God answers the prayers of His children and is able to work miraculously for their well-being (Psalm 103:1–5; James 5:13–16). Following Jesus' example, they also pray to accept the will of God in all things (Matthew 26:39). They are confident that they can call on God's power to aid them in caring for the physical and spiritual needs of suffering and dying individuals. They know that the grace of God is sufficient to enable them to endure adversity (Psalm 50:14–15). They believe that eternal life for all who have faith in Jesus is secure in the triumph of God's love.

This consensus statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee at the Annual Council session in Silver Spring, Maryland, October 9, 1992.

How Does God View Suicide?

By *Becky Wang Cheng*

Obviously the answer to the question in the title is “I don’t know,” but neither does anyone else. The Bible is silent on the subject, but this is a question I’ve pondered increasingly in my medical practice.

The first time I wrestled with the question was in my late twenties. I will never forget how the joy of being a young wife and mother, walking my two-year-old son to Sabbath School on a sunny February morning, suddenly turned into horror, shock, and guilt when the teacher stepped out to tell me that Sharon (not her real name), my medical school classmate, roommate, and maid of honor, had been found dead from an overdose the night before. Crazy people take their lives, but not bright young women who love God and are my friends!

Sharon had visited me just before Christmas. I could still see her throwing back her head, her brown hair flying, all of us laughing as we shared memories of medical school, and now she was gone forever? Why didn’t she call me? Why now—a year away from starting her career? I studied her picture—in which

she held my second son and grinned at the camera—searching for clues...that still aren’t there.

Sharon probably suffered from clinical depression, but to this day I don’t know if she ever got professional help. Among people in general, but especially Christians, mental illness carries such a stigma of shame. We were best friends, so I knew she felt bad about being single, and she was never sure she could please her parents or even live up to her own internal, unreachable standards.

Her death provoked a host of unanswerable questions. What was God thinking when he watched Sharon, bone tired and alone in her apartment after a long day during which a male surgeon had apparently yelled at her? What was Sharon thinking when she swallowed a handful of antidepressant pills before



laying down to sleep and never awaken?

Suicide engenders questions asked one after another, which have been pondered since antiquity without satisfactory or comforting resolution. The sixth commandment is often used as a prohibition against suicide, but is suicide truly self-murder or an often-irrational, impulsive act of despair? If God can forgive the most heinous crimes of murder, why should suicide be unforgivable?

Does God's grace end at death? What role does motive play in determining God's view? If the person sincerely considers an act of self-sacrifice—"if I'm out of the picture, my children won't have to see me slowly die from this degenerative disease"—does God view the death with compassion rather than condemnation?

How important are genetics in predisposition to suicide—the visiting of the sins (genes?) of the fathers upon the children for generations (Exod. 20:5)? Just last week, I saw a patient whose father had hanged himself at age eighty, whose forty-year-old brother had jumped into Niagara Falls, whose younger brother had shot himself in his thirties. Is she "predestined" to be suicidal, at worst, or depressed, at best? If suicide is the end result of a long mental illness, such as paranoid schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major recurrent depression, is it any different from death from heart disease or cancer?

The Bible includes only three recorded suicides, all of which involved betrayal. Judas hanging himself is the most famous, and the only New Testament example. Two lesser known suicides are Saul in his last battle, and Ahithophel, David's adviser, who joined forces with Absalom. Although suicide is not explicitly forbidden in Scripture, Karl Barth points to these as examples of "those who refuse God's grace and try to exist as their own lords and masters," thus echoing St. Augustine's resounding condemnation of suicide.¹

In a very intriguing, profoundly comforting statement, Barth goes on to suggest that in some cases suicide might be a response to faith in God!



Who can say that it is absolutely impossible for the *gracious God Himself to help a man in affliction by telling him to take this way out?* In some cases, perhaps a man can and must choose and do this in the freedom given him by God and not therefore in false sovereignty, in despair at the futility of his existence, or in final, supreme and masterful self-assertion, but in obedience.² (emphasis supplied)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer asserts that suicide is wrong because it stems from "a sin of lack of faith," but he also concedes that God is the ultimate judge. "But who would venture to say that God's grace and mercy cannot embrace and sustain even a man's failure to resist this hardest of all temptations?"³

For the thief on the cross, the last moments of life determined his destiny for eternity. Here is where I find God's view of humans in our time of extremity. Jesus looked at him with full forgiveness and acceptance, and his words of hope were the last words the man heard (Luke 23:42, 43).

So Albert, Mary, Harold, Bernie, Win, Rita, Judy, Yvonne, and other grieving ones, I believe God was present with your loved ones as he was with Sharon in her apartment that cold Michigan night, loving, forgiving, and whispering words of comfort to her as she took her last breath.

Notes and References

1. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1957-69), 4.4: 409.
2. *Ibid.*, 411.
3. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, ed. Eberhard Bethge, trans. Neville Horton Smith (New York: Macmillan, 1955): 168, 172.

Becky Wang Cheng practices medicine in St. Helena, California.



Keeping Human Life Human

By Jack W. Provonsha

A premature infant girl was delivered to Phyllis Obernauer in the back seat of the family car en route to the hospital. Once in the hospital, Mrs. Obernauer was perplexed because the hospital staff and even her obstetrician seemed to avoid her. Finally came the crushing news: the infant had mongolism,¹ with a major cardiac abnormality and an intestinal obstruction. The obstruction required immediate surgical intervention if the little girl were to survive. When informed of the condition, the mother looked ahead to the kind of life that lay before this infant and made a decision she didn't think herself capable of making: "Let the baby die."

The hospital staff was horrified by the mother's attitude, and her wish was not carried out. The local bureau of children's services obtained a court order and forced the intestinal surgery. Two months later, Mrs. Obernauer was presented with a live, still imperfect child and a medical and surgical bill for \$4,000. She took the infant home with great reluctance. Months later, after being tempted on several occasions to end the child's life, she was still saying, "If there were a place where I could take this child today and she would be put to sleep permanently, I would do it."²

At Johns Hopkins University Hospital in Baltimore, an almost identical birth occurred. Again, the parents refused surgery. This time,

however, no court order was obtained. For fifteen days the infant survived. Its bassinet, on which hung the sign "nothing by mouth," was placed in a darkened room. Dehydration finally killed the child during a period of agony for parents, doctors, and nurses.

Which solution was the correct one?

It is one of the ironies of our times that a wondrous technology has thrust upon us all kinds of new questions, or raised old questions in a variety of new ways at a time of diminished capacity to answer them. For many, the old certainties have disappeared—certainties about the nature of right and wrong—along with the social institutions (the family and the church) by which they were preserved and passed along

from generation to generation. Never has man been faced with such difficult questions, yet possessing so little expertise by which to wrestle with them.

I do not propose in this brief presentation to outline what all of these questions are, nor to suggest, in any detail, methods for dealing with them. I have chosen, rather, to concentrate on one issue that seems to be escaping most bioethicists who are struggling with such matters these days.

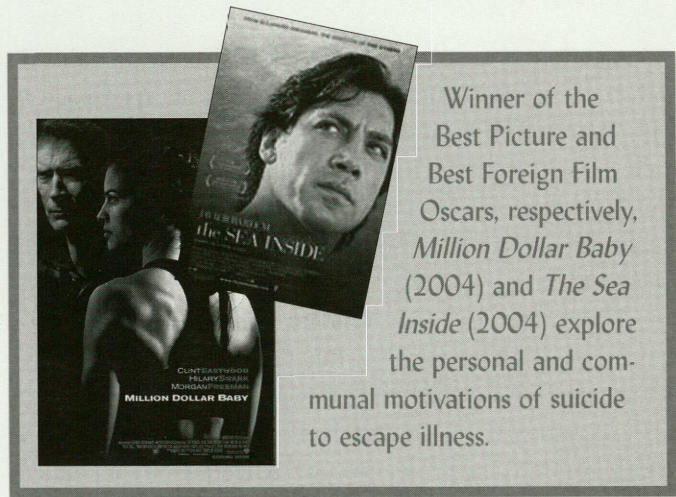
First I should point out that bioethicists display great alacrity in discovering the questions. Across the land, at meetings where such matters are considered, everyone knows what are the dilemmas with which we are faced. But when it comes to finding answers, there is a remarkable level of disarray. One reason for this is that, although all agree that we are in difficulty (even agree somewhat as to the nature of the difficulty), there is little agreement on that for which we are really looking when we seek a way out of the difficulty. What is missing, in short, is a guiding norm, or value ideal, in relation to which the terms like right and wrong are meaningful.

This is surprising—given the fact of our common cultural heritage. When pushed, men usually discover an underlying common system of values (at least in the Western world) that we all owe to our common Judeo-Christian background, and continue to owe even if not every one of us is willing to pay his debts.

In such a culture, if it is true to itself, the highest place (on a scale of earthly things we value) is given to personal human existence. Nothing in all of God's earth is more important. In such a setting, all rules, customs, practices, statutes, or whatever, become valid and enduring precisely to the extent that they create, support, and enhance this highest value. *Moral rules, in short, serve the purpose of keeping human life human.* When Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath," he stated the case for all of the rules governing human behavior.

To say this is to say nothing very new or astonishing. And it is to say something regarding which there is an astonishing degree of unanimity whether one conceives of the rules as divine revelations given to guide man toward fulfillment of the Creator's intention for him (as I do), or in terms of the atheistic evolutionist's observations concerning what behavior patterns foster the survival and development of genus Homo. That unanimity derives, I repeat, from our common value heritage.

When there is confusion, disagreement usually has to do with what the term "human" means in the expres-



sion "keeping human life human." It is at this point that those who consciously acknowledge their debt to their heritage will differ most sharply from those who do not. I submit that this is a point of some consequence.

In the new technology, the questions themselves arise from the premises of our common heritage. Therefore, the best possibility of dealing with them must be found within the context of these premises. Since these are essentially Judeo-Christian questions, they therefore require Judeo-Christian (which is to say biblically based) answers.

How does one define *human* as over against merely animal in such a context?

The Bible speaks of man's having been created in God's image as the unique quality of God's creation. Ellen White captures the significance of this difference in the following words (thus incidentally stating the traditional case for the Judeo-Christian or biblical world view). "Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do." Then she goes on to outline the goal of created beings as that of developing their powers as "thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought...masters and not slaves of circumstances."³

Inanimate things can be acted upon. Subhuman plant and animal life can be acted upon, and can react. Man shares with inanimate nature the capacity to be acted upon, and with subhuman life the additional capacity to react. But man shares only with God the power to act, to create, to initiate actions he did not have to initiate. Only man has this freedom, and thus only man of all earthly creatures can be held accountable, that is, can be held responsible for his actions. It is



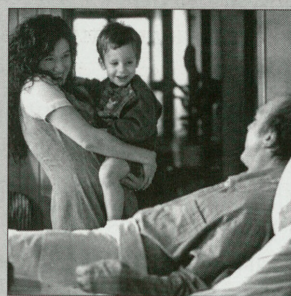
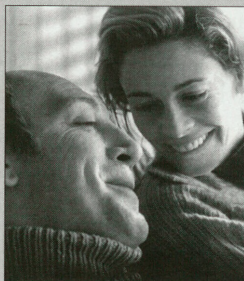
this freedom that sets man apart from lesser animals and by definition renders him human. It is this capacity which in fact underlies the highest of all his abilities—that described by the love commandment. Such freedom involves a certain level of self-consciousness, a time sense, the ability to reason abstractly, and above all the ability to select between live options.

If through disease or accident this volitional capacity is lost, man has ceased to be functionally human—in which case life's value diminishes proportionately. This altered value greatly conditions the amount of effort man would put into life preservation, particularly if that effort should logically better be expended elsewhere. For example, in competition for existence—and all that it implies both qualitatively and quantitatively—it makes moral nonsense to allow what is subhuman to take priority over human existence, or to compete with humanity in such a manner as to deprive it. If it came to such a choice, it would not be morally right to drain off technical or financial resources from children with human potential so as to satisfy the needs of functionally subhuman children. Fortunately this choice does not often face us.

It is even possible to develop a system of relative values giving guidance to our priorities in a situation of competing claims. Such a system would range upward from “thing” values at the bottom of the scale to personal values at the top, the ladder rungs in between arranged in the order of their proximity to, or resemblance to, the highest value—human personal life.

In competition, what was higher on such a scale would take priority over the lower. A “living thing,” or even a potential human, would take a place subordinate to the actual human—as in the case of a fetus in competition with its mother's “human” existence. (Notice, I said not just “existence,” or “life,” but human existence—in the sense of my earlier definition of human.) An abortion becomes justifiable in the presence of a real threat to a relative quality of the mother's life—not merely to life itself. In a choice between two actual persons competing

Directed by Alejandro Amenábar, *The Sea Inside*, is about a man, paralyzed from the neck down in a swimming accident, who fought the Spanish government for thirty years to win the legal right to commit suicide.



Javier Bardem spends almost all of *The Sea Inside* in bed surrounded by friends, family, and an activist who work together to expand the conversation about suicide from one of mere human right to human meaning.

for the same resources—for example, a dialysis machine—qualitative factors (such as “what kind of life?” “how high up on the scale?”) must enter into the equation.

Making judgments involving the value of human life as over against subhuman existence may be facilitated in other ways. It makes moral nonsense, I repeat, to waste resources that are required elsewhere to prolong meaningless existence. If the human quality of existence has disappeared, heroics become inappropriate. There comes a time when it is morally necessary and right to “pull the plug” on empty “tissue survival.”

There remain questions, of course. Can a mere man (even one with an M.D. degree) always be sure that the term “meaningless” applies—and if so, precisely when? And of course there are times when this is in doubt. Ought man to play God? The fact is that there are times when he must (without developing illusions, it is to be hoped). At times one has to make such judgments whether he wishes to or not. And he must make use of all the newer technical aids (such as electroencephalography and others) when he makes judgments.

So far, we've probably said nothing novel or startling. But there is one element (missing in some discussions of this subject) that we might do well to consider. Let me illustrate from a recent newspaper headline: “Triple Transplant Donor-Slaying Dilemma.” The case involved the transplant of the still-beating heart of a victim of a shooting. The legal question concerned who actually killed the donor, the gunman, or the transplant surgeons? In the latter case, of course, the gunman could not be charged with murder (and presumably the doctors could).

This was not the first time a donor's heart was taken while it was still pulsating (transplant people have coined a phrase “pulsatile cadaver”), and of course technically the practice has much logic going for it. If the brain is dead (as tests indicated in the case above), who cares overmuch that other organs are still functioning? (It is probable that the transplant surgeon cares that they are still functioning.)

Who cares? I'm going to suggest that perhaps it should be the concern of all of us. Cerebral death alone cannot constitute, at least at present, the sole criterion of death—especially if we define cerebral in functional terms. Such death, at least in human terms, could occur in intrauterine and presumably “genetic” life. Thus, transplant surgeons could as easily use the hearts of institutionalized mental defectives as those of victims of gunmen. Nuremberg clearly pointed out the dangers down that road.

Donor subjects must not only *be* functionally dead (as far as their brains are concerned)—they must *mean* dead in terms of what the larger community considers evidence of death. Grandma who has suffered her final stroke and lies in an irreversible coma still means Grandma to her community. And until the changes can be rung on that meaning—that is, until Grandma comes to mean corpse—she must be granted what is due her status. And she will *mean* dead only when what it takes to provide that meaning has occurred—that is, when conventional signs of life have ceased and usually have been declared so by responsible people.

When we say something *means* something, we are referring to its symbolic value. And this is the chief point of my remarks. One of man's features that differentiates him from other animals is his capacity for utilizing symbols. This is the basis for his speech, abstract reasoning, and complex social organization. Symbols function for communication, but they also modify or reinforce attitudes. How one relates to the thing that means something else, the symbol, conditions his relation to the thing symbolized.

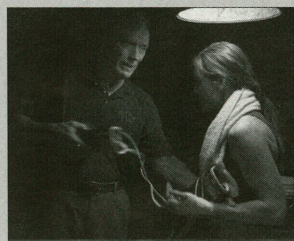
In terms of our present discussion, how one relates to what means human will condition in important ways one's attitudes and sensitivities toward what is in fact human. Those institutionalized mental defectives *mean* human—not merely animal—even if in fact functionally they are not! Therefore we cannot exploit them as living organ banks, without endangering a crucial quality of our civilization, indeed our very humanity. The same must be said for Grandma with her cardiovascular accident—and, I might add, for unborn fetuses. If we are to protect our human sensitivities, we must be prepared also to treat with respect those symbolic individuals who are associated with the concept of humanity, but within the limits of a system of values that keeps human life human.

On that ladder scale of values ranging from inanimate things up to human persons, “symbolic humans,” I think, should be placed somewhere just below potential

humans. But again, they should not be permitted to take priority over actual humans in competition for our limited resources. Mainly what symbolic humans have a right to expect from us is whatever is required to keep our human sensitivities intact. Usually that will not involve costly and elaborate heroics—rather, simple acts of care and compassion such as keep us human as well as provide for their ease.

The naturalist Edwin Way Teale makes an intriguing statement: “It is those who have compassion for all life who will best safeguard the life of man. Those who become aroused only when man is endangered become aroused too late.”

It seems to me that this statement could also be made to read, “It is those who have compassion for what symbolizes human life who will best safeguard the actual life of man.” For surely it is the case that if we lose such compassion, all of those fancy gadgets and devices (and the things they can do that have thrust the new questions upon us) will have become wasted effort. It will all simply cease to be worth the doing in the short as well as the long run.



Directed by Clint Eastwood, *Million Dollar Baby* slips past the typical underdog Hollywood plotting and finds a friendship that lies deepest at death.

Notes and References

1. Down syndrome, the name chosen to replace the descriptive term *mongolism*, is now the official professional designation used for this disorder.
2. Paul Wilkes, “When do we have the right to die?” *Life* 72 (1):48, 52 (January 12, 1972).
3. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association 1952), pp. 17, 18.

Jack W. Provonsha was professor of philosophy of religion and Christian ethics at Loma Linda University. He presented this address at the 1974 Loma Linda University School of Medicine Alumni Postgraduate Convention and *Spectrum* originally published it in the summer/autumn issue of that same year.



Suicide: The Common Tragedy

By Bruce Anderson

I need to forgive him. I have to forgive him.
But how much I have missed him. How much his widowed wife misses him.
How much his fourteen-year-old son, who has
entered the most God-awful teenage rebellion without him, misses him.
I called [radio station] KGO about the need for a suicide barrier on the
Golden Gate Bridge. What is the cost-effectiveness of saving one person?
Where is the price point for one human life?
How much I do miss him.

These are the comments of the forty-four-year-old businesswoman who sits in front of me. Although the purpose of our quarterly visit is to reassess her current functioning and review and prescribe her antidepressant medicine, her thoughts are on the incomprehensible decision of her pastor and friend of fifteen years to end his life in November 2004. Never suicidal herself, she has been successfully treated; her major depression is in remission. Our infrequent visits over the years are described as chemotherapy management.

However, our visits involve much more than writing a prescription; they also include brief reviews of her journey to date and changes in her professional life, and an update on the progress of her son's undergraduate education. But the painful residuals of suicide are the real theme of this visit.

Suicide is the old enemy, the final fatal solution to many treatable illnesses, the destroyer of families, of children's hopes and security, and of everything. It is frequently

avoided, but never vanquished.

The topic of suicide carries personal meaning for me. It is said that there are two kinds of psychiatrists: those who have already lost a patient to suicide and those who will do so sometime in the future. Belonging to the former group, I recall the statistic that over the course of a career a psychiatrist can expect at least one suicide death among his patients. The risk is greater if one chooses to care for seriously ill and hospitalized people.



I encounter the possibility of suicide every working day—almost every working hour. My job as a psychiatric physician, like every physician, includes keeping my patients alive and treating the diseases that threaten to destroy them. Questions about suicide are part of the interview I give every new patient. Though the question may be asked in different ways, the intent is always the same: to assess the risk of self-harm in a depressed person and to use every means possible to do the impossible—to prevent suicide.

The philosopher Albert Camus once said, “Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to the fundamental problem of philosophy.” For the depressed person in particular, making such a judgment rationally may be beyond reach.

The case of Ingrid S. is a painful personal reminder of suicide’s human cost, represented by a piece of art she gave to me more than thirty years ago. It is a watercolor painting of a flower she created by layering strokes of paint, and the effect is hauntingly beautiful.

Ingrid was a follower of Swiss mystic Rudolph Steiner, a nineteenth-century philosopher and the founder of Anthroposophy. During Holy Week, Ingrid became psychotically depressed and delusional with religious themes. She improved under my care, but later killed her-

self by hanging. Looking at this painting, I recall the enormous pain caused by this common tragedy.

Unfortunately, suicides are common events. About thirty thousand people die at their own hand each year in the United States, one every seventeen minutes. Every day eighty-six Americans take their own lives. Ninety-five percent of these people have diagnosable mental illnesses. For every successful suicide, twenty-three are attempted. The ratio of attempts to completed suicides is 200 to 1 among female adolescents; and 4 to 1 among men and women over the age of 65. About 500,000 Americans annually require emergency room treatment for attempted suicides.

Suicide is the ninth leading cause of death across all age groups in the United States. It is the third leading cause among young Americans fifteen to twenty-four, after accidents and homicides, and the second leading cause of death among college students. Suicides are much more common than homicides, which number about twenty thousand in the United States each year.

During the Vietnam War years (1961–73), almost twice as many Americans died from suicide (101,732) as from the war (54,708). Suicide occurs mainly among the depressed. These include persons with major depression and depressed bipolar disorder, and schizophrenic



patients with depression (schizoaffective disorder). Suicide is much more common among persons who have the added risk factors of alcohol or chemical abuse.

An awareness of demographic factors that affect suicide rates can heighten sensitivity to risk among certain segments of the population. These include age, gender, race, marital and occupational status, and physical health. One can summarize most of the known demographic risk factors by noting that being an older, white, divorced, depressed alcoholic male who is alone, ill, isolated, and with a prior history of suicide attempts places that person at greatest risk.

Suicide rates increase with age. Although the total in the United States is twelve per one hundred thousand, in men over sixty-five the rate is forty per one hundred thousand. In Caucasian men eighty-five and older, the rate is fifty per one hundred thousand. Among the young, suicide rates have risen threefold over the last fifty years. From 1980 to 1986, they rose 14 percent among persons aged fifteen to nineteen, and 100 percent among ten- to fourteen-year-olds.

Among Americans fifteen to nineteen, firearms have accounted for 96 percent of the increase since 1980. Also due largely to firearms, the rate of suicide among African American males in the United States increased 105 percent during the same period.

Men are four times more likely than women to kill themselves. Women, among whom depression is more common, are three to four times more likely than men to attempt suicide, but their attempts are less lethal. Suicidal men are more likely to be violent and use firearms.

This is changing, however; at present, 55–60 percent of all suicide deaths involve firearms. Sixty-six percent of suicides occur among white males. Suicide rates of Caucasians exceed those of Native Americans, which exceed those of African Americans, which exceed those of Hispanics, which exceed those of Asian Americans.

Suicide rates are higher for the unmarried. The rate for divorced men is sixty-nine per one hundred thousand, almost six times greater than for men who have not divorced. Although unemployment increases risk, risk is also greater for professionals, those of higher social status, and those living alone or in social isolation. Physical illness, especially chronic nonfatal and painful illness, also increases risk.

Suicide is common among those infected with HIV. In an epidemiological study of New York City residents, the suicide rate for men with AIDS was shown to be 680 per 100,000, 36 times higher than for men without AIDS.

Mental illnesses, especially depressive illnesses, are associated with high rates of suicide. In mood disorders such as major depression and bipolar depression, 15 percent or more

die from suicide. Among persons with schizophrenia, 10 percent do. At least 7 percent of people suffering from anxiety and personality disorders die from suicide. Chemical dependency increases the risk of suicide fivefold.

Prior suicide attempts increase the risk thirty-eight fold. Among those who try, 10–15 percent eventually succeed. More attempts at suicide raise the likelihood of completion. A family history of depression, chemical dependency, or suicidal behavior increases the risk, as well.

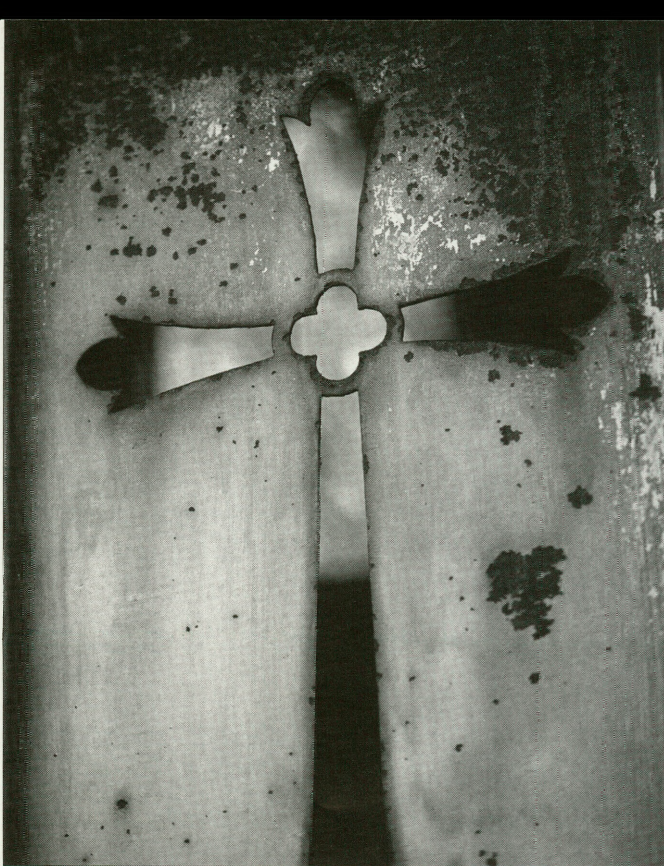
Geography and culture play an influential role in attitudes toward suicide, and in methods and frequency. For example Catholic countries such as Italy, Spain, and Ireland have lower suicide rates than countries such as Japan, Scandinavia, and Germany. Sociologists believe that Catholic cultures have more cohesive societies than Protestant or Jewish ones, which may contribute to lower rates of suicide.

In China, suicide is the fifth leading cause of death, and the leading cause of death in people aged fifteen to thirty-four. In China, too, the rate of suicide is 25 percent higher for women than for men. Chinese women who take their own lives are mainly young and live in rural areas. Fifty-eight percent of these suicides come from ingestion of pesticides, which are freely available. Many of these are thought to be impulsive actions that follow interpersonal conflicts.

Opinions of the ancient Greeks and Romans stand in sharp contrast to the Christian view that the body is the temple of God, and suicide a sin against him. Socrates was honored for drinking hemlock, heroically choosing death rather than exile in submission to a tyrannical democratic majority. Famous Romans such as Cassius, Brutus, and Cato took their own lives for similar reasons. Stoic philosophers believed in the right of individuals to choose the time and means of their own deaths.

Feudal Japanese believed *hara-kiri* was honorable and sometimes heroic. They considered it desirable for a condemned samurai. The term *hara-kiri* literally means stomach cut. Those who committed it did so by plunging a sword into their abdomens below the umbilicus (the *hara* or one-point), then cutting transversely, lacerating the bowel and great vessels. A second finished the process, assisting with another sword cut, then honorably removing the victim's head.

Among the most revered persons in Japanese history are the forty-seven *ronin* who, on the morning of February 4, 1703, committed *hara-kiri*, or *seppuku*, as a group after



they avenged the death of their lord, or *daimyo*, Lord Asano. Lord Asano had committed a grave offense by drawing his sword in the palace of the shogun and attacking his enemy, Lord Kito, who had insulted him. Lord Asano was condemned to the ritual *hara-kiri* death. His samurai thus became *ronin*, or samurai without a lord.

Pretending to be dissolute and shiftless vagrants, these ronin planned the death of their lord's enemy for months and carried out their plans on the snowy night of December 15, 1702. Japanese throughout the country admired these ronin for what they considered a noble action, for it avenged the spirit of their lord and allowed him to rest in peace.

Nevertheless, all forty-seven ronin were guilty of a crime. In his wisdom, the shogun granted them the honor of death by *seppuku*. The conduct of the ronin exemplified the code of *bushido* and galvanized the nation. Even today they are considered legendary heroes and celebrated in Japanese kabuki opera. In the temple of Sengakuji in Tokyo (Edo), forty-seven stones still honor them.

Suicide has remained a feature of Japanese society in more modern times. In 1936, at least six hundred people jumped to their deaths into the crater of Mount Mihara on the island of Oshima. As recently as 1970, novelist and playwright Mishima Yukio committed *hara-kiri* after failing to gain support from the military to change the Japanese constitution and restore power to the emperor.

Lest Americans consider themselves more logical, remember that the Golden Gate Bridge has claimed an estimated thirteen hundred lives since it opened in May 1937.

Although suicide prevention is a matter of special concern among mental health and medical professionals, it is also a major public health problem that demands attention from nonprofessionals. The following seven guidelines will increase awareness of life-saving interventions, which can be significant for anyone with a family member who suffers from depression, and for others who themselves suffer from the common scourge of depressive illness.

1. Don't overlook or ignore depression. Most suicides occur among depressed people. Most depressions are undertreated, if they are treated at all. It is important to continue long-term treatment in patients with depression or bipolar disease. Few people in the general public are aware that depression is usually a recurring and sometimes chronic condition.

For major depression, treatment should continue for at least one year. Among people with severe or recurring depression, treatment should go on indefinitely. Acutely suicidal patients should be referred for immediate assessment, and usually require hospitalization. Remember that untreated depression carries a mortality rate as high as 15 percent.

2. Be very reluctant to discontinue use of lithium (in bipolar patients). In cases where lithium must be stopped, do so gradually. Lithium has a specific anti-suicidal benefit. In a review of twenty-two studies, the pooled risk of suicide in unipolar and bipolar patients fell 89 percent among patients who received lithium maintenance, in comparison to those who did not.

In a study of two hundred bipolar patients, of whom half decided not to continue use of lithium, suicidal behavior increased twenty-fold within six to twelve months. With lithium, suicide attempts in bipolar patients fell tenfold, though they still remained two times higher than those of the general population.

3. Don't be afraid to ask about suicidal thinking. Physicians and mental health professionals should ask specific questions such as, "Have you ever felt suicidal? Have you ever seriously considered suicide?"



How close have you come? Have you ever tried to harm yourself? (Assume they have.) What did you do? What other means have you considered?"

4. Pay special attention to people with histories of suicidal acts. Ask about any history of violence or impulsive behavior. In addition to known demographic factors, consider the following acute risk factors for suicide: (a) severe anxiety, (b) global insomnia (difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, and awakening early in the morning), (c) psychosis with delusions of poverty or doom, (d) hallucinations with commands or instructions to commit suicide, and (e) recent alcohol use.
5. Listen for expressions of hopelessness, desperation, and loss. These are common themes of the suicidal person, who typically sees suicide as the only solution to an intolerable existence. Suicidal persons invariably have a sense of loss that they feel deeply—whether or not this sense may seem reasonable to others. This loss may be interpersonal, financial, or health related.
6. Pay attention to your own attitudes and prejudices. Consider your own reactions toward suicidal people. It is common for medical personnel and others to feel disdain for unsuccessful suicide attempts. Somehow, like the ancient Japanese, we tend to admire the sincerely committed suicide effort. Depressed patients who have tried to harm themselves sometimes make the comment "I can't even do this right." Rather than agree with them, let us celebrate life-saving cowardice and "failure."
7. Never forget to consider those things that keep people living. Religious values may play an important role in the decision to stay alive. The existence of children is often a deterrent to suicide, especially the presence of dependent children. A parent may think "I could not do that to them." Asking a woman, "Would you kill your children's mother?" may provoke thoughtful reconsideration of suicidal intentions. I sometimes ask patients, "What do you think has kept you alive the past few years?" in an effort to heighten awareness of reasons to preserve life.

Although there is no substitute for proper psychiatric and psychological treatment, the courage and hope of ill people can be an inspiring antidote to depression and fear. My wife and I recently spent a day with a dear friend who suffers from cancer and the effects of cancer

treatment. She tired easily. She suffered painful nerve injury as a result of her chemotherapy. She covered baldness with a variety of scarves and hats.

However, her comments were as pointed and accurate as ever. She still suffered no fools. She zestfully lived each moment given her, making the barest concessions to her disease. She possessed the greatest confidence in her surgeon and oncologist, but had no magical expectations of their powers. She was not depressed.

It seemed that the awareness of her illness and its consequences sharpened her determination to live every moment, to treasure her friends and family and every beautiful thing that life can offer.

The frequency of self-murder is a challenge not only to the healing professions, but also to a culture rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition. In the Christian view, life is a gift from God, and the value of every human life is measured in the priceless blood of Jesus Christ. Christians believe that God was willing to empty the riches of heaven to save one individual.

American individualism complicates matters, valuing personal autonomy, political and economic freedom, and individual opportunity and achievement. This same individualism in a secularized culture has led some to view suicide as a rational choice, the right of a person to choose death over life with physical or mental pain. These views are reflected in the Oregon assisted-suicide legislation, which asserts the right of individuals to receive physician assistance in carrying out the choice to end one's life.

However, I would argue that legally enshrining a new right to doctor-assisted suicide is not a solution. We must advocate both modern pain treatment and effective treatment of mental illnesses, especially depression, which is causal in the vast majority of suicides.

There is already evidence that wider use of new and safer antidepressants has decreased suicide rates in the United States. However, it remains a tragic and shameful fact that most suicides occur in depressed people who are untreated at the time of their death.

Suicide is usually not a calm, rational decision about the value of one's life. Rather, it is a decision often made by persons whose thinking is so impaired by illness that they are rendered incapable of logical decision making.

Bruce Anderson practices psychiatry in St. Helena, California.

Louie: A Homily

By Louis Venden

My name is Louis, too. I went by “Louie” the first thirty years of my life, then more recently I have been “Lou.” You see, the one we’ve come to remember and honor got his name because of mine; because of our treasured ties to his parents.

That’s very special. It means a great deal to me. That’s part of why I’m here. Join me in thinking a bit about the reasons we’ve come together today.

In many ways, we’re a very diverse group, thinking of things such as age, background, experience. We come from different religious faith perspectives.

There are those who come perhaps find-

ing little or no meaning in God talk or traditional religion. There may be others who are searching and wondering. But with all of our diversity, we come together because of one special person. We’re drawn here by Louie; by one we’ve known, loved, and lost—for now.

I’m reminded of those words by Emily Dickinson:

The Bustle in a House
The Morning after Death
Is solemnest of industries
Enacted upon Earth—

The Sweeping up the Heart
And putting Love away
We shall not want to use again
Until Eternity



We can say we've come because of family ties. Literally, of course, but then in an extended sense. In one way or another we're all part of Louie's family.

We're here to acknowledge how fragile we are. The song we've just heard is right.

On and on the rain will fall
Like tears from a star.
On and on the rain will say
How fragile we are.

Another part of why we've come is because of our fragileness. We need one another. We need to believe in each other, to value one another in all the diversity that we represent. To value ourselves and out of our gathering to be more thoughtful and accepting of each other. And to make the world a better place because of our common bond with Louie.

We've come to bear one another's burdens. We've come to share tears and to share memories. Each one of us in one way or another has a personal untarnished treasure that has Louie in the center. We come remembering his wonderful creativity, his commitments, idealism, and honesty; his wanting to be "real."

We come perhaps needing to let go of conclusions and of judgments, to forgive. To forgive Louie for not meeting, not living up to our expectations—what we might have thought or hoped he would be and do.

We wouldn't really want him back to face the darkness and the pain that meant for him life could not go on. We'd rather have him be at rest. We need to remember that all of us are broken and our failures simply have different names and take different forms. The good news is that God in Christ has forgiven us and so we can be forgiving and accepting of one another. We can let go of judging—of judging Louie, a beloved child of God.

And we need to forgive ourselves. That's immensely important, too. We may remember little signals that we wish we had followed up on. There may be the torture of "what if" and "if only" kind of regrets. Together we can help one another let go of blaming ourselves or someone else.

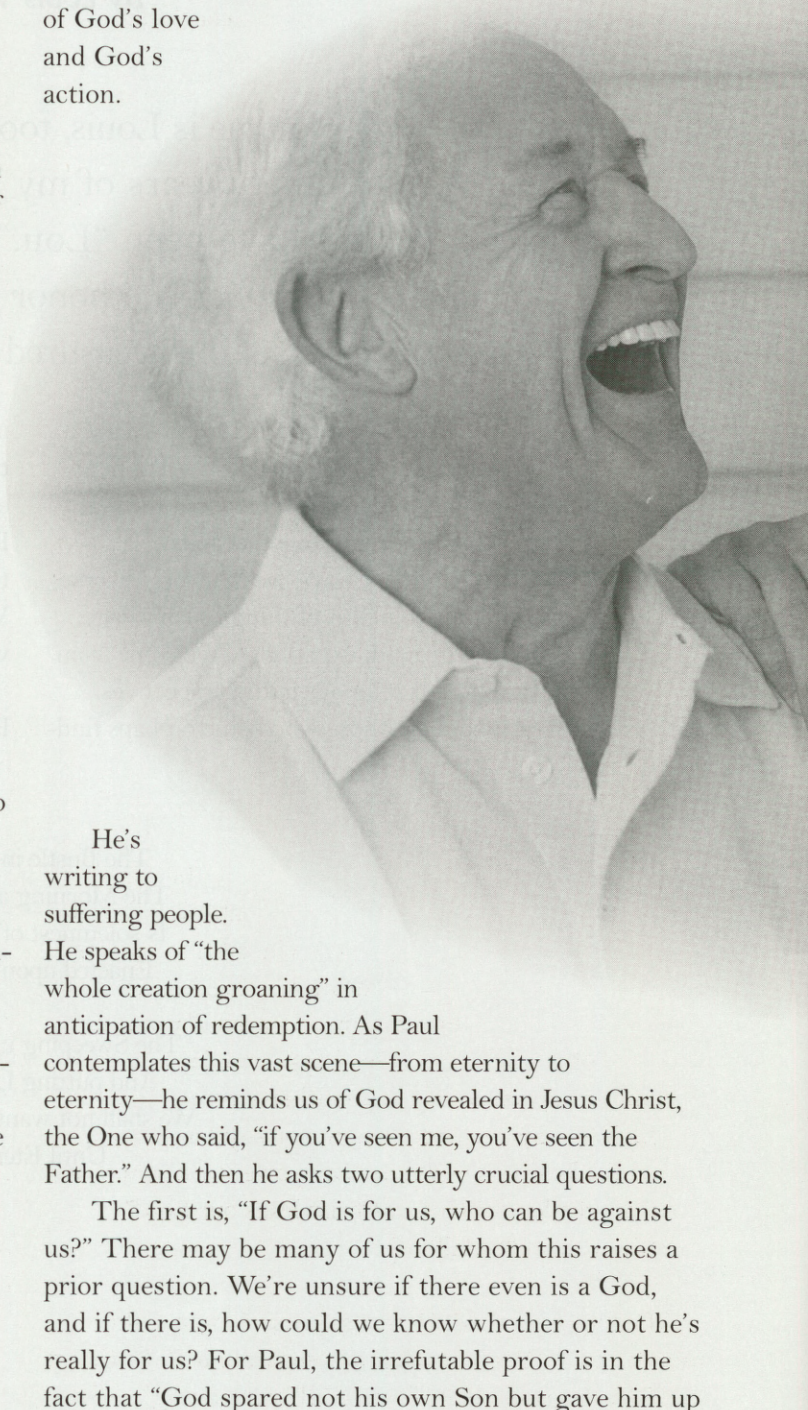
Many of us have come looking for help from beyond ourselves; help from the One the Apostle Paul calls "the Father of mercies; the God of all comfort." Help from the One we see with tears in his eyes at his

friend's grave in the little town of Bethany. The One of whom it was said he would be "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

In his letter to people in the city of Rome, Paul highlights the wonder and glory of the good news he's proclaimed. He wants us to get the big picture—an immense picture. He takes us into God's purpose and plan from an eternity past to an eternity future. And he calls us to place our suffering and our grief in the context of God's love and God's action.

He's writing to suffering people. He speaks of "the whole creation groaning" in anticipation of redemption. As Paul contemplates this vast scene—from eternity to eternity—he reminds us of God revealed in Jesus Christ, the One who said, "if you've seen me, you've seen the Father." And then he asks two utterly crucial questions.

The first is, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" There may be many of us for whom this raises a prior question. We're unsure if there even is a God, and if there is, how could we know whether or not he's really for us? For Paul, the irrefutable proof is in the fact that "God spared not his own Son but gave him up



for us all.” Paul is pointing to Calvary’s cross. That’s how far God has gone to prove his love. You can count on it! He is for us!

But another urgent question remains. “Who (or what) can separate us from the love of Christ?” Paul lists just about every disaster you can think of—powers, forces, events that could make you wonder—perhaps leading us to conclude that we’ve been cut off, abandoned. Then over against this dark picture he proclaims his personal conclusion:

“I have become absolutely convinced that neither death nor life, neither messenger of Heaven nor monarch of earth, neither what happens today nor what might happen tomorrow, neither a power from on high nor a power from below, nor anything else in all God’s whole world has any power to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38–39 Phillips).

Did you get that? Here’s his answer to question number two: “Who or what can separate us?” Nothing! Can we grasp that word in all its meaning? Take it

deep within our minds and hearts? This could be a very tough challenge. There’s tragic confusion and distortion in ideas that our place with God—God’s love for us—is somehow, in some way, conditioned upon how well we do; that some habit, thought, or action on our part will alienate God. But the text says “nothing” can do that. Do we believe this deep inside?

Is it true, as someone has put it, “there is nothing that you can do that will make God love you more, and there is nothing we can do that will make him love us less”? Isn’t Paul’s answer, “Absolutely”?

If we take the “nothing” of Paul’s answer to heart we can be certain that God loves Louie with a present and eternal love, no matter what. God cares and is about his work of caring in our lives and in our world—no matter what. That’s a radical, boundless love. Love to the nth degree.

So we can know in whose hands Louie rests. The final word about Louie is not some tragic and fatal act. The final word is that he is a loved child of God. And ours is to give up judging and to trust him to the safety and security of the Everlasting Arms. The arms of the One who loves and cares for him—who has and will for all eternity.

The Bible has a great word for that truth, my friends. That word is *grace*. And it is amazing!

Let’s pray.

Our gracious Lord—Father of mercies, God of all comfort. You know the thoughts of our hearts, each one of us. And we know something of your heart. You gave your Son at Calvary. And you alone can give comfort to a father and mother—to a brother and sisters—give comfort to us all that comes from your great heart of love.


We’re thankful for the good treasure, untarnished—of memories of a very special son of yours, Louie. The things that he stood for, that he believed in and the way he reached out to make a difference in our world. What he was gives challenge and encouragement to our lives.

We’re grateful that we can trust him to you—to your boundless love and to your grace, and we do so, dear God, in the name of your Son, Amen.

A longtime pastor and evangelist, Louis Venden currently teaches in the Faculty of Religion at Loma Linda University.



THE LOCAL CHURCH



The renewed eastside window of the chapel at Theologische Hochschule Friedenseu is now one hundred years old. One of the area churches was inspired by the restoration of the window in 2003 and made a six-foot by six-foot poster as a symbol for the Week of Prayer. On the last Sabbath the poster was cut into puzzle pieces and everybody got a part of it. "Therewith we demonstrated that every one is necessary for the whole picture," says Gerhard Svrcek-Seiler.

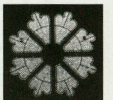
Future Church: Young People and Their Commitment to Adventism

By V. Bailey Gillespie

When I was much younger, I loved everything about space. I would go to the movies on Saturdays before I became an Adventist and wait in line with my friends for the weekly serial. The future fascinated me, and movies that featured Flash Gordon would always end each segment with a cliffhanger. He could solve the problems of the world in one brief half-hour every single week, right on schedule. I would watch his spaceship, which was actually a model suspended by wire, its engines burning, the rocket trailing smoke, and just knew there was an actual starship beyond.

When I got older and became a church member, I realized that those movies were, in essence, a microcosm of the world. When I finally learned the Great Controversy story, I understood that the macrocosm of the battle between good and evil would only be resolved by the good grace of God through Christ and that the problems of this world would eventually be negated only through the action of God. There never would be enough time for Flash Gordon to solve it all. This hero was good, but not really great.

I learned that, to fix local problems, I needed to make good choices and get involved with God. Change for the good would happen only if I implemented my understanding of God's plan in my life. Change in general happens anyway, but good change is intentional. God proved that by coming to earth the first time and will guarantee it through his next appearance. I realized that if change were going to happen in my lifetime, it would take more than me wishing for it; I needed to do something.



Have you or someone you know
been sexually abused within
the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

BY: LAY LEADER • VOLUNTEER •
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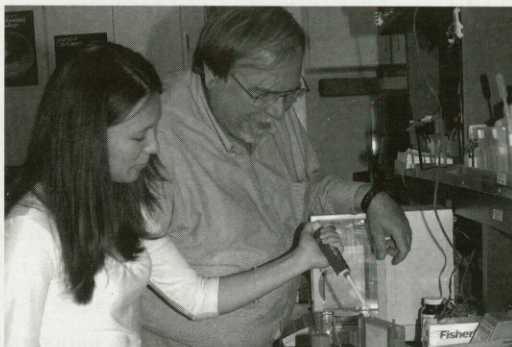
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Long before Valuegenesis research began in the 1990s, we had decades of excellent studies that identified which strategies for change might work and which would probably fail. We have all experienced the folly of bandwagon solutions, reactions, and technological panaceas, and we should have learned by now about how to bring about change that persists. But all too often we haven’t.¹

The most recent Valuegenesis research concluded in 2000. It studied young people in Adventist schools, grades six through twelve, and focused on faith, values, and commitment in three important venues of experience: home, church, and school. Since then, we have given our findings to conference groups, pastoral meetings, churches, and school boards. Toward the end of our statistical presentations, I often get two questions: “So...just what did you find out?” and “What do we really need to do to make a difference?”²

If we truly want to make a difference, we should listen to the young people of the Church. What they say and how they have reacted to our denominational presence may give us a glimpse of how the Church today is becoming their church of tomorrow.

What Did We Discover?

First, we discovered that the young people we surveyed claim a relationship with Christ. Fifty-nine percent had tried directly to encourage someone to believe in Jesus Christ during the past year; two-thirds had shared with others the work of God in their lives; and 40 percent had encouraged someone to join the Adventist Church.

We also learned that religion plays a major role in their lives. We asked the question, “How important is religious faith in your life?” Whereas ten years ago about half (50%) responded positively, ten years later, more than half (58%) gave the same testimony. Only a stark 2 percent said that religion was not an important influence in their lives at all.

If one looks at personal piety as an indicator of commitment, the youths we studied do well. Ninety-one percent prayed privately on at least a weekly basis; 73 percent prayed at least once a day; and only 2 percent never prayed at all.

Compare this with ten years ago, when 53 percent prayed at least once a day and only two-thirds prayed privately on a weekly basis. To say that this generation is more “spiritual,” no matter how one defines this term, is an understatement.

Good News about Grace

One critical area in the 1990 Valuegenesis study involved the process of salvation. Although the Adventist position on this issue is clear—we are strong advocates of salvation through grace by faith—we noticed then that over two-thirds (67%) of young people were confused about it. In our new research, these concerns were explored further and a number of additional questions were included to clarify this confusion. In addition, we identified a “Love of God” scale.

Our youth demonstrate a clear understanding of God’s rich love. Some 95 percent understand God’s love and are sure that “God loves them no matter what”! But what two-thirds of our subjects saw in 1990 as confusion over the process of salvation is currently reflected by slightly over 50 percent—a decrease in ten years of more than 17 percent.

The Importance of Being Adventist

In our 2000 study, respondents seem to feel strongly about being Adventists. Seventy-one percent believe it is important or extremely important to attend a church of their own denomination. However, the percentage that claim it is not important has risen markedly over the past decade—from 9 percent to 26 percent. It seems that loyalty to God is strong, but that specific denominational loyalty is waning. Still, in 2000, 74 percent indicated that there was a “good” or “excellent” chance that they would be Adventists at age forty. Only 6 percent saw no chance at all.

We also see strong commitment to Adventist beliefs. On a five-point scale of orthodoxy, which reflects all beliefs traditionally held in Adventism, the average value was 4.23 at the sixth-grade level and 4.44 in the twelfth grade. Again, Valuegenesis points to strong adherence to the core of Adventist beliefs. Furthermore, it seems clear that students are better able to understand some of the more complex doctrinal statements as they grow older. For example, in response to a question that explores the millennium, 40 percent “definitely believe” in it in the sixth grade, whereas 64 percent do in the twelfth.

Faith Maturity

A significant change has occurred in faith maturity scores when we compare findings from the 1990 study to those in 2000. In 1990, we balanced the vertical faith experience

(prayer, personal religion, meditation, Bible study, and so forth) with the horizontal (sharing, caring, witnessing, and so forth), only to discover that only one in five students had a rich and growing faith.

What was the problem? we were asked. We attributed the low level of faith maturity to such problems as lack of youth ministry in local churches, emotional coldness, and thinking climates unfriendly to youth.

But now we have better news in regard to this part of our study. In recent years, mature faith scores have increased 100 percent. This means that something significant has happened since our first report. However, we need to evaluate our satisfaction with the fact that only about 50 percent of our youth understand our grace orientation in the process of salvation.

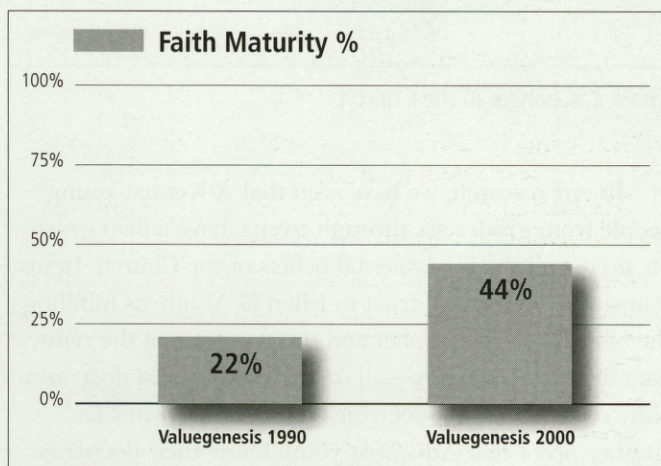


Chart 1. Faith Maturity Scale Percentages

From 1990 to 2000, the Adventist Church has experienced an 8 percent decrease in orientation toward law, too. The movement is in the right direction. However, it is obvious that some confusion still exists as to the proper role of works in God’s plan for these young lives.

So What Should We Conclude?

Much can be learned from this research, but there is not enough space here to share all the details of the survey, which included 369 questions. However, it is clear that some trends can be detected. For example, we wanted to know what it would take to change the Church into a place where faith would grow and members would consider themselves a part of the church of Christ. So we asked: “To feel com-



fortable bringing a friend to church, what needs to happen?" Students could choose as many answers as they felt appropriate. Their responses are seen in Chart 2.

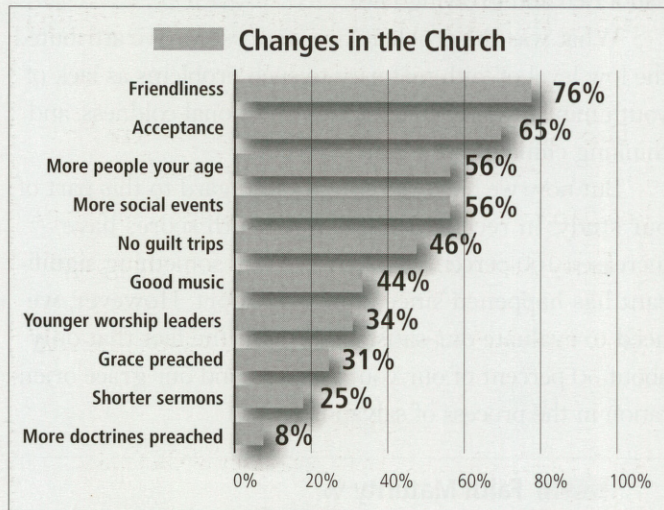


Chart 2. Changes in the Church

In our research, we have seen that Adventist young people from grades six through twelve have a firm grasp on almost all the fundamental beliefs of the Church. Items that scored lowest are trust in Ellen G. White as fulfilling the biblical role of prophet and the doctrines of the remnant and the sanctuary—all uniquely Adventist doctrines. Note on Chart 2 that doctrines scored low on this list, another proof that Adventist youth know their doctrines and don't need to be reminded of them continually.

Items that scored highest involved personal climate issues such as friendliness, acceptance, social events, and attendance at a church relevant to one's age group. These crucial issues continue to rise to the top of students' concerns about the Church. Each is extremely important in building a sense of commitment and loyalty to it.

Is There an Adventist Attitude?

Belief and behavior go together. Understanding and making decisions are closely related. Attitudes that young people have toward their church are also important. All too often these attitudes are connected to the methods used to enforce Adventist lifestyle issues. How youth perceive their church is important for feelings of acceptance and pride taken in ownership.

We have identified an "Adventist Attitude" scale that contains eight statements concerning standards and their enforcement. Students could respond on a scale that ranged from "never true" to "always true." Using factor

analysis, we discovered a strong relationship between them, and we formed a reliable scale that helps us see how the enforcement of Adventist lifestyle standards affects the attitude of youths toward the Church in general. The sidebar provides a close look at each of these statements.

Slightly more one-third of the respondents said that the Church emphasizes rules and standards so much that the essential message of Christianity seems to get lost. Almost one-half of the respondents suggest that adults don't "walk as they talk." So hypocrisy among older generations causes some concern for this group.

This scale provides us with a particularly useful insight into these attitudes among youths in the Church and how to lessen their impact on them. When we look at the total number of students who have an Adventist Attitude, we note that 19 percent of group have a negative outlook and that three out of ten are in the middle of the scale. Fifty-two percent of them reject this attitude altogether.

As one looks at the development of this Adventist Attitude through the grades, it is interesting to see that the percent that rejects it decreases from 70 percent in the sixth grade to 44 percent in the twelfth. Persons who have this negative outlook are more likely to declare that they will not be Adventists when they are forty years old.

Youths and an Adventist Attitude

- Non-Adventists laugh when they hear what Adventists are forbidden to do (39%).
- Some adults insist on certain rules or standards for younger Adventists that they do not observe themselves (46%).
- The feeling is conveyed in the Adventist Church that how one behaves is more important than what one believes (44%).
- Emphasis on Adventist rules and standards is so strong that the message of Christianity gets lost (38%).
- Adventists are loaded down with too many restrictions (29%).
- Students breaking a school standard or rule in Adventist schools are punished too harshly (27%).
- Adventist rules and standards just don't make sense (18%).
- People respect Adventists for their high moral standards (41%).

The correlation between this attitude and support for Adventist standards is negative, except for health and sports issues. Conversely, the more youths like their church's services, the less they demonstrate this attitude. Also, exhibition of this attitude decreases the more one perceives attendance at an Adventist school as important for faith development.

What Can We Say Then?

In summary, if you want your children to build a deep, personal relationship with God, one that is both devotional and compassionate, positive warmth and a thinking climate in school and church are crucial. Stated differently, the initial evidence is that positive climate scores reduce the negative Adventist Attitude.

More than any other factor, a warm and thinking climate assists in developing a more positive attitude toward the Seventh-day Adventist Church among students. Also, if students say that they like their school, they are less likely to see hypocrisy in their church. In other words, do your job well and nice things will happen.

A more mature, intrinsic faith coupled with a positive view of Adventist culture has the ability to generate less hypocrisy and a closer relationship with the Church when it comes to commitment to God and the Church's mission.

Notes and References

1. This article and synopsis of the Valuegenesis research is taken from our latest book, *Valuegenesis—Ten Years Later: A Study of Two Generations*, by V. Bailey Gillespie, Michael J. Donahue, with Ed Boyatt, and Barry Gane (Lincoln, Nebr.: AdventSource and Hancock Center Publications, 2004).

2. The findings reported here are based on more than sixteen thousand Seventh-day Adventist youths in Seventh-day Adventist schools throughout the North American Division during the 2000 school year. The research was contrasted with the findings of the 1990 Valuegenesis research report in Roger Dudley and V. Bailey Gillespie, *Valuegenesis: Faith in the Balance* (Riverside, Calif.: La Sierra University Press, 1992).

V. Bailey Gillespie is professor of theology and Christian personality and director of the John Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry, the School of Religion, La Sierra University.

"My reason nourishes my faith and my faith my reason."

—Norman Cousins

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Discussed: camping, raising money, canoes, protruding bones, brainstorming, respect, teenagers, bonding

Pathfinders: Blazing a New Trail through Suburbia

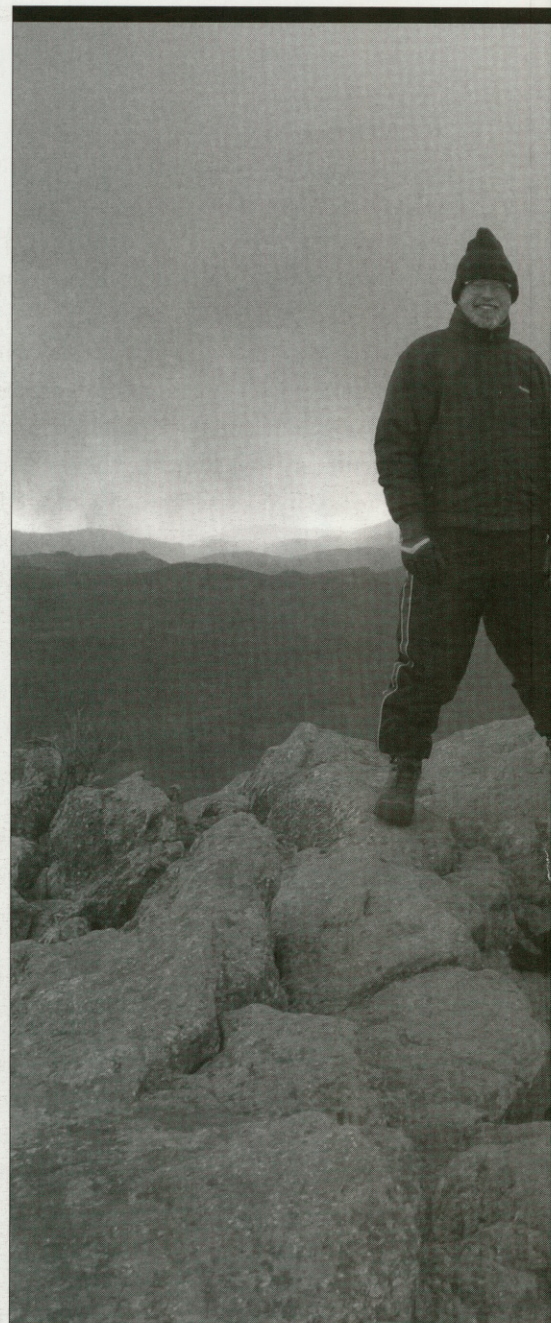
By James Coffin

In an increasing number of predominantly Caucasian Seventh-day Adventist congregations in North America, Pathfinding is an idea whose time has come...*and gone*. Even in many of the Pathfinder clubs that effectively attract fifth- and sixth-graders, the ranks are thinning by seventh and eighth grade. And high-schoolers? Forget it.

Markham Woods Church, situated in a northern suburb of Orlando, Florida, faced just such a problem back in the early 1990s. In a church that boasted almost four hundred children and youth between birth and college age, fewer than thirty were Pathfinders. Potential adult participants responded to pleas for help as if we were threatening a root canal without anesthesia.

"In the summer of 1992 we took serious note of what we were achieving. It wasn't much. Certainly not what we'd like," says Karen Gardner, Markham Woods Church's Pathfinder director since 1993. "So we moved for a radical overhaul. We had little to lose, and there was always the chance that we'd happen upon a winning formula."

As the congregation's youth pastor at the time, I sat down with a group of people who between them had scores of years of Pathfinder experience. They weren't radicals or rebels. They all believed in Pathfinding. But they had to admit that what we were doing wasn't meeting *their* expectations—let alone those of potential Pathfinders.





Some 125 Pathfinders and adults took a four-day trip to Grandfather Mountain in North Carolina in January 2005. Many saw snow falling for the first time. At Chimney Rock, above, grades 9-12 Pathfinders posed for a photo while enjoying the novelty of a windchill of seven degrees below zero.



In our discussions, we focused on two main questions. First, what could our Pathfinder club offer that young people wanted but weren't likely to find at home, at school, or at Sabbath School? Our conclusion: outdoor adventure, with a strong social component. Second, what did our youth *not* like about Pathfinders? Our conclusion: the militaristic regimentation, the uniforms, the marching, and the honors, which reminded them too much of school. (Ironically, in many non-Caucasian clubs, these elements are draw cards, not turnoffs.)

In what doesn't seem a particularly innovative move, we decided that our reformulated Pathfinder club would revolve around camping—six times per year. We also decided that, granted the busyness of life (for both adults and youth), and granted our inability to enlist enough adult helpers, we would limit our Wednesday night meetings to twice each month. In the summer months, when absenteeism was typically high, we would simply provide recreational activities (swimming, bowling, miniature golf, and the like).

Our church had recently completed statements of mission, philosophy, and goals. We drafted our own for Pathfinders, using a similar format (see next page). “We

tried to let the statements truly dictate what we would and wouldn't do with the club,” says Delby West, a major player in the club at that time and currently the congregation's children's ministries coordinator. “For example, shortly after formulating our mission, we were invited by another Pathfinder club to join in an overnight lock-in at a video arcade. We declined—because the activity didn't help achieve our voted goals.”

“We intentionally sought to move away from the militarism inherent in traditional Pathfinding,” says Gardner. “Further, uniforms were an expense in both money and time that we were unwilling to pay—granted the rate at which children outgrew their uniforms and the cost of acquiring and maintaining them. The cost had to be born by the parents, the club, or the church, and none could really afford it. Just ensuring that the insignias were appropriately sewed on was a logistical challenge of major proportions.”

Initially, however, the group wanted to retain a simplified dress uniform, the components of which could be worn outside of Pathfinder activities, guaranteeing maximum usage and economic efficiency. Opting for white polo shirts and black shorts or slacks, our club looked great.

In October 2001, the club took an out-of-state trip to Lost Sea Cave in Tennessee, where it also visited Lookout Mountain.



For an amazing number (mainly boys) the “uniform” became their weekly church attire—dressy enough to satisfy parental criteria but relaxed enough for comfort.

When our Pathfinders went to a union-wide camporee wearing our new uniforms, our leaders overheard several grudging compliments from adults in other clubs about “those rich kids from Markham Woods.” The reality? Our uniforms had cost only a fraction of what everyone else had paid. (Currently we simply issue each Pathfinder and staff member one sweatshirt and two Pathfinder T-shirts of our own design—and we change the design about every four years).

However, Pathfinders from other clubs weren’t as generous as their leaders. They openly harassed our youth because they looked different. So, upon our return, and after much discussion about a variety of issues, we decided to participate no longer in conference, union, or division camporees—because we didn’t fit in and because such events were so expensive. (Many Pathfinder clubs spend huge amounts of time simply raising money.) We had to ask ourselves: “What’s our goal? Is it to maintain the forms of traditional Pathfinding? Or is it to provide an effective ministry for our children and youth?” We opted for the latter.

Certain that we could provide more appealing activities for considerably less money, we voted (a) to take a major, memorable out-of-state trip every three years in lieu of camporees; and (b) to invest in durable goods for the club—which now include a custom-built equipment trailer and chuck wagon, twenty canoes on two trailers, dozens of backpacks, two school busses, a pickup truck, and an array of smaller investments—in addition to enough tents to handle camping crowds of more than 150, plus tents for backpacking.

“While we may have shed the military trappings,” says Gardner, “logistically we’re better equipped than some armies! We’ve had several families join our congregation just because they saw all the Pathfinder equipment in the parking lot and said, ‘Wow! This church must really be interested in its youth.’”

Continuity of quality leadership has been a huge factor in the club’s success. The club has developed a reputation for excellence—not that things don’t go wrong or that staff don’t have to scramble to deal with unexpected circumstances. But overall, Pathfinders, parents, and staff know that club procedures are well thought through and well executed. The youth want to join and adults want to help—which is a huge turnaround from the old days. The adult-child ratio on cam-

Markham Woods Pathfinder Club

Mission

The mission of the Markham Woods Church Pathfinder Club is, through outdoor adventure activities, to develop in the church’s young people a lasting respect and love for God, for family, for others, for the church, and for nature.

Philosophy

Pathfinder-age young people are at a pivotal stage in their lives: They are establishing their own identities, fine-tuning their values, and assuming increasing responsibility. To assist in this developmental process, the Markham Woods Church provides active Sabbath School and Christian Education programs. The Pathfinder Club offers an additional experience that is both unique and appealing, that is not part of these other ministries, and that for many may not be available anywhere else.

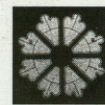
Young people have a natural love of adventure. Thus the Pathfinder Club utilizes camping and other exciting outdoor activities to teach lessons and develop individual and team skills that will be beneficial throughout life.

pouts is often as high as 1 to 2.

Gardner, who is also church treasurer and office administrator, does much of her Pathfinder organizing “on the clock.” “A volunteer would need huge amounts of time to administer an operation that involves so many people and has so many details to be attended to,” she says. “Few—if any—volunteers in our congregation would have that kind of time to give.”

Besides partially paying for a Pathfinder leader, Markham Woods Church provides an almost unheard-of level of support for the club. For example, this year’s church budget allocation is \$19,200—in addition to \$3,300 for the Adventurer Club (grades 1–3) and \$600 for the Eager Beaver Club (age 4 to kindergarten).

But the support doesn’t only come in the form of money. The church has really jumped onto the bandwagon. One of the pastors goes on *every* campout—and there



have been more than seventy campouts since the reorganization in 1993! Several elders—in fact, more than 20 percent of the entire elder group—are active in the club.

Senior elder Morris Weir has been our main camp chef for years. “It’s as much fun for the adults as it is for the kids,” he says, which may explain why so many elders choose to participate. The fact that I was youth pastor at Markham Woods before becoming senior pastor gives the club some advantages, too. Everything combined means that Pathfinders and other ministries for children and youth always receive high priority.

To make it easy for parents to bring their children

to Pathfinder meetings, the church launched a program several years ago called “Souper Wednesday.” At 6:00 p.m., an hour before Pathfinders, Adventurers, Eager Beavers, and the church’s midweek adult Bible studies begin, the church starts serving complimentary soup, bread rolls, and fruit. The idea is that parents can come directly from work to the church. The cost of the meals is borne by the church budget—as are the costs for *all* of the church’s social/recreational activities, whether for children, youth, or adults.

Our “free for all” philosophy, as we call it, has had a significant impact on Pathfinding. There are no

Markham Woods Pathfinder Club

General Goals

1. Teach spiritual concepts through outdoor adventure activities.
2. Teach young people both individual and team skills.
3. Develop in each young person a sense of self-worth and self-reliance.
4. Create a bond of friendship and respect between young people and adults.
5. Ensure a sense of belonging to the individual unit, to the Pathfinder Club, to the Markham Woods congregation and to the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.
6. Inspire a desire to serve others.
7. Promote a love and respect for nature.
8. Instill a sensitivity for the feelings of others.
9. Teach personal responsibility and self-control.
10. Encourage young people to transfer the skills and lessons learned in Pathfinders to the family, school, church, and community setting.

“Free for All” Philosophy

Many organizations “nickel and dime” their members nearly to death. Markham Woods Church seeks to be an exception. As part of its overall philosophy, the church doesn’t charge for social/recreational activities. For three reasons:

1. It’s a pain to always be collecting money at events.
2. We don’t want to exclude the “have nots” from participation.
3. It’s more efficient just to give money to the Church Budget than to pay for services from the church—because money given to the church is tax-deductible.

For example, if a family in the 30 percent tax bracket pays \$100 to participate in a church function, that’s \$100 gone. But if a family in the 30 percent tax bracket is allowed to participate for free, with absolutely no strings attached, yet chooses to donate \$100, their gift is tax-deductible. And they have just saved having to pay \$30 in taxes. They can keep the \$30 for themselves or use it for other charitable purposes.

But won’t some people take advantage when you merely encourage giving but don’t demand it?

Probably. But the fact is, most people want to contribute. So, overall, the positives of such an approach far outweigh the negatives.

If you feel you benefit from Pathfinders, give generously to the Church Budget.

Pathfinder dues; membership is free. Of course, nothing is ever truly free. Someone has to pay. But the way participants pay is through their contributions to the church budget, not as a “fee for service.”

The advantages are at least three-fold: First, the approach removes the distinction between the haves and have-nots. Those who are able, pay. Those who can't, don't. But everyone participates. Second, it makes giving more efficient. Fees for service aren't tax-deductible. Freewill giving with no quid pro quo is tax-deductible, freeing up more money for the giver or for some charity. Finally, it makes life easier for event organizers not to have to collect money.

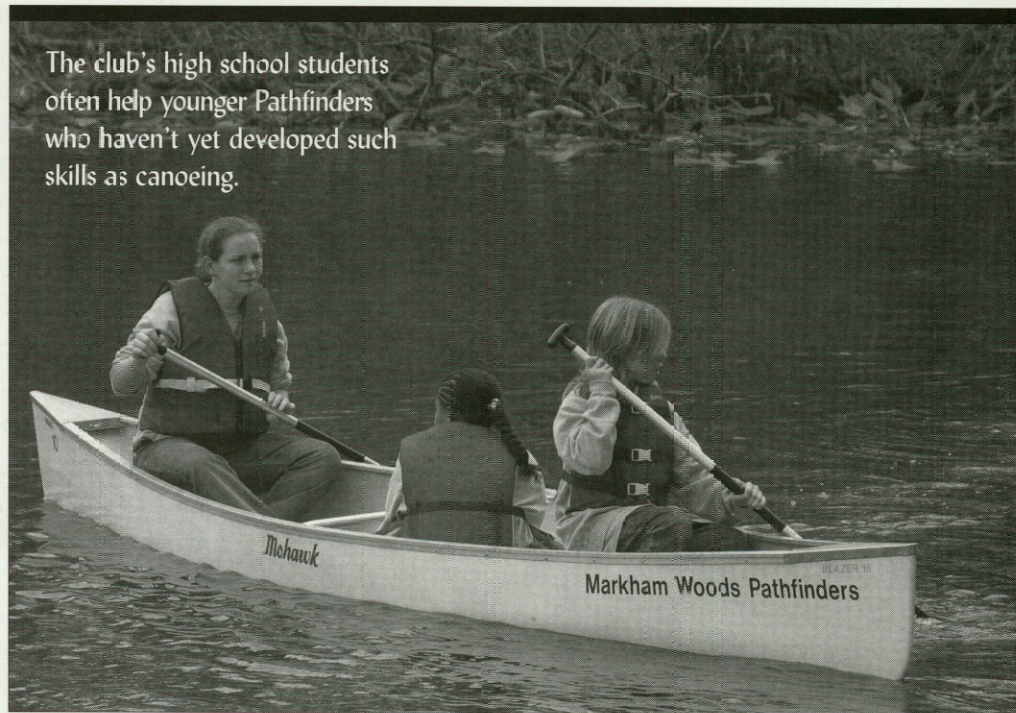
So far, people have responded marvelously. Between church budget allocations and gifts directed specifically to the club, the Markham Woods Pathfinders haven't had to do a fundraiser for the past seven or eight years.

Another great help has been the church's repetitive calendar, which allows adult volunteers and Pathfinders to plan ahead and avoid church scheduling conflicts. “We camp on the second weekend of September, October, January, February, March, and April,” says Gardner. “We don't cancel campouts, and we don't reschedule campouts—maybe three times in the past twelve years (usually because of hurricanes!).”

Gardner continues: “If someone from another club were to ask me, ‘Would you be available to speak to our leaders on Sabbath, October 14, 2006?’ without looking at my calendar, I could immediately reply, ‘No, because I'll be on a campout with *my* club.’ The other entities of our church work around our campout schedule, ensuring that no Pathfinders or staff have to decide between another major church activity or the Pathfinder activity. Being given that kind of deference tells us that our ministry is seen as important.”

Initially (following the reorganization in 1993), each campout was themed—orienteeing, snorkeling, first aid and rescue, canoeing, camp cooking, bicycling, survival. The two meetings leading up to each campout were spent developing the skills that would be needed. These skills were

The club's high school students often help younger Pathfinders who haven't yet developed such skills as canoeing.



further honed on the campout. Although the Pathfinders didn't earn honors per se, we definitely taught many of the skills for which honors are offered. We simply did it in a much more fast-paced fashion. But with great results.

Often campout activities would require a combination of several skill sets. A different cluster of counselors was responsible for organizing the activities of each campout. And some definitely cutdid themselves.

Our “9-1-1” campout, organized by a local family practitioner, was probably our most memorable. He effectively utilized the skills of two church members, a former U.S. Navy Seal, and an employee of the Orlando Police Department. The OPD employee was able to borrow a whole fleet of (confiscated, impounded, crime-connected!) walkie-talkies from the OPD, as well as a professional-grade assortment of rubberized “wounds,” which ranged from protruding bones to disembowelment. With the addition of appropriate “blood,” mud, and torn clothing, the mock injuries were stomach-turningly realistic.

The Pathfinder rescue teams would receive a call such as: “A man was fishing on the shore of Lake Pravatt when he was attacked by an alligator. His lower left leg has been ripped off and only a bone shaft remains. His companions have applied a tourniquet and are standing by for instruc-

tion and help. He can be reached by following the park service road half a mile to a huge double-trunked oak on the left. Then follow a course thirty degrees east of north for approximately three hundred yards.”

The exercises involved a variety of skills the Pathfinders had learned—in addition to first aid and rescue. After the Pathfinders had done their rescue, county paramedics came in an ambulance and demonstrated how they would have dealt with each case.

At first, the themed campouts worked wonderfully. However, with the passage of time, the skill levels between veteran and novice Pathfinders became so disparate that the pre-campout instruction became more problematic. What has resulted is a perpetual reinvention of the club. “Something will work well for two, three, or four years, then it ceases to work,” says Gardner. “We brainstorm and take a different approach. Certain aspects of the club have never changed. Others have changed many times. But the perpetual fine-tuning and restructuring is what has kept the club alive and vibrant.”

One major issue we had to address was an increasing number of high school students who wanted to remain in the club. In 1992, we had none. Today we have about forty. Young people who had fallen in love with the club didn’t want to leave just because they were in high school. How could we effectively incorporate them? Initially we created a separate club—Club Wilderness—which sponsored such exciting activities as a week on the Appalachian Trail. But

the youth liked the adventure and social mix of Pathfinders. They themselves pushed to remain.

Today our club has grown to just over one hundred and includes members from grade four to grade twelve—with an increasing number of counselors now coming from the post-grade-twelve group who still don’t want to say good-bye. Nor do we want them to.

“Had someone suggested to me a few years ago that we could have fourth-graders and high-school seniors excited about going on the same campout, I’d have thought they were crazy,” says Gardner. “But it has worked amazingly well.”

Gardner cites three reasons. “First, although all age groups go on the campouts together, eat their meals together, and usually have their worships together, a lot of activities are separate. [The club is divided into three distinct subsets—grades four through six, grades seven and eight, and grades nine through twelve.] Second, many of the high schoolers were Pathfinders when they were in the fourth grade. So they take the presence of the younger set in stride. Third, we really emphasize tolerance and forbearance. And it seems our preaching has succeeded.”

“The club’s prime behavioral expectation is respect for everyone,” says West. “Our club—and our church, for that matter—declares itself a ‘No Put-Down Zone.’ We’ve really work hard to ensure that kids don’t say negative, cutting things to each other. While put-downs inevitably slip through, the fact that in every aspect of church



High-schoolers, left, admire their cardboard-and-duct-tape boat at a campout in March 2005. Above, this boat-designing group called themselves “The Elites.” Right: *Not an SOS*; this group won the “longevity” competition by staying afloat almost half an hour.



Markham Woods Pathfinder Club Discipline Policy

1. When an adult has issued a clear directive to a child or group of children and they do not comply, the adult will take the child/children to a club leader and explain in the presence of the leader the exact behavior that is being requested.
2. If after receiving such an unquestionably clear directive in the presence of a club leader the child/children persist/s in noncompliance, the Pathfinder leader will place a call to parents, and the child will have to explain what he or she is doing or not doing and why. The club leader will answer any questions.
3. If, after this phone call, the child/children still fail/s to comply, parents will be called and requested to come get their children.

life we so consistently promote universal respect pays big dividends in the long run.”

“For example,” says Gardner, “recently our Pathfinder staff overheard a group of kids talking about a teacher. ‘She wouldn’t do well at Markham Woods,’ one kid said, ‘because she’s terrible about putting kids down.’ So it’s clear that, despite their lapses, their sensitivities are being heightened.”

When our club first changed directions in the early 1990s, Florida Conference Pathfinder director Cheeko Cotta was deeply concerned. However, with the passage of time and the obvious positive results, he recognized that, although outside the mainstream, our approach seemed to scratch where it itched. Cotta has been a model of support, adroitly walking the tightrope between encouraging innovation such as ours and seeking not to upset those within the conference who are committed to more traditional Pathfinding.

“Our goal is simply to find something that works,” says Gardner. “If the traditional format works for a club, then don’t change. If it’s not working, then brainstorm until you find an approach that does. And don’t try to carbon-copy us or any other innovators—because our ideas don’t work indefinitely even for us. We’re always having to adjust.”

“One of the greatest benefits of the Pathfinder club has been the bonding that takes place,” says West. “In Pathfinders we have students from several Adventist

schools, several private schools, and several public schools. Some are Adventists and others aren’t. Sabbath School and our youth socials don’t provide the opportunity for friendship development afforded by a weekend campout. Pathfinders is the place where all this diversity gets cemented together.”

The same is true for the adults. Doctors, lawyers, carpenters, teachers, nurses—a huge array of people who love outdoor adventure and young people—have found in Pathfinders a church within a church. They’re a close-knit group who really enjoy being with each other. They look for every opportunity for interaction and fellowship.

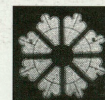
“Pathfinders has been fertile evangelistic soil for the young people, but even more so for adult helpers,” says Gardner. “One of our current elders had been outside the church for a couple of decades, but he started helping with Pathfinders to be with his kids. He discovered a group of people and an approach to spirituality that he could relate to. The rest is history, as they say.”

“A few years ago,” Gardner continues, “the Pathfinders were surprised to discover that one of the leaders in the grades seven and eight section was soon to be baptized. They were staggered to discover that this man, who (with his Adventist wife) had been offering their go-to-bed prayers on campouts and who led out in highly creative worships, was himself just finding his way spiritually. Unbeknown to them, he was being ministered to *by* them as much as he was ministering *to* them.”

Gardner, who has directed the club continuously for more than twelve years, says she has found both great reward and great challenge in her role. “If you were to talk to our Pathfinders, their parents, or the volunteers who make the Markham Woods Pathfinder Club possible, every one of them could cite things that need to be improved,” she says.

“We’d all like to do things a lot better,” Gardner goes on. “But despite our shortfalls, we’ve seen a response that’s truly gratifying. It’s been impressive enough to convince me that even in suburban, affluent, postmodern, predominantly Caucasian situations, Pathfinding is still viable. It’s simply a matter of structuring the approach to meet the situation rather than trying to make the situation fit the structure.”

James Coffin is senior pastor of Markham Woods Church in Longwood, Florida, and director of Global Mission’s Center for Secular/Postmodern Mission.

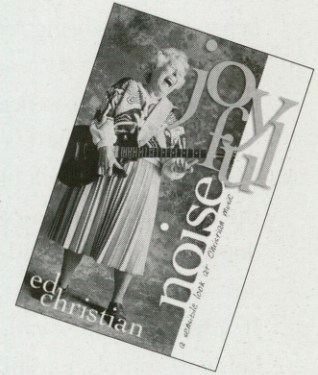
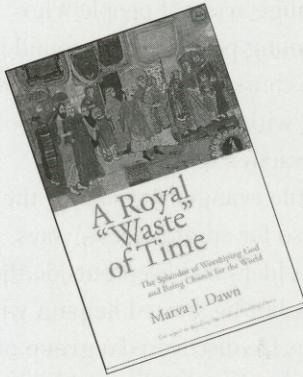


Discussed: Westside Story, marketing gurus, tolerance, blended services, words, congregational singing, simple approach to important truths, personal preferences, open mind

Music Lessons

By Jeffry Kaatz

A Review of Ed Christian, *A Joyful Noise* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2003); and Marva J. Dawn, *A Royal "Waste" of Time: The Splendor of Worshiping God and Being Church for the World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999)



Like many in the Christian church, I have more battle scars over worship music than I care to recount. I guess it is part of the territory for a trained musician or pastor in an ever-changing society. Too often, we use musical taste and familiarity with musical styles as the primary determining factor for appropriate worship music.

We all have lessons to learn. Over the years, my religious music lessons have come in discussions at home, during my classical training as a cellist, in experiences I have had at my home church (where any slow instrumental piece was deemed appropriately sacred), and in other churches, where I have held positions as a member of the staff or as a professional musician. These experiences made reading these two books on the topic all the more interesting.

Ed Christian's *A Joyful Noise* and Marva Dawn's *A Royal Waste of Time* provide illuminating discussions of issues related to sacred music that arise in homes and churches.

Lesson I: Evangelism vs. Worship

My wife, Karen, and I supplement our income by working for two different churches that worship on Sundays. Karen plays the organ and piano for a Congregational church, and I coordinate the music program for a Missouri Synod Lutheran church. Both congregations are warm and friendly, and both are blessed with aesthetically pleasing sanctuaries.

But that is where similarities end. One congregation goes out of its way to make any unchurched person in the community feel com-



Singing Boys, a panel by Luca Della Robbia from *Singing Gallery*.

fortable about dropping in. Music and readings are very accessible and in many ways simple. However, the other service is quite structured and probably intimidating for some people on first visit.

Highland Congregational Church's approach to worship is to meet the community at its level. For example, it sometimes serves French fries and soda for communion services. Each year, it hosts a Chancel Theater worship service, which uses songs from Broadway musicals. Between songs, the minister weaves points of significance

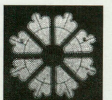
taken from the choral text into messages intent on improving everyday life. In the past, Chancel Theater services have included *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Westside Story*, and the *Sound of Music*.

The pendulum swings to the other end of the spectrum at Immanuel Lutheran Church. There, musicians and congregation enjoy a high church tradition, which adheres to the liturgical church calendar refined over many centuries. I am quite certain a song from *Fiddler on the Roof* has never been sung in this sanctuary. At Immanuel, the worship service is not so much about reaching out to the local community as about spending quality time in praise and worship of God.

Marva Dawn, in her book *A Royal "Waste" of Time, the Splendor of Worshiping God and Being Church for the World*, discusses the difference between evangelism and worship. Dawn maintains that each has a time and place, and that evangelism should not take the place of worship.

Many churches have been torn apart because of conflicts generated by this serious confusion between worship and evangelism: that worship ought to be designed to appeal to the unbeliever or "unchurched" and therefore should make use of a certain kind of accessible "style." Deep at the root, the disagreements arise because declining numbers

have put congregations and denominations in a great panic over how to attract new members. Many pastors, lay leaders, and national church officers seem to be thoroughly disdainful of God's own instructions when they accept the false advice of marketing gurus to "throw out the traditions" of their churches in order to "appeal" to the world around them and thereby "grow." (122)



Dawn later continues,

If we choose a certain musical style or other elements simply to appeal to those outside our walls, then we are forcing worship to bear the brunt of evangelism, which is instead the task of all believers. Don't misunderstand: good worship *will be evangelistic*, but that is not its primary purpose, for it is directed toward God, not toward the neighbor. No passage in the Scriptures says, "Worship the Lord to attract the unbeliever." Rather, in countless texts we are commanded, invited, urged, wooed to worship the Trinity because God is worthy of our praise. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, *worship* can actually be done only by those who recognize that worthiness. (122)

This is not to say that Immanuel Lutheran Church has not used contemporary music. In fact, it was a hot topic when I arrived, the congregation having voted the year before to stop holding three traditional liturgical services and instead conduct two that were distinctly different. One of these followed the traditional format, with which the congregation was accustomed, whereas the other used praise songs and choruses more contemporary in format, the minister wearing a shirt and tie rather than a white robe.

My twelve years at that church have been a remarkable journey. I have learned more than I ever imagined about how congregations and individuals worship, and how music in various styles and forms can effectively move an individual closer to God. My personal palate of worship music has grown significantly, as has my ability to worship.

Lesson 2: Congregational Singing

Christian and Dawn agree that congregational singing is important for corporate worship and both draw on Psalm 100: "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing." Both recognize that singing in church is often lackluster, and that to be effective it needs passion and energy.

I grew up in a small Adventist church that often had no more than one hundred worshipers on any given Sabbath. However, that was a time when the congregation really sang—children, parents, grandparents... everyone. People sang in harmony, too. My late grand-

mother, Gladys Smouse, had a particular way of carrying the alto line of most hymns.

Physically, singing is an invigorating activity. It is conducive to the praise and worship of God. But in general, congregations do not sing with the same enthusiasm they once did. I think this may be a phenomenon of the culture I am part of, for I am aware of many others that currently sing with the same conviction that mine did a generation ago.

For this reason, a number of congregations have moved to a contemporary worship format, including more upbeat praise songs. In general, I do not disagree with this, and enjoy worshipping on occasion in this style of worship. However, just as in many traditional worship services, I often find that the same proportion of people in contemporary services observe rather than participate. The music in general is louder, which is often misinterpreted as participation.

So the question comes around to this: What makes a song appropriate for worship, whether a traditional hymn or a contemporary praise song or chorus?

Christian focuses on congregational unity and evaluating ways that singing can enhance corporate worship. Thus, he leans toward music with words, and that brings us to lesson three.

Lesson 3:

Instrumental Music vs. Music with Words

In chapter four of his book, Christian outlines seven "Guidelines for Our Music, Congregational Worship." To a large extent, I find them helpful and insightful, but I would challenge a few points, particularly the use of instrumental music in a worship service. Guideline one states:

Music is not of itself sacred or secular, whatever its style. Classical and sacred are not synonymous. Quality of composition or performance does not make music without words suitable for the worship service. When instrumental music calls to mind sacred lyrics, it can lead to worship, though generally less efficiently than music with words. At best, from a spiritual viewpoint, music without words in the worship service provides a background for meditation. However, many listeners don't make use of this opportunity. (38)

Christian supports instrumental arrangements of hymns in some cases because participants can meditate



on the text while listening. He also asserts that, without the textual association, the hearts and minds of individuals in the congregation may tend to drift away from the purpose of worship

“Some people assume that any classical music is appropriate in the worship service because it

has no words and its beauty and excellence praise God,” he writes. “However, while such music may be so beautiful that it makes us thank God, we are more likely to enjoy it simply because it is beautiful, with no conscious thought of God” (38).

I concede that some people may need a text to be sung with the music to bring them into a state of worship. However, I also recognize text can be just as distracting as music for worship. I believe that in some parts of a worship service, for example as the congregation assembles and during communion, instrumental music can be as effective as hymns or songs, for it allows members of the congregation to meditate on God without text interrupting their thoughts.

I think that during worship we need time to contemplate and meditate, time to sort out our thoughts and focus. Once that starts, music with text can unify the congregation. I also believe that music—with or without text—can assist the congregation in its reflection on the spoken word. For those who have a worshipful attitude when they come to church, the issue of text or no text becomes less relevant.

This notion runs somewhat contrary to Christian’s second guideline:

Any style of music can entertain. Entertainment is not in itself wrong, in its place, but the worship service is not the best place for entertainment, because the more we are being entertained, the less we are worshiping. Thus the worship service will be more spiritually profitable if we avoid music that entertains. “Special music” in the worship service can sometimes provide an opportunity for meditation or allow God to speak to the listener, but primarily, I believe, it entertains the congregation, despite the performers’ desire to give glory to God. (39)

I agree that in some instances music can distract us from worship, especially if it supercedes the focus of

worship. This seems to be Christian’s perspective when he advises caution in choosing a classical instrumental selection over a hymn arrangement that has a recognized text associated with it.

Personally, I struggle with this perspective, for I can accept an offering of praise to God by a musician who performs a classical work. For me, this is an added bonus of being a Christian and a musician, for I can appreciate and use music in ways beyond those of non-Christian musicians, who often appreciate this genre only from an aesthetic perspective.

Christian’s third guideline focuses on the need for congregational unity, with which I agree. I believe that elements of worship that detract from this unity should be changed or eliminated.

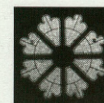
Karen and I are regularly asked to play for worship services, and we find it a challenge to come up with a varied selection. One direction we have turned is toward instrumental arrangements of recognizable hymns. Some of my favorites tend to be choral arrangements that I adapt for cello and piano, such as *It is Well With My Soul*, arranged by J. N. Beck, or *Amazing Grace*, arranged by W. Hall.

I still enjoy playing songs like *Arioso* by J. S. Bach, and in doing so feel I have given God something more meaningful than a hymn arrangement I might have offered. If Christian’s perspective on the use of this type of music is correct, then I may have done a disservice to the congregation as a whole, although it has blessed me and I have offered God something meaningful.

Lesson 4: The Value of Repetition

One complaint about contemporary Christian praise songs and choruses is that the words are often repetitive and trite. Taken as a whole, this is probably correct compared to much of what we consider “high” church music. Repetition can be an effective way to reinforce important truths, even though too much of even a good thing can be bad.

One of the most meaningful worship services in which I have participated as the conductor of a choir was in a performance of Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus” from *The Messiah* at the conclusion of an Easter morning service.





Speaking of repetition, altos alone sing the word *hallelujah* more than forty times in this composition. If repetition of text were the only factor used to decide appropriate worship music, we would probably need to eliminate this masterwork.

Another example is Randall Thompson's glorious setting of *Alleluia*. The short chorus *He Is Our Peace* by Kandela Groves, which is often sung in both contemporary and blended worship services, repeats its four-word title eight times. Led by an organ, piano, or contemporary praise band, this chorus is an effective song for a congregation to sing in preparation for prayer.

It is helpful to step back and take a more simple approach to important truths. This is often done effectively in contemporary songs and choruses. It can also be done with awe, grandeur, and majesty in the music of Handel and Thompson.

Lesson 5: Different Services for Different Music

In recent years, some congregations have chosen to support two or more distinctly different worship services that cater to the variety of tastes. Immanuel Lutheran Church went to this format twelve years ago, and so have a few Adventist churches in my community.

Christian and Dawn strongly oppose this arrangement. Christian goes so far as to state: "If a church can't agree on music, it's better to split a church physically into separate congregations than to split it spiritually by imposing the tastes of one faction on another" (55).

Dawn states in response to the use of musical "taste" as a reason to support two styles of worship: "Not only is taste as an entry point wrong biblically, but also it is extremely destructive of genuine community, fosters an independent view of the local congregation, and reduces worship simply to a matter of preferences instead of an entering into God's presence in the company of the Church throughout space and time" (187).

Furthermore, Dawn refers to a 1995 study in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America that dealt with effective ministry and membership growth: "A mere 1 percent joined a congregation because of its musical style. The largest proportion, 28 percent,

joined because of faith and beliefs, 22 percent because of family and friends, 5 percent because of the hospital-ity ('atmosphere'), and 19 percent because of the location of the facilities" (187).

In my experience at Immanuel Lutheran Church—where both traditional and contemporary services are supported—I have found both forms to work quite effectively. During the early years of transition, several families chose to move to other congregations. Some members truly believed that contemporary forms of music were inappropriate for a house of God.

Time has healed the emotional chasm and very few scars remain from past battles over musical style at that church. Gracious leadership, understanding, tolerance, and open-mindedness are moving the congregation forward. I am spiritually fulfilled worshipping God in both services. However, I do not believe this is the best solution for every congregation, especially smaller ones where critical mass is essential.

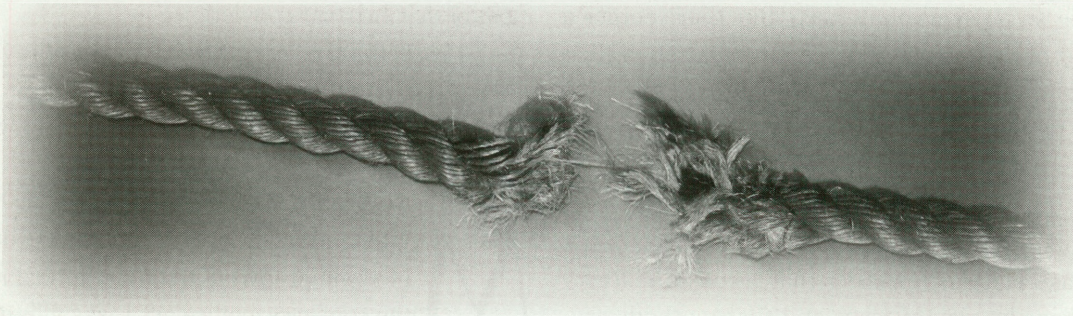
I consider these five lessons an important part of my journey as an Adventist, teacher, and professional musician. Personally, I need to give more thought and study to the roles of evangelism and worship. In my mind, there is some room for them to overlap. At present, churches may be blending these two activities into one out of convenience.

Although I have personal preferences for worship and worship music, I have also learned much from participating in and studying a variety of worship styles. The main lesson I have learned is to keep an open mind because there is often more to see—and hear—with greater understanding. If we do, we will be better able to "Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name," as the Psalmist states matters.

Reading the perspectives of Christian and Dawn helped clarify several questions in my mind. Their books also revealed new questions that will require further thought and study. It may be that one lesson from these books transcends the others—the fact that there are always more lessons to be learned.

Jeffrey Kaatz is vice president for advancement and university relations at La Sierra University. Prior to accepting this position he served as chair for the Department of Music at La Sierra University and has more than twenty years experience in church music leadership. Kaatz completed the doctor of musical arts degree in cello performance at the University of Southern California.

Discussed: company policy, integrity, shallowness, evangelism goals, congregations, clubs, innovation, loneliness, hope, irony



Becoming Useless

By Ryan Bell

It doesn't take long to learn how to be a successful pastor. Every pastor knows there are certain activities and accomplishments that get rewarded. These things include, among many others, conducting public evangelistic campaigns, keeping the church growing, avoiding major congregational fights, submitting all your forms on time, promoting conference programs, and not asking for too many favors.

Normally a wise mentor will clue a new pastor into these things. At least that's how it happened for me. As I was preparing to leave seminary after completing my master's of divinity degree, I spoke to one of my favorite professors. We talked about reentry and what it takes to succeed in Adventist ministry. His advice: "You have to think of your ministry as having two jobs. Your main job, for which you get paid, is to be the pastor of your church. Then you can

pursue the things that you really want to do in ministry on the side."

The not-so-subtle implication in his advice is that being the pastor of my church is a very prescribed undertaking. The expectations are clear and the path of ministry is marked out in advance. I am called there to implement "company policy." Then, in my spare time, I can pursue my calling. A smarter pastor would have realized that he could just implement the conference model of pastoral ministry and spend the rest of

his time relaxing at home with his family. But I was too driven, and perhaps too naive, to understand that.

For a while you can keep both worlds going, and in doing so be everyone's hero. But there comes a moment of decision, a crossroad where you realize that integrity means leaving some things out. The beginning of the end of my usefulness was when I realized that ministry isn't just a matter of techniques and methods, and I began learning to think theologically about the practice of ministry.

Once a pastor starts insisting that Jesus' ministry must be done in the way of Jesus and that methods are not atheological he has some hard decisions to make. Will I continue to be useful in the ways I've described or will I continue down the "rabbit hole" into deeper reflection upon and understanding of ministry?

Deeper reflection about the practice of ministry also leads to deeper reflection about theology itself. If I must think theologically about the practice of ministry, perhaps what ails the Church is not merely antiquated methods but wrongheaded theology. For example, it began to seep into my heart that the Church exists for more than simply brokering individual people's relationship with God or producing religious goods and services to be consumed by the discerning religious consumer.

The more I began to understand that the gospel is Jesus' teaching about life in God's Kingdom the more difficult it has become to talk about "accepting Jesus as my personal Savior" (indeed, I'm not sure anymore what this expression means). The more I understood the relationality of the Trinity, the more uneasy I began to feel about relationally bankrupt forms of church and methods of evangelism.

Gradually, the shallowness of my ministry began to settle upon me. As I started looking for others who felt as I did, a new world opened up to me—a world of people from myriad Christian traditions who believed the church should be more, that it should be a community of saints sharing their lives together, living in a way that contrasts with the way of the world but always for the sake of the world.

The deeper I go, the more uncomfortable I become about the duplicity of my ministry. I wonder, mostly to myself, "Is everything incompatible? How can I survive this metamorphosis I'm experiencing?" Then came the other questions from deep within me—perhaps I'm going

down the wrong road. Are these new convictions compatible with Adventism? Some of them, I found, have deep roots in Adventism but have been covered over with decades of American cultural values that now rival the most basic Christian convictions.

So it seems the more I delve into the mysteries of Christ, the gospel, and the church the more useless I become to the system that gave my ministry its start.

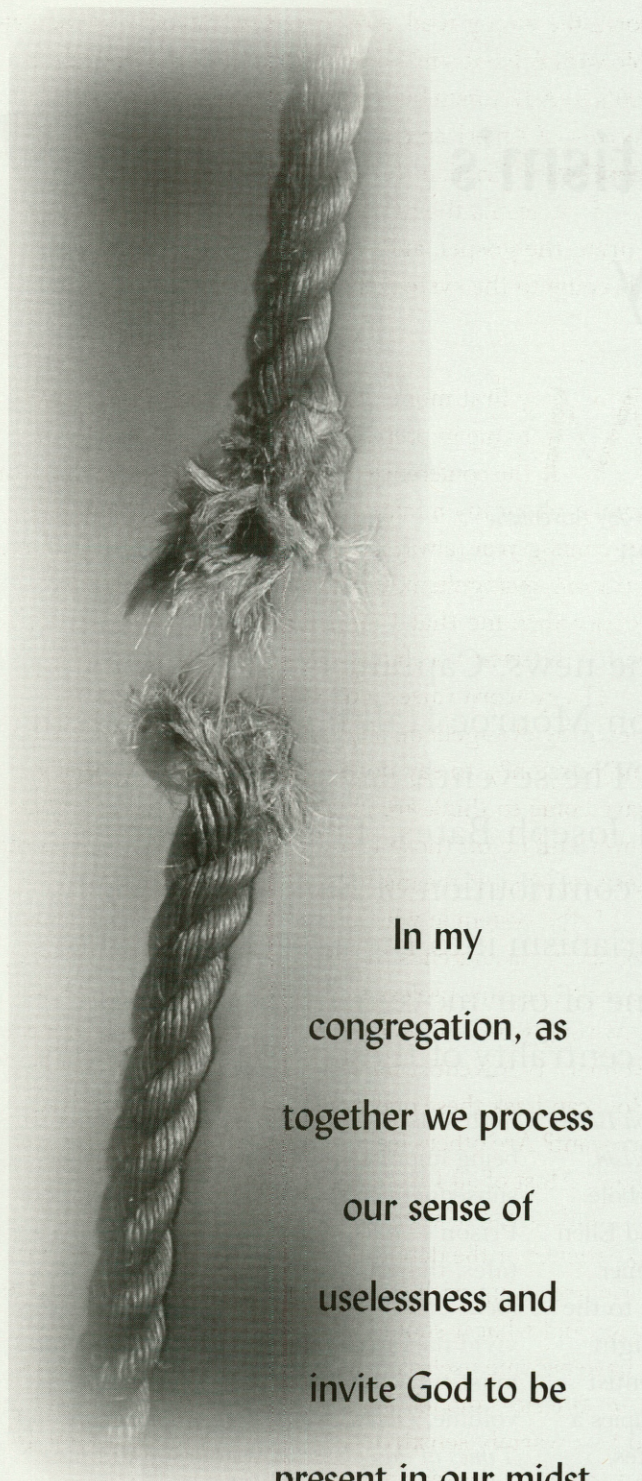
My first moments of clarity about this occurred to me in preparation for my annual review at the conference office. As I was filling out annual reports about my ministry achievements and goals for the coming year (always in the preset categories of administration, evangelism, pastoral care, and the like), it occurred to me that I am living in a different world with a different vocabulary.

Every word raises a dozen questions (what is meant by evangelism, soul winning, leadership, vision, and mission?), to say nothing of all the issues that I have come to think are central to being a church that never end up on those forms. These concerns go to the heart of what it means to be the church.

If the system in which I find myself has convictions about what a church is that are so different from my own, haven't I become useless to that system? It seems I have unwittingly become an iconoclast to those who lead me. I wonder, "Is Adventist ministry something one outgrows?" How can I ask these questions without being perceived arrogant? Are others feeling this way or am I losing my mind? Most of all I wonder, "What do I do now?"

This sense of uselessness is not restricted to my experience of the denominational system. My members have grown up with expectations about what the church is for and what it should do. For some of my members, I have become useless. Some expect me to fit a "corporate America" model of a strong CEO. Others expect me to be a warmly sensitive chaplain. Others expect me to conveniently package and deliver God to them.

Finally, I have become useless to myself. After working for ten years to succeed in all the ways pastors hope to succeed (the proverbial "butts and bucks"), I find that my evolution has sabotaged any hope I had of being useful in all the usual ways. Although there are still some signs of those outward successes, I am seeking a life in ministry that ends up not feeding my ego the way I'm used to. Which leads me inexorably to the conclusion that I have become useless.



In my
congregation, as
together we process
our sense of
uselessness and
invite God to be
present in our midst,
we are sensing some
hopeful ways for-
ward.

With uselessness comes loneliness. Those who identify most with my struggle are outside the Adventist network. Even my closest friends in ministry struggle at times to understand what I'm talking about.

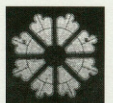
Where is hope to be found? Perhaps it seems too simple, but I want to suggest that the gospel holds out the greatest hope. Life comes from death, spring follows winter, God continually shows up in the most godforsaken places. The church appears to me to be one of those godforsaken places more often than not. And so it is that the congregation is the locus of my hope.

Most congregations share a deep sense (most often unarticulated) that together they have become useless to the world, to their communities. In my congregation, as together we process our sense of uselessness and invite God to be present in our midst, we are sensing some hopeful ways forward. The issue remains, however, whether the system can contain churches that are working through these issues. Can the denomination allow for churches and pastors who are growing and developing in unusual and unpredictable ways?

The Church today finds itself in a very different social location. Old methods are proving bankrupt, or at least innocuous. The onlooking world is merely amused by how seriously Christians take themselves, huddled together in their little clubs. In an effort to put this all in perspective and find a way to live in this place it occurs to me that perhaps pastors and church leaders *must* become useless in order to finally become useful to God and his church.

Maybe one of the most profound signs of hope is the sense of uselessness itself. If, by taking myself and my answers less seriously, I can learn to take God more seriously, then real innovation might be at hand. Reflecting again on the gospel irony that life comes only through death, I suspect that real usefulness comes only after we arrive at this place of uselessness. Maybe *there* is hope.

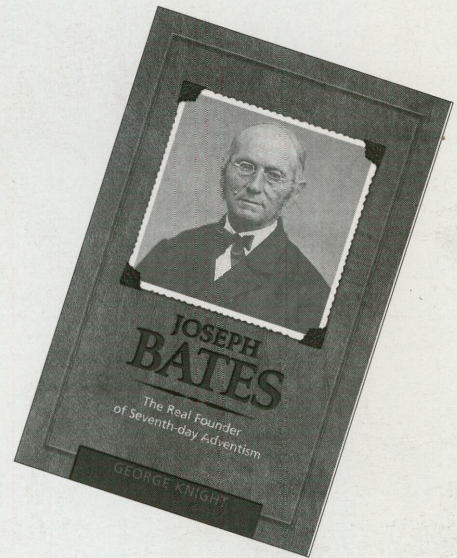
Ryan Bell is the pastor of Bucks County Seventh-day Adventist Church in suburban Philadelphia and is the director of the re-church network.



Early Adventism's Leon Trotsky

By Benjamin McArthur

A Review of George Knight,
Joseph Bates: The Real Founder of Seventh-day Adventism
(Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2004).



...he was
among the first
Millerites to
embrace the
Sabbath...,
a tireless
missionary...,
Adventism's
first health
reformer...,
[and] devoted
to advancing
the gospel.

What's the news, Captain Bates?" James Madison Monroe Hall famously asked in 1846. "The seventh day is the Sabbath," replied Joseph Bates. The exchange summed up the greatest contribution of Bates to our early church: infusing Sabbatarianism into the apocalypticism of Millerism. The very name of our movement, Seventh-day Adventism, suggests the centrality of these two propositions.

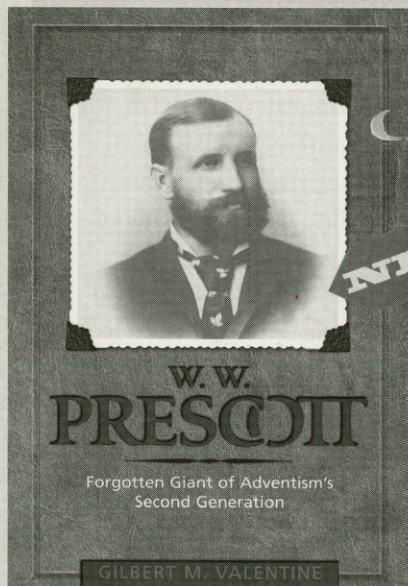
Still, George Knight's title, *Joseph Bates: the Real Founder of Seventh-day Adventism*, hints at marketing department hyperbole. James White, the great organizer, and Ellen Harmon White, the prophetic confirmer of doctrine, were fully as necessary to the movement's early success. But Knight should be granted his point. In Adventist historical memory, Bates's name occupies a distant third place to the two Whites. Knight will have served a useful purpose if he can restore Bates to an equal station.

Bates is generally remembered for his seafaring background, a profession unusual in the ranks of antebellum religious and social reformers. His adventures on the

high seas—in particular his experience of being impressed into the British navy and subsequent imprisoned in bleak Dartmoor Prison—make for vivid reading. These tales, though briefly recounted, are not a focus of Knight's study. If one desires a vivid narrative retelling of Bates's life one must turn to Godfrey Anderson's 1972 volume, *Outrider of the Apocalypse: Life and Times of Joseph Bates*. Anderson did pioneering work on Bates's life and produced work that remains the best general account of the Adventist pioneer.

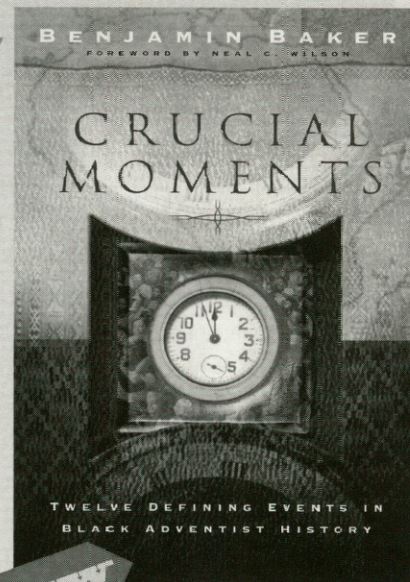
A reader needn't stop there. Joseph Bates himself produced an autobiography published in 1868, which is primarily devot-

Explore Your Heritage



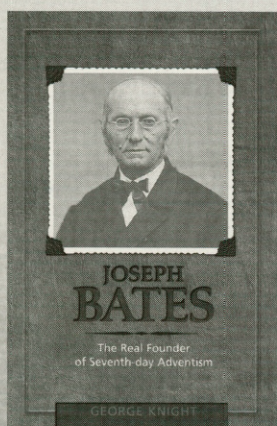
W. W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation

Gilbert Valentine examines Prescott's impact on the church's educational system, then looks at how he helped reshape the theology and the policies of the church during a critical church era. Hardcover, 335 pages. 0-8280-1892-8. US\$19.99, Can\$26.99.



Crucial Moments

Benjamin Baker's lively, easy-to-read narrative traces the hand of God in the growth of the Adventist movement. In stories that provoke and instruct, he portrays the 12 most significant events in the history of Black Seventh-day Adventists. Paperback, 128 pages. 0-8280-1882-0. US\$9.99, Can\$13.49.

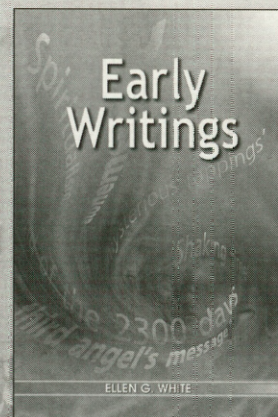


Joseph Bates: Founder of Seventh-day Adventism

George Knight sheds new light on the first theologian and real founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, who gave his estate to the new Advent movement and spent the rest of his life in unpaid service to his King. Hardcover, 292 pages. 0-8280-1815-4. US\$16.99, Can\$25.99. Sale, US\$15.49, Can\$23.49.

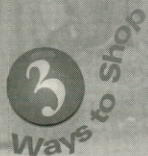
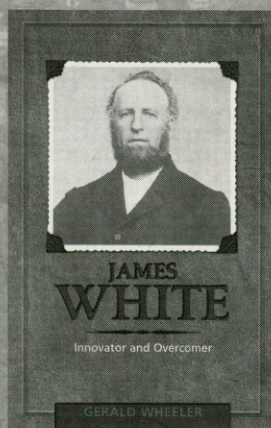
Early Writings

This book contains a selection of Ellen White's writings from the 1850s and an autobiographical section on her, plus information on the early Adventist believers. Paperback edition. 1-904685-13-7. US\$9.99, Can\$13.49.



James White: Innovator and Overcomer

Gerald Wheeler provides a fascinating look at James White, the man from Maine who organized a denomination, served as its leader, and founded four journals, two publishing houses, and one university. Hardcover, 256 pages. 0-8280-1719-0. US\$16.99, Can\$25.49.



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Price and availability subject to change. Add GST in Canada.

ed to his seagoing adventures. His vivid stories of life in the British navy and experiences in South America is, overall, a primary source worthy of broad circulation among scholars and general readers with an interest in nineteenth-century seafaring history. (Making this easier is a 2004 reprint of his *Autobiography*, with a foreword by Gary Land, by Andrews University Press, part of the Adventist Classic Library.)

George Knight's interests, however, are less with adventure than influence. *Joseph Bates* is a work less polished than Knight's *Millennial Fever: A Study of Millerite Adventism* (2000) or *From 1888 to Apostasy: The Case of A. T. Jones* (1987), but it is one that repays careful reading. An historian on the prowl for new evidence, Knight utilizes recently uncovered sources, such as a cache of Bates letters. He details the multiple contributions Bates made to Adventism and provokes (at least in this reader) reflections on how the institutional face of Adventism is indeed the extended shadow of its founders.

And what were Bates's contributions? First and foremost, he was among the first Millerites to embrace the Sabbath, having read Thomas Preble's tract on the subject and then traveled to New Hampshire to meet with the clutch of early Millerite Sabbathkeepers there. Bates became the seventh-day's greatest advocate among the Disappointed. He brought the message to the soon-to-be-married Ellen Harmon and James White.

Furthermore, Bates invested the Sabbath doctrine with prophetic significance. The Sabbath was the test that would distinguish the remnant; it was implicit, thought Bates, in the Three Angels' Message. Bates, anointed by Knight as Sabbatarian Adventism's first theologian, also was its first historian in the sense of placing the little Adventist band in the great flow of prophetic history.

Bates was a tireless missionary. Through New England and New York he carried the Sabbath advent message; then in the 1850s his itinerancies took him to Michigan, where he effectively established the movement in what would become the keystone state of Adventism.

Finally, he was Adventism's first health reformer. He eschewed alcohol and tobacco as a young man, and meat and other rich foods shortly before 1844. Ellen White and other church notables caught up with him in the mid-1860s, after illness began decimating leadership. After White's early health reform visions of 1863 and 1865, Bates, who had previously kept his Spartan health regimen a private matter, felt freed to actively propagate the message of good living.

In *Joseph Bates*, George Knight reminds us again that our church doctrines did not spring fully formed from the brow of Ellen White. They emerged through prayer, study, and struggle. Knockdown theological battles with the Albany conference faction of Millerites took on the air of Trotskyite-Stalinist battles over minutia of communist doctrine. In this reading, Bates is Trotsky. He had the same unbending devotion to truth as he understood it, the same readiness to take on all comers (even willing in print to attack Miller himself).

This contentiousness extended to fellow Sabbatarian Adventists. When James White appeared insufficiently committed to an unsullied evangelism (White's desire to devote previous resources to founding *Present Truth* was evidence of backsliding), Bates almost broke with him, petulantly refusing for months to contribute a word to the journal. The struggles between the two men ultimately concerned leadership of the emerging movement. In this agon, the younger man, aided by a charismatic spouse, was destined to win. But unlike Trotsky, Bates was not banished to nether regions; indeed, it was a mark of his and White's Christian spirit and underlying comradeship that tensions would be surmounted, and the two men together continued shaping the young church well into the 1860s.

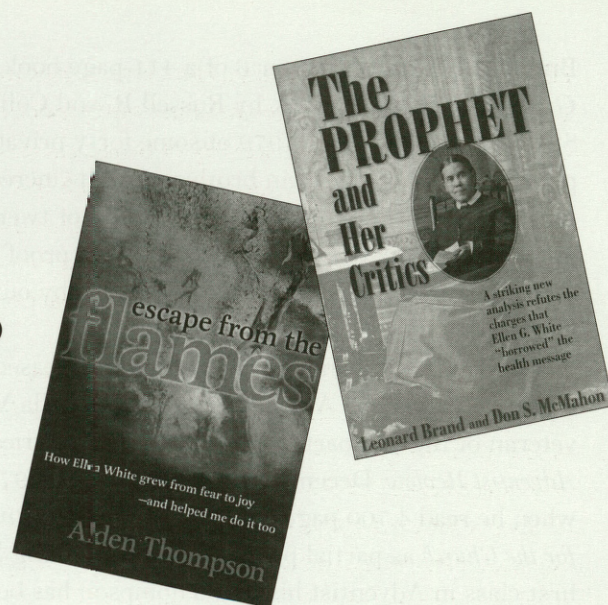
Joseph Bates's influence on Seventh-day Adventism was not merely theological or organizational. He contributed, less happily, to the strain of legalism that long infected the Church. Bates came by such a trait temperamentally. It was apparent in the ban on drink and swearing and imposed Sunday observance on his ship crews. It later surfaced in his attitude regarding Sabbath keeping. Knight acknowledges that Bates had an imperfect grasp of salvation by grace, preferring, it would seem, a behavioristic criterion for salvation. One must wonder whether Bates's failure to persuade any of his four surviving children to embrace Adventism had its cause in a sometimes unattractive version of the Adventist gospel.

But such should not be the last word on Joseph Bates. A man who poured the considerable savings of his seafaring career into his mission (living the last half of his life in near penury) and whose every sentient moment seemed devoted to advancing the gospel is one to admire. And George Knight, who has explored so many vital corners of early Adventism, is to be thanked for reminding us of our debt to the intrepid sea captain.

Benjamin McArthur chairs the History Department at Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee.

Prophets Are Human! Are Humans Prophets?

By Arthur Patrick



The evidence suggests that both these statements indicate a three-letter response: Yes. If so, the Adventist dialogue and dialectic about Ellen White is set for a new level of intensity and usefulness. Indeed, five recent books by six Adventist authors, read together, indicate that a crucial tipping point in Adventist Studies is already here.

Graeme Bradford's *Prophets are Human* is from the publishing house serving the South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists (SPD). Released at the Ellen White Summit sponsored by the SPD in February 2004, Bradford's book—a mere ninety-one pages—delivers a heavy message in light language: Ellen White is an inspired prophet and an authentic human being. Unpacked, these concepts mean she was the messenger of a loving God to a struggling Advent movement and its people, even though she made mistakes in peripheral matters.

Bradford is at heart an evangelist; by employment he is a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Theology at Avondale College. According to the back cover of his book, he "is an honest seeker who writes honest answers to questions about Ellen White" (William Johnsson, editor, *Adventist Review*);

he merits "highest admiration...for his personal integrity and commitment to truth" (Barry Oliver, SPD secretary). SPD president Laurie Evans states in his foreword: "This book is long overdue."

Others offer contrasting assessments. One thought leader in Ellen White matters wrote a personal letter to Bradford from Adventist world headquarters in the United States. His twenty-nine pages of concerns are similar to those made public by Angel Rodriguez (*Reflections*, newsletter of the Biblical Research Institute, April 2005, pages 8–10) and Gerhard Pfandl, a BRI staffer in an eight-page review. All three focus on the core issue: inspiration. For Pfandl, "*Prophets are Human* is seriously deficient"; for Rodriguez it is "not representative" of Adventist thought.

But the most strident dismissal of

Graeme Bradford, *Prophets are Human* (Warburton, Victoria, Australia: Signs, 2005)

Leonard Brand and Don S. McMahon, *The Prophet and Her Critics* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2005)

Don S. McMahon, *Acquired or Inspired? Exploring the Origins of the Adventist Lifestyle* (Warburton, Victoria, Australia: Signs, 2005)

Russell R. Standish and Colin D. Standish, *The Greatest of All the Prophets* (Rapidan, Va.: Hartland, 2004)

Alden Thompson, *Escape from the Flames: How Ellen White Grew from Fear to Joy—and Helped Me to Do it Too* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2005).



Bradford comes in Chapter 6 of a 411-page book, *The Greatest of All the Prophets*, by Russell R. and Colin D. Standish, authors since 1979 of some forty privately published books. The twin brothers find it “incredible” that Bradford’s book “passed the scrutiny of twenty individuals” (30); they lament it is another proof that “alas, the omega of apostasy, as prophesied by our prophet for these days, is a reality” (43).

But help is at hand. Pacific Press has released a winsome volume by Alden Thompson of Walla Walla, veteran of the five-part “Sinai to Golgotha” series in *Adventist Review*, December 1981. Ever since 1979, when he read 4,700 pages of Ellen White’s *Testimonies for the Church* as partial preparation for teaching his first class in Adventist history, Thompson has been brewing his understanding of inspiration with reference to both Scripture and Ellen White’s writings.

The result is a “growth model” that offers solutions for the most intense issues that have been under debate for thirty-five years, since *Spectrum* began to bring them into the open for Adventists. Like Bradford’s book, Thompson’s volume is written in language accessible to a wide readership under an engaging title: *Escape from the Flames: How Ellen White Grew from Fear to Joy—and Helped Me to Do it Too*.

But there is more help, much more. Two new volumes present the research of an Australian medical specialist: *Acquired or Inspired? Exploring the Origins of the Adventist Lifestyle*, and *The Prophet and Her Critics*.

The Prophet and Her Critics is co-authored by Leonard Brand of Loma Linda University and Don S. McMahon of Melbourne, Australia. Brand is uniquely qualified to intensify the appeal of McMahon’s research for North American readers. Brand provides a context for re-evaluating the earlier research of Ronald Numbers on health (1976), Jon Butler on prophetic fulfillment (1979), and Walter Rea on literary relationships (1982) in particular.

Brand proposes that the “quality of their research” should be examined to see “(1) whether their logic meets an acceptable scholarly standard, avoiding serious logical errors; (2) whether their data support the conclusions they reach; and (3) whether their research design adequately supports their conclusions” (14). Then Chapter 5, titled “The Test,” summarizes McMahon’s research and notes that the CD included with McMahon’s volume makes available the data from which his conclusions were formed.

Back in 1987, McMahon was rereading the *Minis-*

try of Healing, testing his hunch “that most—if not all—modern, health/lifestyle risk factors were covered by Ellen White” (*Inspired or Acquired?* 139). A long engagement with historical and scientific issues followed, as he identified “health and medical statements” that implied *what* should be done by the individual and *why* it should be done.

Finally, with the help of a CD-ROM that enabled him to search Ellen White’s writings on computer and date any given statement, he compared her writings with those of five other nineteenth-century health advocates. Three medical colleagues checked McMahon’s analyses; a statistician contributed a probability study that gave him his greatest surprise: “The chances were astronomically against random chance” (141).

There may well be extended discussion amongst medicos and others about the specifics within McMahon’s analyses of the *whats* and the *whys* enunciated by Ellen White, and the ways in which these transcend or compare with the recommendations of Sylvester Graham, Bronson Alcott, Larkin B. Coles, James C. Jackson, and John Harvey Kellogg. The *what* statements in *Spiritual Gifts* (1864) may have a 96 percent congruence with twenty-first-century medical opinion; some 38 percent of its *why* statements are considered verified by the same standard. (McMahon offers analyses of White’s health writings up to the *Ministry of Healing* and wisely assesses the fluidity of medical opinion.)

Mathematics experts and statisticians will, no doubt, pore over the probability and variance proposals. But the big issue is clear: whereas most nineteenth-century medical writers wilt under scrutiny, Ellen White is exceptional. McMahon concludes: “When the knowledge of the mid-19th century is taken into consideration, it is impossible to exclude inspiration from Ellen White’s writings”; indeed, these writings “should not be rejected; it is essential they be carefully studied and appreciatively implemented” (142).

With Thompson and McMahon’s research plus Brand’s interpretive framework, Adventists lose some and win much. The Standish brothers lose most. Prophets are human. But humans are prophets. Anyone ignoring this groundbreaking research and its relevance for the ongoing conversation about the life and writings of Ellen White will quickly be out of date.

Arthur Patrick is a research fellow at Avondale College, Cooranbong, Australia.

Circles of Light

By Nancy Lecourt

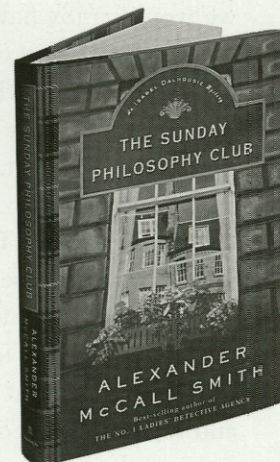
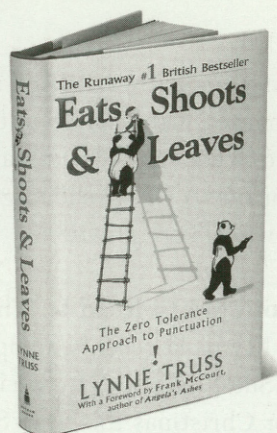
At the present moment, you, Reader, are sitting in a circle of light, reading *Spectrum*. As readers, we travel from book to magazine to newspaper and back, always scanning the horizon for what will next appear on the bed table or beside our favorite chair. We read many things for many reasons. Here are some of mine at the moment.

I'm Stuck in the Middle Seat. On a recent airplane trip to Washington D. C. to visit a new baby in the family, I left my body stuck in its tiny space while my mind took a vacation with the help of *The Sunday Philosophy Club* by Alexander McCall Smith. Since I love his series, which begins with *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*, this book might also be categorized as "I Love Anything by this Author."

In any case, it belongs to the Miss Marple genre of murder mysteries, where

the "detective" is some innocuous and unassuming person, often a woman (though Chesterton's Father Brown is an avatar), who turns out actually to be far more observant and trenchant (Miss Marple famously has "a mind like a meat cleaver") than police or other official investigators.

These books tend to be more about character and setting than plot, and *The Sunday Philosophy Club* is no exception: set in present-day Edinburgh, it is Scottish to the core. It introduces us to many people



Billy Collins, *Sailing Alone Around the Room* (New York: Random House, 2002)

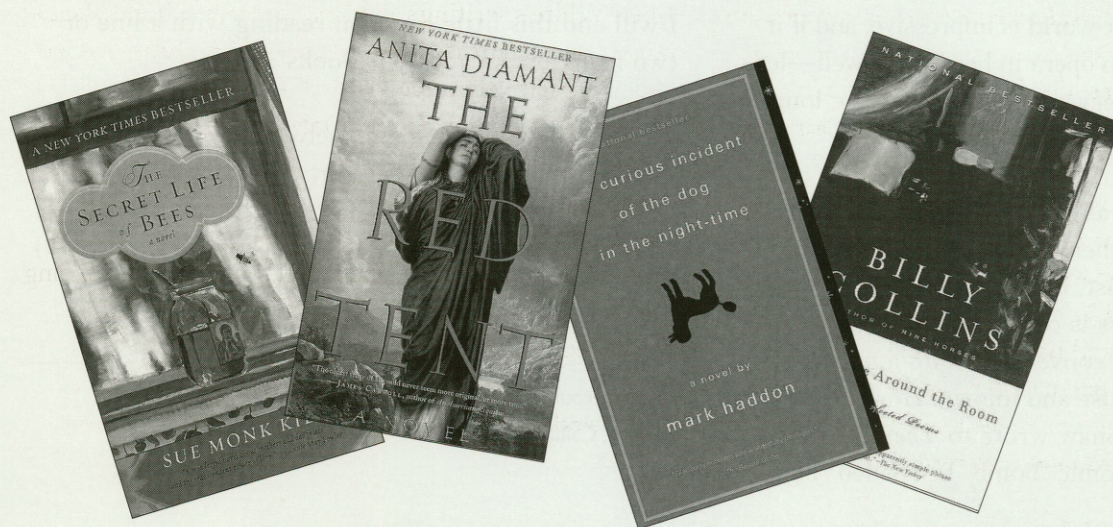
Anita Diamant, *The Red Tent* (New York: St. Martin's, 1997)

Mark Haddon, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (Canada: Doubleday, 2002).

Sue Monk Kidd, *The Secret Life of Bees* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2002)

Alexander Smith McCall, *The Sunday Philosophy Club* (New York: Pantheon, 2004)

Lynn Truss, *Eats, Shoots and Leaves* (New York: Penguin, 2003)



we would enjoy having tea with, not least among whom is the main character, the editor of the *Journal of Applied Ethics*, who is constantly ruminating on the moral implications of life. A light read; a good read. Before you know it, wheels are down.

A Friend I Trust Told Me to Read It. This category is endless, of course. My most recent example is *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kid. I gave it to most of my own friends for Christmas this year. Set in South Carolina in 1964, it is a coming-of-age novel, really, and tells the story of a runaway white girl who finds

order to save useless work and make the world a better place. Can we say, “monomania”?

I Read It for Work. In my case, this means choosing books for my literature classes, and in this category comes a surprising book that my students (all but one) enjoyed very much: *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon. The narrator is a fifteen-year-old autistic boy who is writing a mystery about the murder of the neighbor’s dog. The real purpose, of course, is to help us understand a little better what the world looks like to a boy like Christopher.

...I left my body stuck in its tiny space while my mind took a vacation with the help of...

herself in the middle of the civil rights movement, loved by and loving a community of black women who worship God by way of a statue of a Black Madonna and a lot of honey. I know, it sounds strange—just read it. I also recommend the book on tape/CD version. The voice is just right.

I Found It at the Thrift Store. I’m a firm believer in serendipity, so when a nice new copy of *The Red Tent* by Anita Diamant presented itself for \$1.99, I knew the time had come to read this book I’ve been hearing about since it first appeared in 1997.

For those of you who haven’t read it, the protagonist/narrator is Dinah, only daughter of Jacob. She tells the story from the moment Jacob arrives chez Laban (her mother and the other women of the camp have told her the story many times) to Joseph’s bringing his two sons to be blessed by Jacob before he dies. Diamant’s recreation of this ancient world is impressive, and if it sounds a bit like a soap opera in her hands, well—let’s face it, romance, adultery, deceit, rape, murder, long-lost family, revenge—it’s all there in Genesis!

Everyone’s Talking about It. I am an English teacher, after all, so when a book about punctuation made the best-seller list, I had to get it. *Eats, Shoot and Leaves* by Lynne Truss is certainly amusing, and oh-so-British. It may not convert you into a punctuation fanatic, but it will amuse and inform. How’s this for surprising? Bernard Shaw wrote to *The Times* in 1945 to suggest that the atomic “bomb” be spelled “bom” in

And as my students felt, we don’t just learn about him—we learn from him. Here is their favorite quote:

Prime numbers are what is left when you have taken all the patterns way. I think prime numbers are like life. They are very logical but you could never work out the rules, even you spent all your time thinking about them. (12)

I Need a Poem Once in a While. I confess, I am not a big reader of poetry. But I tuned in to National Public Radio in the car one Sunday a few years ago and was mesmerized by the voice and texture and well, lightness, of the poetry being read by someone who turned out to be Billy Collins. *Sailing Alone Around the Room* is the book I have, but I’d recommend anything by him. His poems are accessible, welcoming, and yet often poignant and profound. I will end this little essay on reading with a line or two from his poem titled “Books”:

I see all of us reading ourselves away from ourselves,
straining in circles of light to find more light
until the line of words becomes a trail of crumbs
that we follow across a page of fresh snow;... (12)

And so I wish you happy trails.

Nancy Lecourt is a professor of English at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Varieties of Religious Experience

I am interested in comparative religion. I think your journal is playing an important role in broadening the intellectual horizons of Seventh-day Adventists.

I think the time has come for all Christians to recognize that Jesus is one way to attain salvation, but not the only way. God is revealed in all faiths in different ways. This does not mean that everything in every religion is equally good. We should be critical in our study of scriptures, including the Bible.

For instance, the biblical view on slavery is simply unacceptable, and the same goes for its teaching on the position of women. A literal, fundamentalist interpretation of the early chapters of Genesis does not stand up to scientific scrutiny. Also, the way Old Testament prophecies are applied to Jesus is problematic.

What I am trying to say is that every holy book has scientific and ethical problems and Christians should recognize this with reference to their own Scriptures. If they do this, they will become more broad-minded and find truth in other scriptures and other theologies.

I am not an apologist for a non-Christian religion. In fact, I am a convert to Christ from Hinduism. But I think Christian missionaries do more harm than good by preach-

ing that there is only one door to salvation. I find Christ more spiritually inspiring, but I do not reject the possibility that others find similar inspiration in other faiths.

*Meera Gargi
India*

On Media

Regarding the history of Adventist media (winter 2005), particularly print media, the author focused upon the media of communication while not always addressing the nature of the church that media serves.

Adventism evolved through three major phases of community, from a propositional message-centered activity (“preach truth”), to an institutional-centric church (“do good”), to a congregational-centric experience (where media serves to nurture). Preaching and writing (primarily one-way forms of communication) are in the Adventist “DNA.” This reflects a more fundamental human need to express and be appreciated.

The article hinted at something I find significant—Adventist publishing capacity far exceeds the ability of Adventist authors to write good and useful content. Thus, it became too easy to write and publish a book without regard to the value of the text. Yet church members did buy many of those books.

That drive for expression has fueled, I fear, duplication of ministries in all major genres. (This phenomenon is not unique to Adventism—just listen to rural AM radio on a Sunday morning.) Duplication and fuzziness of market needs continues to this day.

The human need for expression often occurs without understanding the nature of the audience or medium. The ratio of writers to readers is too high. The portion of good writers is too low. And in television, it is easy to tune the content to the most available and responsive audience (retired Adventists with the time to watch all this programming).

There are models available for breaking down audiences in the U.S. demographically. But few Adventist communicators seem to use them or be interested.

The author’s (correct) observations of the success of the newstand and proliferation of journals speak not to the allure of print so much as to the fragmentation of cultures, markets, audiences, and economies that enable “niche” journals to thrive. So media (print or otherwise) must be understood in the context of message, audience, and purpose. Understanding these, we can better understand and manage communications and media.

*Michael Scofield
Loma Linda, Calif.*

Real Sanctuary

I read though the *Spectrum* issue with the articles on the sanctuary and Adventist media (winter 2005). I have to say that I found the article about Hiram Edson rather odd. Trying to speculate on an unprovable experience to what end? If we could determine it was a vision would it mean he had to be a prophet? Or maybe we could not question it? The issue seems immaterial.

The article about differences of view between Clifford Goldstein, Desmond Ford, and Dale Ratzlaff was interesting but I began to wonder if anyone actually looked at the sanctuary as it might apply to reality. Then I read Chris Blake's article. He wrote about a sanctuary that is real in the world I live in. And you know what? The world to come or an existing heaven cannot be imagined.

Everything we are told can only be put into words that conform or parallel our earthly experience. Biblically, that would in some cases be a here and now of a few thousand years ago. We are here and it is now and we all have a deep thirsting for sanctuary.

Dick Larsen
via e-mail

R.I.P.

Here is my response to the following statement by the president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, namely: "I would give my life for the Church" (winter 2005, 3).

Humm, prima facie a novel idea, I must admit, and not a theological and/or Socratic but

Pavlovian statement!
When is the funeral?
Oremus!
Graciously in Christ,

Arnold Illanz-Barres
Berrien Springs, Mich.

Sunday Worship

In its last couple issues, *Spectrum* has run a half-page ad with the heading "Two Congregations, One Holy Church." The ad is for Roy Gee's Auburn Gospel Fellowship and Rick Kuykendall's First Congregational Church. The ad shows that we have services on both Sabbath and Sunday. The question has been asked of me, "If you are a Sabbatarian, how can you pastor a church that worships on Sunday?" This is my answer.

Because of my Adventist background and education, I am well aware that there is no biblical basis for the institution of Sunday worship anywhere in Scripture. The making of Sunday into the Christian Sabbath was a later development. On the other hand, nowhere in Scripture is there a commandment to attend church on Sabbath.

Although we cannot be sure exactly when synagogues began to appear, we do know that God never commanded their establishment as places of worship. That does not mean it wasn't a good idea; it just means that God never commanded it. This is one reason we are told in Luke 4:16 that Jesus "went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom" (NIV)—not, "according to the commandment."

I think it is a great idea to worship every Sabbath in a local church, and I personally try my best to do just that in attending the Auburn Gospel Fellowship. I conduct worship services on Sunday not because I believe that the Sabbath was changed to Sunday, but because that is the "custom" of the people that attend the church where I am pastor. I have preached to them about the ongoing validity of the seventh-day Sabbath, and they know that I worship on Sabbath. What they do with that knowledge is between them and God. And as I recall, there is no commandment among the 613 laws of the Torah that forbids worship on Sunday....

Rick Kuykendall
Auburn, Calif.

Correction

I thought the winter 2005 issue was excellent—a very interesting look at media in our church. Way to go!

However, in "A Print-Driven Church," by Bruce Manners (which was a good article), I was disappointed to see that the only mention of Pacific Press was completely false.

Pacific Press *did not* reduce its lineup from sixty to thirty books in 2004. Pacific Press's annual trade book lineup (that is, books sold in Adventist Book Centers) has averaged around forty to fifty new books each year since the early 1990s.

Nicole Batten
Director of Publicity/Public Relations
Pacific Press
Nampa, Idaho

Get Smart or Turn Out the Lights

FROM
AAF

Urban life in the Greco-Roman world was brutal, chaotic, and steeped in misery. But much of the attendant heartbreak was acceptable to its most honored citizens.

Seneca, the famous Roman moralist, endorsed the drowning of unwanted babies. Roman legislators accorded the male in a household so much power he could order (!) a woman to abort her child. When in the second century it dawned on the physician Galen—the *physician* Galen—that a deadly epidemic was breaking out in Rome, he fled from the scene of sickness to an estate in Asia Minor, where he could be safe from danger.

Christianity grew because it was an innovative response to all of this. Infanticide was sin. Marriage was symmetrical, the wife respecting the husband and the husband respecting the wife. During the two epidemics that struck the Empire in the first few centuries of the Church's life, Christians nursed the sick instead of running from them.

By the fourth century, the Roman emperor Julian, hoping to stem Christian growth and revitalize paganism, was urging pagans to fight back by becoming benevolent themselves. But pagan ideas could not animate generosity, not the sort you met in the Church. Pagan gods made ritual demands, but they did not ask for ethical commitment. So the people who worshiped these gods remained in their indifference.

As the sociologist Rodney Stark shows in his *Rise of Christianity*, the early Church prospered against pagan competition because its ideas were better, and its embodiment of these ideas truly revolutionary.

Now as then, the local congregation is the testing ground for whether Christian ideas are worth supporting. Now as then, whether the theory behind congregational life actually helps individuals and communities to thrive matters deeply. And now as then, the catalyst for the new and richer perspective always needed in the Church is the conversation—disciplined and Bible-centered—that goes on among believers.

Every congregation is an experiment in Christian life. In interactions with one another and with the wider world, members of congregations road test what they share and learn in conversation. Then (if they are faithful) they come together for more conversation, working for

ever fresher and more authentic models of the Christian theory that gives shape and motivation to their witness.

As better ideas once helped the Church to succeed against paganism, better ideas must help us today to meet the challenges that come from secularism and from other religious visions.

Fearful Christians shy away from honest talk, or even make today's orthodoxy a thing as rigid as a stick. But only God is in heaven. We are on earth. So we lack God's eye view, see through a glass darkly, need always to grow in understanding. That's why anyone, high or low, who stifles forthright conversation puts at jeopardy not only the Church's mission but also the human flourishing that is the mission's point.

The best venue for life-transforming talk remains the Sabbath School. Here, on a day when the commerce and clatter of ordinary time subside, we may reconsider the biblical vision. Here we may participate in what Kathleen Norris calls "the continual process of learning (and re-learning) what it means to love God, my neighbor, and myself." Here we may resist the dumbing down of the Church, and embrace the unfiltered and passionate debate that leads not only to better ideas, but also to better lives and a better world.

By God's grace, better ideas defeated paganism. Without better ideas, the early church would have failed. What is more, without better ideas, the Church today will fail. Our calling as members of the Association of Adventist Forums is to resist such failure by creating community through the kind of conversation that ushers healing change into human interaction.

Thanks to the gifts God gives, we may put our time and talent into discussion-focused Sabbath Schools, or into other venues for life-changing conversation. And it surely matters that we do so. Better ideas make a difference, and so does their absence. If we don't get smart, and stay smart, we'll have to turn out the lights.

Charles Scriven

AAF Board Chairman

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Sonnet 98

By Heidi Tompkins

She doesn't understand this fantasy.
She just read Uncle Arthur as a child.
Her fears speak of lost opportunity
To meet symbolic truth amidst the wild.
Her world is tied for safety to the real
(which really is not safe), a world so round
It shuns foreign dimensions' strange appeal.
Is this the Christian life — to kiss the ground?
St. Stephen spoke of Moses, but he died
For his vision of heaven. Daniel dreamed
Of beasts; she doesn't shudder — they're a guide.
She picks one light. How many might have gleamed!
Man cannot know the things God has prepared.
It is through symbols His wide world is bared.

In May 2005, Heidi Tompkins graduated summa cum laude from Southern Adventist University with a bachelor's degree in English.