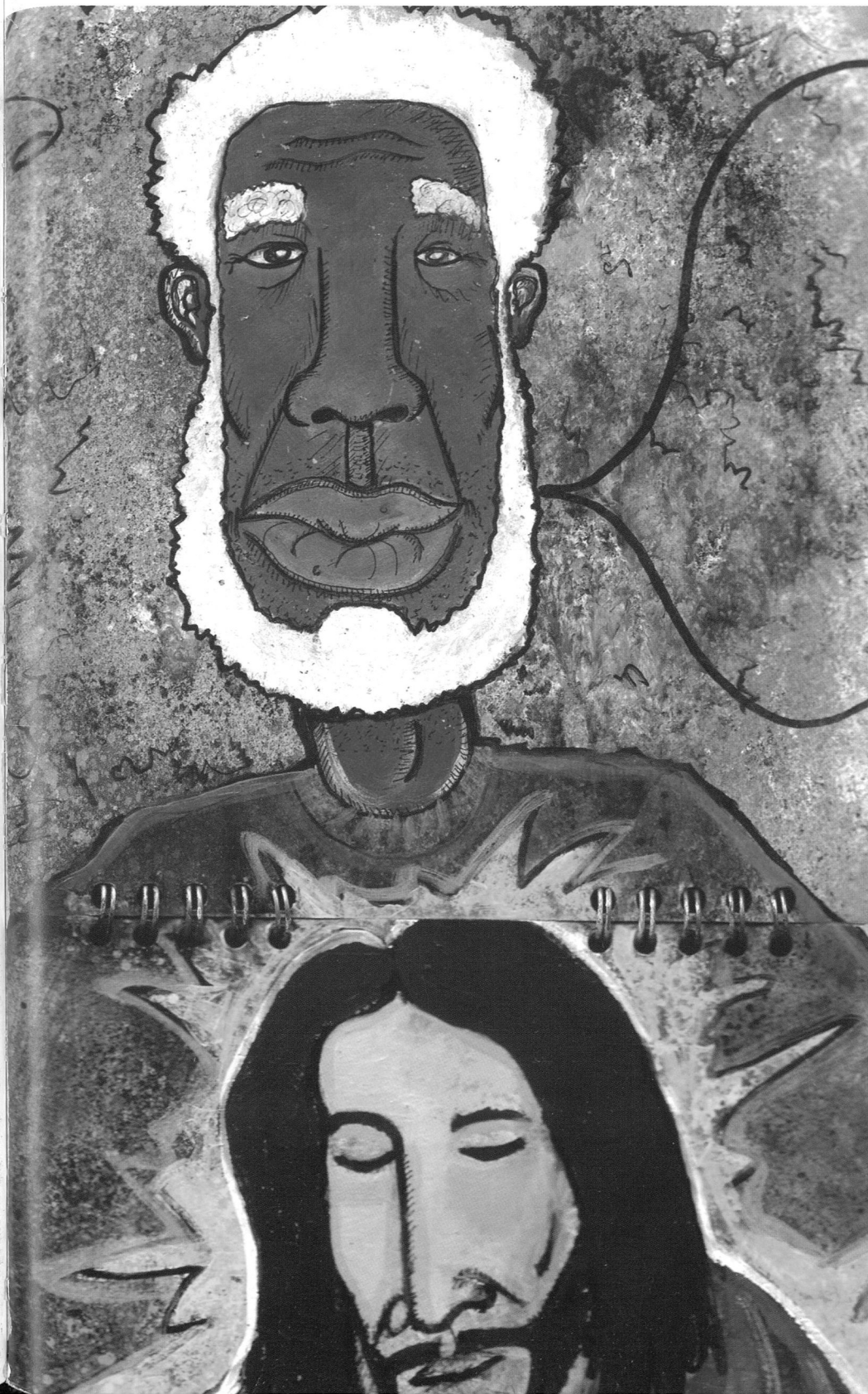


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SPECTRUM

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Things Fall Apart

Holy Discontent at Willow Creek

The Parallel Society

Breaking the Glass Ceiling

Living Through the Greatest Religious Change in History

Before I Left for College

Center for Adventist Research
Andrews University
Berrien Springs Michigan

Call Me Ishmael

www.spectrummagazine.org

SPECTRUM

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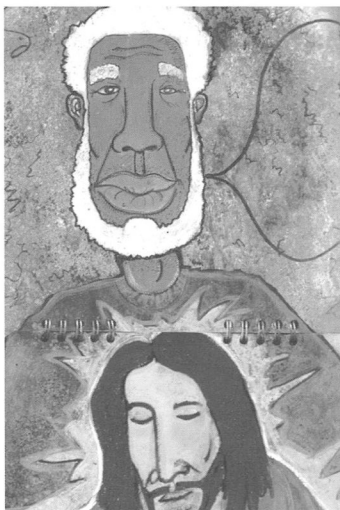
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Title of Painting: *The Old Man*

About the Cover Art:

I have a brother in jail and wanted to do something for him that would have a lasting effect on him while there. So I decided to paint a book of images that expressed what I wanted to say, knowing that a picture is worth a thousand words. This picture is one of those images. The old man with Jesus in his heart represents the wisdom that comes with old age. I don't want my brother to wait until it is too late to open his heart to Jesus.

About the Artist:

A senior theology/graphic design major at Walla Walla College, London L. Lee was a missionary in Japan for four years. While there, he taught English and Bible, along with graphic design and fine art. He and his wife of three years, Nikisha, plan to become career missionaries after they finish school.

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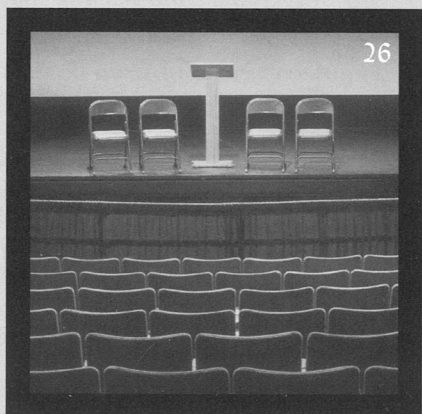
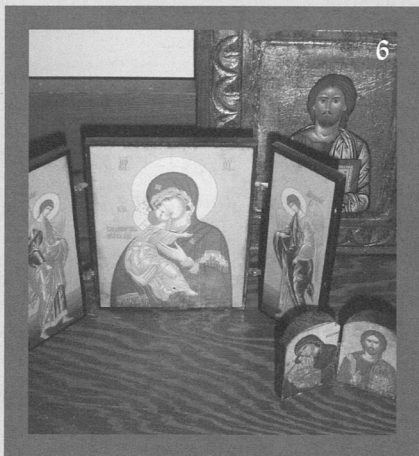
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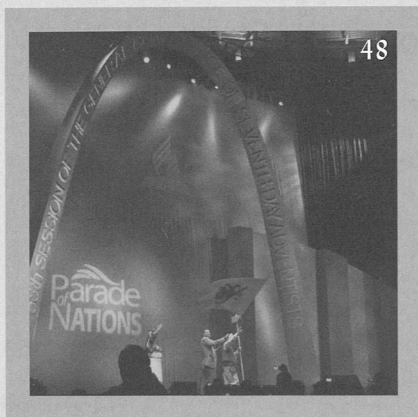
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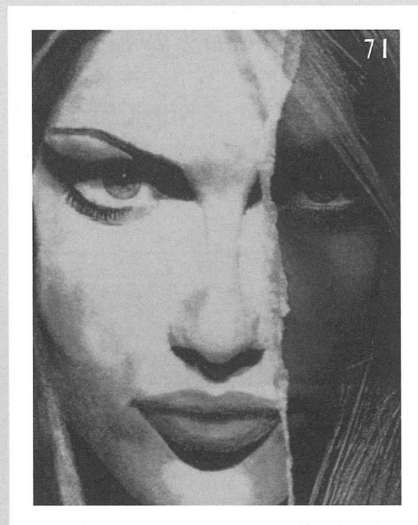
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The Coded Talk of Friendship

*... and your comment, so astute and perfectly weird,
made me feel enclosed again in the coded talk
of friendship, that tall pagoda
where companions can sit on pillows
and observe the great China of life filing by
and say whatever comes to mind.*

(Billy Collins, "Influence," in *The Art of Drowning*, 12)

Well, here you have it in your hand, dear friend, the great China of this Adventist life filing by with the summer's cargo of experiences. Were we to find ourselves ensconced in that tall pagoda of friendship, sitting on pillows, having a cup of tea, these are probably some of the comments that I would make about this past summer.

After describing the heat of Saint Louis, and the fun we had taking nighttime photos in front of the city's famous arch that gave us halos from the reflection of the flash, I would want to say something profound about this year's General Conference. And I would try to wax eloquent about the Church being the people, and then just give up and talk about the Jamaican women.

They seemed to be there by the hundreds. Some travel agent must have put together a really great vacation package. They did not have a booth to staff, they were not delegates, or presenters, or up for election. They brought their friends and enthusiasm and seemed to tour through the exhibit hall at least once a day. And then I'd have to add to them the women of Nigeria, who clearly won the fashion award for best costumes. I bought one of their dresses, I loved them so much.

And, the elections, you would say, trying to get me back on track.

Jan Paulsen gives me hope for the Adventist Church; he's a good man.

Why do you say that?

Because of his nomination of a woman to be a vice president of the Church, and his defense of that nomination. Finally, the majority of the members have one of their own in the inner circle.

And?

His openness, his interest in conversation, his

emphasis on the youth, his love for the Church.

Before I ended up sounding like a public relations machine, I'd have to switch the subject to the "Blues" that I heard my last night there, or the restaurants, or the jewel box conservatory that I visited across town.

Then we'd talk about your family, your funniest experience of late. "And so what else is new?" you would ask.

Then I'd tell you about the Lake Region Conference story that has taken over my life for the past month.

"Don't you get discouraged when you hear about all these problems?" you'd ask.

Yes, and no. There are problems, but the people give me hope. To talk with them about them is to hear how much they love the Church, no matter how flawed. They want to fix it, make it better. Their commitment is inspiring.

Yes, it's been a summer of extremes—the highs of General Conference immediately contrasted by the lows of financial malfeasance. The ribbon of hope that runs through all of it is the love and enthusiasm of the people for their church.

Call me weird, but that's the way I see it.

Bonnie Dwyer
Editor

NOTEWORTHY



Holy Discontent at Willow Creek

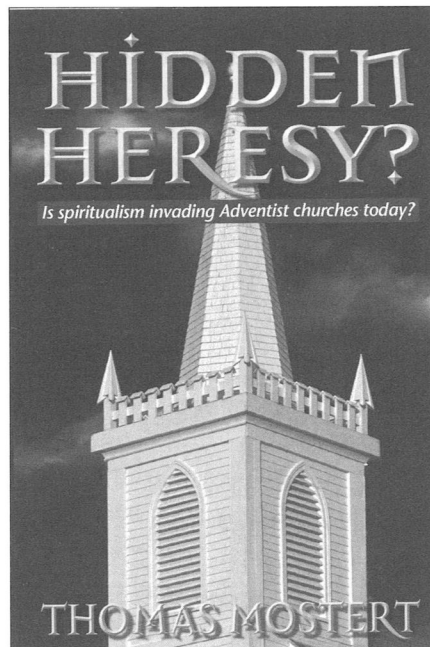
By Bonnie Dwyer

It begins with drums, an extended vibrant drum solo. Acts 2:42–47 appears on the video screens throughout the auditorium, but it is not read aloud. Instead an ethereal voice soars above the drums, scenic landscape images roll across video screens, then slides of churches, and finally people. Dancers fill the stage. “Shout into the darkness,” the singers say, “calling out that there is hope.”

As the music ascends in a final measure, a lectern is lifted to the stage. Jim Mellado, president of the Willow Creek Association, walks out to welcome the seven thousand people clapping in the auditorium, as well as the ones who are watching via satellite in one hundred cities. The tenth annual Willow Creek Leadership Summit is underway.

Mellado makes a point of saying that Willow Creek is dedicated to serving the local church, but by now people in business and industry are benefiting from the leadership summit, too. And the lineup of speakers reflects the cross-over.

In addition to two of the best-known preachers in America today—Bill Hybels and Rick Warren—the conference participants will hear Colleen Barrett, president of



Southwest Airlines; Ken Blanchard, author of the *One Minute Manager*; and Dr. Jack Groppel, a nutritionist and tennis trainer, among others.

Hybels receives a standing ovation as he takes the stage to give the opening presentation. He begins by affirming pastors, telling them he knows the dark nights of the soul that come with pastoral work, as well as the grand visions. “Church work is a forever game; you’re never just a pastor,” he says. “You’re at the helm of the most important ship on earth.”

Then he asks the key question of the day, of the seminar: what precedes the vision that is so often talked about in leadership books? What gives birth to it? Hybels first turns to the story of Moses in Egypt watching one of the

Hebrews being beaten. That incident drove Moses to kill the Egyptian and then into the desert where he at last agreed to work with God.

Next Hybels uses an example from the world of cartoons—Popeye. In the midst of the crisis central to each episode Popeye always exploded: “I can’t take it no more, that’s all I can stand,” and the audience chimes in with Hybels for the last line, “I’m Popeye the sailor man.”

So, Hybels asks the audience, “What is it that you can’t stand? What is your holy discontent? What is your Popeye moment?”

For the Adventist pastors in attendance from the Pacific Union Conference, part of their discontent could conceivably concern the recently published book by their union conference president, Thomas Mostert, called *Hidden Heresies*.

In it, Mostert strings together quotes from the writings of Ellen White to call into question the teachings of Bill Hybels, Rick Warren, Robert Schuller, and Joel Osteen. Mostert suggests that because they do not emphasize God’s law, hidden within their teachings is heresy that represents modern spiritualism.

The pastors from the Northern California Conference recently heard a presentation by Mostert at their camp meeting in which he suggested that a couple groups of pastors will have problems with his book’s mes-

sage. On the one hand, said Mostert, are the pastors who don't believe in the Spirit of Prophecy.

With that, he launched into an explanation of what pastors should do if they have disagreements with Ellen White. He told them to go to the ministerial director in their conference and work through this problem, but that it was not something that should drive them from the ministry.

By the time Mostert had finished addressing that issue the meeting had ended. The pastors disbursed and made comments about how disagreement with Mostert about Willow Creek indicated that you must not believe in the Spirit of Prophecy, because he never got around to the other part of his original point.

Many pastors would disagree with Mostert on his assertion that there are heresies hidden in the Willow Creek materials. Forty-five Seventh-day Adventist churches and organizations belong to the Willow Creek Association. The Adventist members include the Southern Union, the Washington Conference, the Center for Creative Ministries, and churches from Maine, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, Ohio, Michigan, Colorado, California, Nebraska, Virginia, Maryland, Arizona, and Washington.

"It is no doubt impossible to fully know which religious leaders God is using and which may be unknowingly following a plan created by His enemy," Mostert writes. "The fruitage of most Christian leaders and churches today seems positive. Large numbers of lives are changed from a secular focus to a commitment to Jesus. . . ."

"If God is leading Sunday churches to save people for the kingdom, are they not doing a work that is beyond the reach of Adventists? Shouldn't we thank God for what is

happening, use whatever good methods of theirs we can, and wait until the end-time events mature fully to worry about any dangers?"

"We could. But remember, Satan never uses a strategy that is too obvious. He is not only planning to use Sunday churches as part of his final great deception; he will also seek to sidetrack and neutralize the work of God's remnant church," Mostert says (28, 29).

The Adventist pastors at the Leadership Summit do not seem to let Mostert's comments sidetrack them. As they discuss the presentations they heard, they comment on how the nutritionist Dr. Groppe sounds like an Adventist in his advocacy of rest when he repeats the words about Sabbath from Genesis 2. They find Warren's advice practical, not heretical.

Warren continues the story of Moses that Hybels started and describes how God used what was in Moses' hand to accomplish his work. Moses' rod became the rod of God. "What is in your hand?" Warren asks.

"What is in your heart, what is in your hand?" That is what Sunset Oaks Seventh-day Adventist Church pastor Walt Groff says he is taking away from the leadership conference—that and batteries recharged for ministry in the local church.

Bonnie Dwyer is editor of *Spectrum* magazine.

A "Sistah's" Guide to Opera

By Nancy Lecourt

An Idaho afternoon in August: A thunderhead shadows creep across sage hills. A large white tent breathes lightly in the dry air. A thousand readers are gathered to hear the likes of Amy Tan, Thomas Cahill, Mitch Albom, Thomas

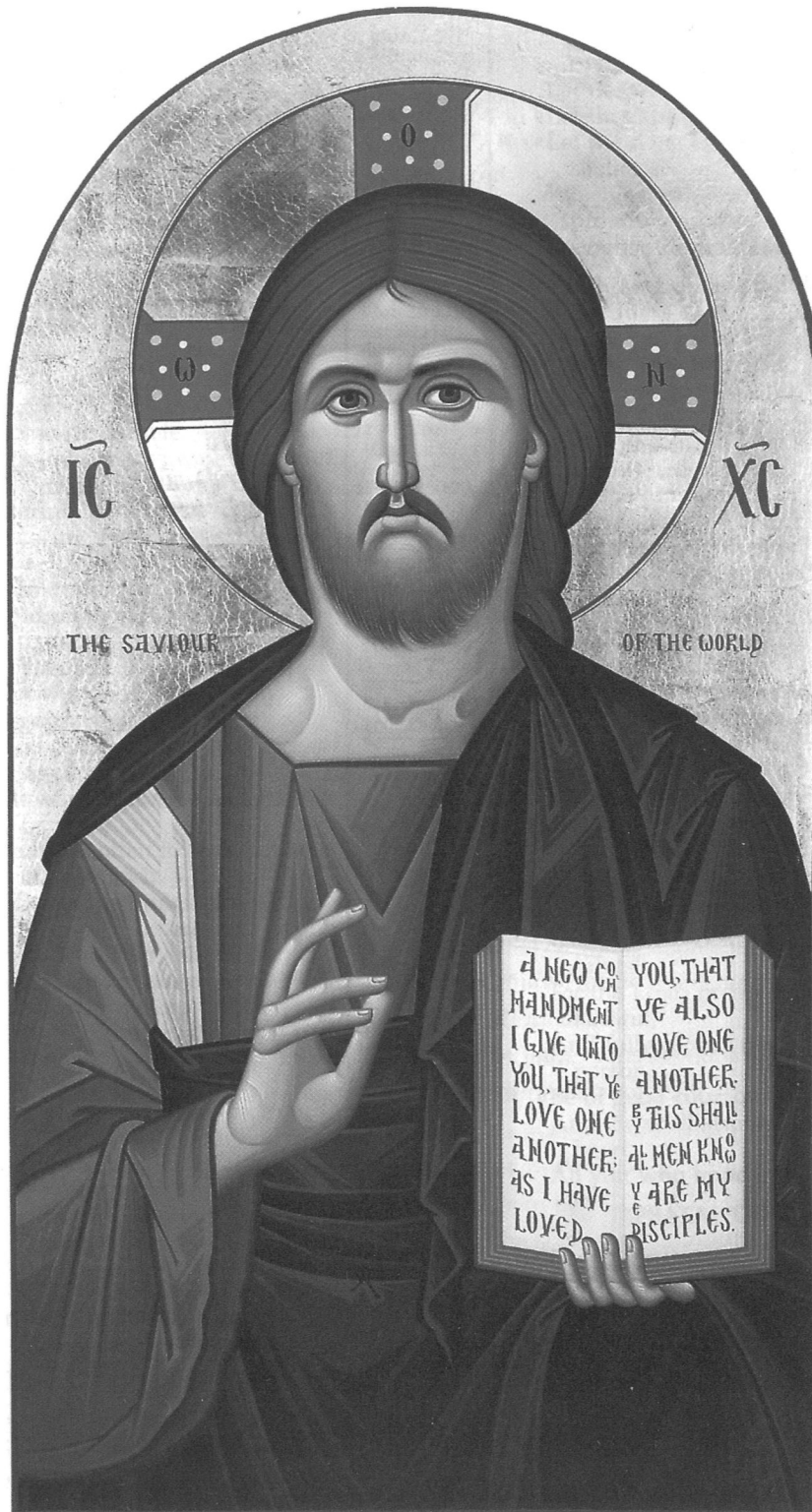
Keneally, and Dave Barry at the eleventh annual Sun Valley Writers' Conference. The audience is mostly white, privileged (Dave Barry: "Attention—there is a non-luxury car in the parking lot. It will be towed soon; in the meantime, please avert your eyes.")

The stage is Hemingway chic: large leather sofas, heavy tables, mission-style lamps, huge oak bookcases, horse blankets, a grand piano. The talk has been good, great even: poetry read by Billy Collins; comments on speaking "American" from Robert MacNeil; Michael Chabon's inspiring tale of writing his first novel.

The theme of the conference is "Writing in Unpredictable Times." W. S. Merwin has looked into the distance and recited recent poems about a black dog, about picking blueberries after dark—that is, about death. Firoozeh Dumas has told funny stories about her experience growing up Iranian in California in the 1970s. (The repairman arrives with an "I Play Cowboys and Iranians" bumper sticker; her mother promptly informs him that they are from "Toorkey.") David Macauley has talked in great detail about doing the drawings for his new book, *Mosque*—his response to the events of September 2001. ("I worked hard to get this right. I didn't want to have to change our dog's name from Faux Pas to Fatwah...")

There have been ideas, feelings, laughter, tears. Nothing seems to be missing. Still, when Angela Brown begins to sing on Sunday afternoon, the audience is stunned. Her grace and spirit are as welcome as the moist
Continued on page 61...

THE BIBLE



Discussed: the Second Commandment, Roman symbols, war of images, Christ Pantocrator, iconoclasts, First Council of Nicea, Roman and Eastern Orthodox Catholics, *Jesus of the People*

Picturing Christ: Incarnation and Iconography

By Cynthia Westerbeck

As Seventh-day Adventists, we are familiar with the general Protestant fear that religious art is idolatrous or, perhaps worse, Catholic. The rejection of iconography was historically used by Protestants as a clear visual way to distinguish themselves from Catholics during the Protestant Reformation. We are also familiar with the utilitarian objections to art that shaped the aesthetic sensibilities of our nineteenth-century founders.

John Ruskin succinctly captured this attitude toward art when he declared, “the entire validity of art depends upon its being either full of truth, or full of use.”¹ As inheritors of this utilitarian principle, church decorating committees frequently struggle to justify the purchase of any work of art—whether painting, sculpture, banner, or stained glass—to congregations that insist the money could be put to better use.

Rarely, however, do Adventist decorating committees confront the objec-

tion that such works of art violate the Second Commandment, which declares:

You shall not make for yourself any carved image [graven image, idol], or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God....(Exod. 20:4–5 NKJV)



We are unambiguous in our reading of the other commandments—keep the Sabbath, honor your parents, don't kill, don't commit adultery, don't steal, don't lie—but we ignore the Second Commandment, or at least interpret it very loosely. Even Ellen White dismissed the prohibition against pictures in her discussion of this command:

The second commandment prohibits image worship; but God himself employed pictures and symbols to represent to His prophets lessons which He would have them give to the people and which could thus be better understood than if given in any other way. He appealed to the understanding through the sense of sight.²

The theological debate over this troubling command has tended to focus on whether creating an image of Christ is the same as worshiping it. But the commandment clearly says, don't make any carved images. Period. That is why both the Jewish and Muslim faiths prohibit representational art.

So how did the early Christian Church come to value images of Christ and Mary, especially given that it grew out of a Jewish tradition that interpreted literally the prohibition against images in the Second Commandment? The progression from symbols scrawled on the walls of catacombs to elaborate icons decorating the walls and ceilings of cathedrals became a battle not over money, but over the very nature of Christ. If we understand the early debate over the role of art, perhaps the discussions about art in our own churches can take on a new theological dimension that transcends our utilitarian roots.

From Catacomb Encryption to "Emperor Mystic"

The history of how first-century Christians came to disregard the Second Commandment remains vague, but it does seem certain that the early Christians were influenced both by a Jewish culture that rejected representational art and a Roman culture that celebrated artistic realism. Jewish artists employed in Roman workshops would have been familiar with Roman symbols. When these Jews converted to Christianity they continued to paint what they knew, but they gave the Roman symbols new Christian meanings.

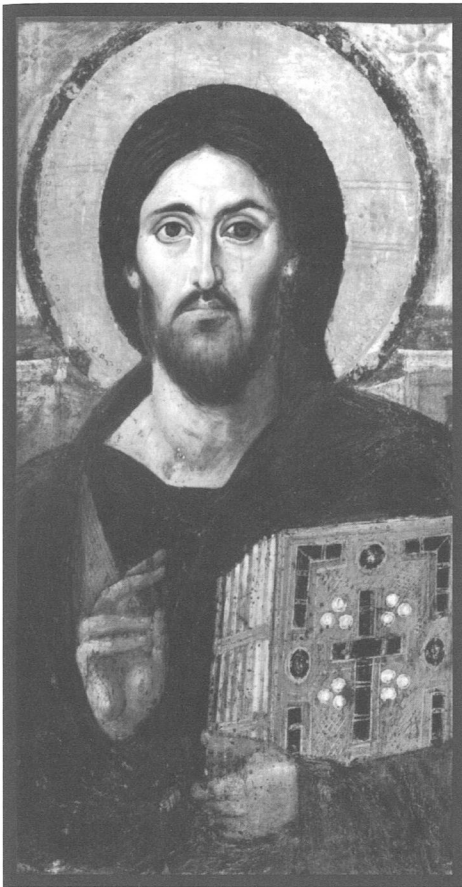
A grapevine, once the symbol of Bacchus, easily

translated into Christ as the vine. A fish became the ichthus, an acronym for the name of Christ as well as the symbol of Christ as "fisher of men." Even the pagan god Eros could come to represent the love of God through Jesus Christ, or the figure of Hermes carrying a lamb could become Christ the Good Shepherd.³ These symbols, so easily mistaken as Roman images, were used as a private code among believers during times of persecution. The one symbol notably absent was that of the cross, which was not a particularly popular image during a time of Roman rule.

By the time Christianity was recognized as an official church in 313 with the Edict of Milan, Christians had a fully developed set of symbols that reminded them of Christ's life and teachings. As Thomas Mathews says, "the lanky Good Shepherd of Early Christian art wrestled with the muscular Hercules and won."⁴ Mathews goes on to argue that the fourth century "ushered in a war of images" as the Christian Church suddenly found itself in charge of an entire empire and needing a new style of art to match its new status. As Mathews states,

Because the impoverished art of the catacombs and cemeteries was inadequate to express the grand claims the Christians were making for their god, they now appropriated the grandest imagery they could lay hands on, namely that which had been developed in the service of imperial propaganda. Finding themselves with an emperor of their own faith, Christians boldly appropriated for their own religious purposes the entire vocabulary of imperial art, transforming motifs and compositions that had been used for imperial propaganda into propaganda for Christ.⁵

The image of the emperor carried huge power for the Romans; it could even stand in for the emperor himself in a court of law.⁶ Christian emperors simply assumed this tradition, but added to their secular power the significance of their semi-divine status. And since it was important to emphasize Christ's role as the true power behind the throne, it wasn't long before icons of Christ in majesty replaced earlier images of the secular Roman rulers in the hearts and minds of the people. Images of Mary enthroned also lifted Mary above her humble origins, clothed her in rich robes, placed her on a throne, and made her a mother figure worthy of raising an emperor.



This icon of Jesus Christ of Mount Sinai, from Saint Katherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai, depicts Jesus Christ with two different looks on his face: One is of a loving man, and the other of a fearful judge.

finger and middle finger was meant to reinforce the dual nature of Christ.

Although these icons appear to our modern sensibilities to be highly stylized and stiff, each element was intended to glorify not the artist, but instead the divine majesty of Christ. Rather than apply techniques used by Roman artists to emphasize realism, painters of icons consciously eliminated the natural use of shadow and linear perspective in order to draw the viewer away from the earthly dimension and into the divine. The following description can be applied to almost any icon of Christ Pantocrator:

All attention is drawn to the sometimes enormous eyes fixed on the beholder, set off by the arch of the eyebrows, and by the point between them where the Spirit seems to be concentrated. The forehead is high and bulging, the seat of wisdom

The most popular of these icons was Christ Pantocrator, which means in the Greek, "Ruler of All." These images were intended to emphasize the divine majesty of Christ, while at the same time reinforcing the fact that he had "become flesh" and taken on a human nature that could be represented through art. Even the traditional gesture of the bent fore-

and intelligence. The nose is long, thin, severe, noble; the nostrils quiver.... The very thin mouth is always closed, because in the world of glory all is vision and silence.... Light casts no shadows.... The perspective is generally reversed.... Through the icon the truths of faith radiate toward the person contemplating it. The vanishing point thus moves toward him.... Gold is not a color. It is brilliance, active light.... Light is not given the task of creating an illusion. It radiates from the image itself toward the beholder. The bodies on the icon do not bathe in a light whose source is external to them. They bear their own light, which wells up from within them.⁷

The icon was seen as more than just art or a representation—it was a means to salvation. As a kind of window to a world of transcendence, the icon attempted to move the viewer beyond human dimensions and into the divine. Worshipers quickly began to ascribe miraculous powers to these icons. People were healed and battles were won all in the name of the icons. Some priests even scraped the paint off of icons into drink as a kind of powerful medicine.⁸

There was clearly some discomfort within the early church with the kind of power associated with these icons. Bishop Eusebius, for example, chastised the sister of Constantine for requesting an icon. But when a woman "brought him an icon of Paul and Christ clad as philosophers, he did not destroy the work but confiscated it and kept it in his own house to prevent its improper use by women."⁹ In the early eighth century there was clearly still confusion about the difference between pagan idol worship and Christian icons. John of Damascus, a great advocate of icons, argued:

If you speak of pagan abuses, these abuses do not make our veneration of images loathsome. Blame the pagans, who make images (*eikones*) into gods! Just because the pagans use them in a foul way, that is no reason to object to our pious practice.... Pagans make images of demons which they address as gods, but we make images of God incarnate and of his servants and friends, and with them we drive away the demonic hosts.¹⁰



In other words, it was acceptable to venerate an image as long as it was an image of the true God. In contrast to an idol or *eidōlon*, which in the Greek meant “a false representation of what does not exist,” an *eikōn* was “the truthful representation of an existing thing.”¹¹

The debate over icons, however, soon turned away from the issue of idolatry and became instead a much more significant theological debate over the very nature of Christ’s incarnation. This battle over icons dominated the next two centuries of church history and would eventually play a significant role in the schism between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches.

The Iconoclastic Debate

In 717, Leo III became the Byzantine emperor following a successful defense of Constantinople against an Arab siege.¹² In 726, Leo banned the public display of icons. To set an example, he removed the image of Christ from the Chalke Gate and had it replaced with a simple cross along with the inscription, “The Lord does not allow a portrait of Christ to be drawn without voice, deprived of breath, made of earthly matter, which is despised by Scripture. Therefore, Leo, with his son the new Constantine, engraved on the gates of the kings the blessed prototype of the cross, the glory of the faithful.”¹³ Thus began the first period of persecution against all those who created or worshiped icons.

There are many theories as to why this emperor was suddenly so concerned with the issue of icons. Perhaps he had a sincere theological conviction. Perhaps he wanted to curb the increasing power and wealth of the monastic communities that had turned the creation of icons into a thriving business. The most intriguing theory is that perhaps Leo had noted the irony that the Islamic forces, who were becoming an increasingly dangerous threat to the Christian empire, kept the Second Commandment better than the Christians by absolutely forbidding representational art.

Many scholars speculate that the emperor came to believe that Christians were being punished for their idolatry and would continue to lose in battle to Islamic forces until the church was cleansed of its idolatry. Certainly it is true that the army became fiercely iconoclastic during this period, perhaps because of its desire for victory—combined with its close encounter with Islamic ideas during its military campaigns.

In 741, Leo’s son, Constantine V, took the throne and



The image above, which appears on the altar of Sacred Heart Church in Skiatook, Oklahoma, combines traditional Byzantine iconography with Osage tribal designs. Christ is shown in the costume of a nineteenth-century Osage chief. He wears a crown made of beaver skin, and he carries an eagle fan. He displays his heart, symbol of his blazing love for humankind. Glorified wounds in his hands, feet, and heart testify to his redemptive suffering and resurrection.

intensified the persecution of those who created or worshiped icons. During this time Constantine worked to clarify the theological objection to icons. Instead of arguing the question of whether veneration is the same as worship, the debate turned to the question of the nature of Christ. Mary

Alice Talbot describes the debate as follows:

Iconoclasts, attacking image veneration as an idolatrous practice, claimed that Christ, as divine, could not be circumscribed. If one did depict Him in His human aspect, then he was guilty of separating His two natures. The iconodules argued, on the other hand, that the N[ew] T[estament], with its teaching of the incarnation of Christ, superseded the prohibition of images in the O[ld] T[estament]...since God was made flesh, He could be depicted. If the iconoclasts claimed that Christ could not be circumscribed, they were denying His humanity.¹⁴

This argument was a continuation of the debate over the nature of Christ that had been the primary subject of the first church councils, especially the First Council of Nicea. At that council the nature of the Trinity had been created as a kind of compromise between the Arians, who didn't believe that Christ was divine, and the followers of Athanasius, who argued that Christ (as one with God) was wholly divine and therefore could not be human. Added to this mix were the Gnostics who believed that God could not take on a material body because all matter is evil, and the even more extreme followers of Docetism, who argued that Christ had been "pure spirit" housed in only a phantom body.

The one thing they all agreed on was that you could not transcribe the divine nature of God in artistic form. The question was, could you transcribe Christ's human form without denying his divinity? In 754, a church council was held at Hieria that formalized the prohibition against icons, arguing against the notion that Christ's human nature could be depicted in isolation from his divine nature:

We decree unanimously in the name of the Holy... Trinity that there shall be rejected and removed and cursed out of the Christian church every likeness which is made out of any material whatever by the evil art of painters. Anyone who presumes from now on to manufacture an icon, or to worship it, or set it up in a church or in a private house, or possesses it in secret...he shall be deposed.¹⁵

It is important to note that these church leaders did not outlaw art altogether—and certainly showed no discomfort with continuing to create images of themselves. In fact, during this iconoclastic period images of Christ

were removed from coins and replaced by images of the emperor.¹⁶ Also, as icons in churches were destroyed, they were replaced by elaborate natural designs (grapevines, foliage, images of birds and animals).

Clearly, this was not a debate over either the allocation of money or over the prohibition against images in the Second Commandment. It was instead a continuation of the debate over the divinity of Christ that had dominated all of the church councils since the First Council at Nicea in A.D. 325.

In 775, Constantine's son, Leo IV, became emperor and somewhat relaxed the prohibition against icons, yet even he was distressed to discover that his wife, Irene, kept secret icons. In 780, Leo IV died, leaving Irene to serve as regent for her nine-year-old son. In 786, she used her authority to call an ecumenical council to reverse the iconoclastic ruling of 754, but the meeting was disrupted by iconoclastic soldiers. Not easily discouraged, Irene sent the army off on a campaign to Asia and convened the Seventh Ecumenical Council, the second to be held in Nicea. The practice of venerating images was restored, using as the primary justification the dual nature of Christ:

The name "Christ" is indicative of both divinity and humanity—the two perfect natures of the Saviour. Christians have been taught to portray this image in accordance with His visible nature, not according to the one in which He was invisible; for the latter is uncircumscribable and we know from the Gospel that no man hath seen God at any time. When, therefore, Christ is portrayed according to His human nature it is obvious that the Christians, as Truth has shown, acknowledge the visible image to communicate with the archetype in name only, and not in nature; whereas these senseless people [the Iconoclasts] say there is no distinction between image and prototype and ascribe an identity of nature to entities that are of different natures. Who will not make fun of their ignorance?¹⁷

This respite for iconodules did not last long. In 813, Leo V seized the throne and again forbade the veneration of icons, removing the image of Christ once more from the Chalke Gate. In 815, Leo called for a church council to reinstate the iconoclastic findings of



the council of 754. But the energy for the iconoclastic movement was fading quickly.

In 829, Theophilus took the throne and reinforced iconoclastic policies, but his own wife, stepmother, and daughters continued to worship icons in secret. Theophilus died in 842, following a defeat by the Arabs at Amorion—and along with him died what remained of the iconoclastic movement. Theodora circulated a rumor that her husband embraced icon worship on his deathbed, then reestablished the veneration of icons while acting as regent for her young son.

In 843, the Council of Constantinople was convened to formally reestablish the veneration of images:

We define with all accuracy and care that the venerable and holy icons be set up like the form of the venerable and life-giving Cross, inasmuch as matter consisting of colours and of small stones and of other material is appropriate in the holy church of God, on sacred vessels and on vestments, on walls, on panels, in houses and on roads... For the more frequently they are seen by means of painted representation the more those who behold them are aroused to remember and to desire the prototypes and to give them greeting and worship-of-honour, but not the true worship of our faith which befits only the Divine Nature.¹⁸

Although the specific style and use of icons would become a significant distinction between the Roman and Eastern Orthodox branches of the Catholic Church, this council brought an end to the formal theological debate over the veneration of icons.

From “Christ Pantocrator” to “Millennium Christ”

The debate over icons would, of course, surface again during the Reformation as Protestants pointed to icons as a major symbol of the corruption of Catholicism. But images of Christ—whether in stained glass, sculptures, paintings, or illustrations—have remained a fixture in the experience of most Christians. Adventist children are raised on images of the gentle Jesus as depicted by Harry Anderson.

In our postmodern consciousness, the primary debate about such images is no longer one of theology but rather one of ethnicity. We are, perhaps rightly, concerned more about accurately portraying Christ’s

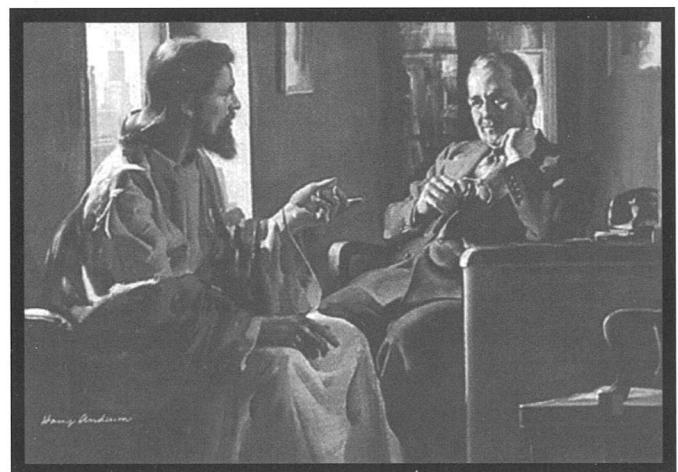
Middle Eastern heritage than wrestling with the nature of the incarnation.

The desire to depict a Christ who speaks to the widest range of cultures and genders was exemplified in the image of *Jesus of the People*, the winning entry in an art contest sponsored by the *National Catholic Reporter* that called for depictions of Christ for the new millennium. The artist, Janet McKenzie, emphasized in this winning image her “commitment to inclusivity” in both ethnicity and gender.¹⁹ The dark-skinned figure appears at first to be African American, but the background also includes elements from other spiritual traditions, including a Native American feather and a Yin-Yang symbol.

One of the judges, art critic Sister Wendy Beckett, says of the image, “This is a haunting image of a peasant Jesus—dark, thick lipped, looking out on us with ineffable dignity, with sadness but with confidence.” Although the final image is not overtly feminine, the artist chose to use a female model in order “to incorporate, once and for all, women who had been so neglected and left out, into this image of Jesus.”²⁰

How would eighth-century iconoclasts have responded to such an image onto which we have imposed our postmodern sensibilities? How does such an image differ from the Byzantine icons in which the creative impulses of the artist were subordinated to the stylized attempt to transcend earthly reality and depict the divine?

When reading the history of the iconoclastic movement, we may be tempted to cheer for women such as Irene and Theodora as they faithfully defend their icons—and yet for Protestants such sympathies



Adventist Harry Anderson’s paintings usually depict a gentleman Jesus who associates with middle-class Americans.

GOSPEL ART GALLERY

seem akin to cheering for the wrong team. This quandary can be seen even in Ellen White's comments about art as she warned against it even while she celebrated its usefulness. Although Ellen White argued that "art can never attain to the perfection seen in nature," even she recognized the power of art to draw people to the truth:²¹

Many may be reached best through sacred pictures, illustrating scenes in the life and mission of Christ. By this means truths may be vividly imprinted upon their minds, never to be effaced. The Roman Catholic Church understands this fact, and appeals to the senses of people through the charm of sculpture and paintings. While we have no sympathy for image worship, which is condemned by the law of God, we hold that it is proper to take advantage of that almost universal love of pictures in the young, to fasten in their minds valuable moral truths....²²

Despite acknowledging the power of images to lead people to truth, she still warned against the extra time and expense that accompanied the proliferation of illustrations in publications: "The almost endless succession of wearisome research and delay and anxiety, and the great expense in increasing facilities to multiply illustrations is simply leading in advance in a species of idolatry."²³

In tension with this utilitarian impulse toward economy, she urged that only images of the highest quality be used: "We want to be true in all our representations of Jesus Christ. But many of the miserable daubs put into our books and papers are an imposition on the public."²⁴ Thus, we see even within her statements on art the struggle between good stewardship and aesthetic sensibilities that brings so many church committees to grief.

Perhaps in a world where celebrities and mass media have become our new icons, the Church should give careful consideration to the theological implications of the images we select—whether in television broadcasts, book illustrations, or mass mailings.²⁵ Although conversations about art in our churches will always carry with them the baggage of our Protestant and utilitarian roots, we should acknowledge that we project an image of Christ in every church we build and every evangelistic series we televise.

What picture of Christ do we project to the



JESUS OF THE PEOPLE © 1989 JANET MCKENZIE • WWW.JANETMCKENZIE.COM

Janet McKenzie's *Jesus of the People* was praised for its depiction of a peasant, minority Jesus.

world? In our fear of idolatry have we replaced Christ Pantocrator with sterile, timid projections of our own fears? Rather than limit our debates about art within the church to anti-Catholic rhetoric or utilitarian constraints, we should examine the theological implications of the earlier iconoclastic debate and make sure that the picture of Christ we project to the world is instead always infused with both divinity and humanity—and not limited by our inherited aesthetic sensibilities.

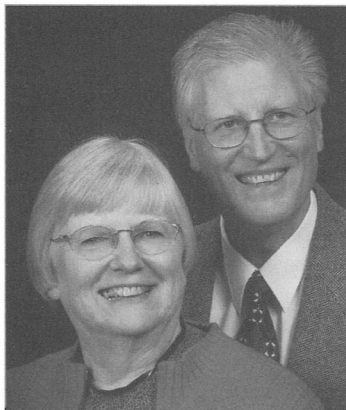


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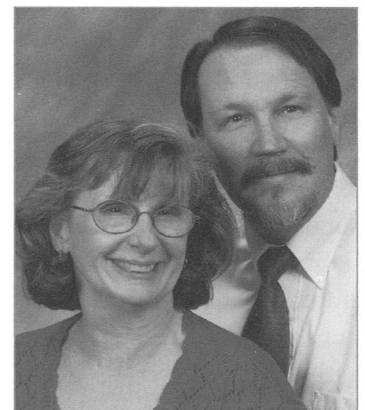
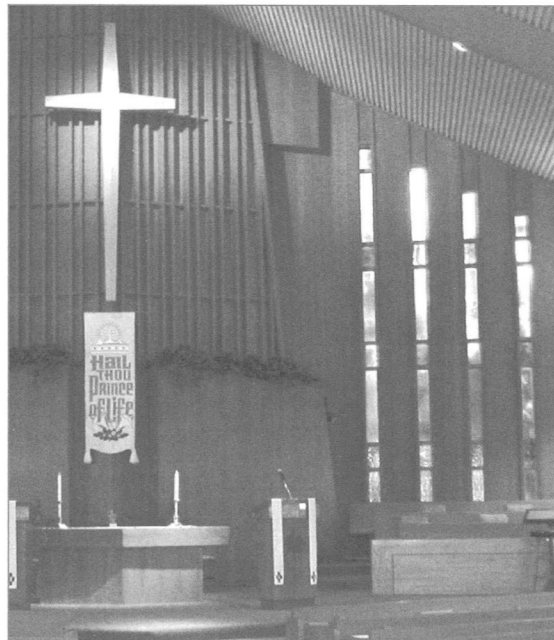
Pastor Roy &
Bennie Gee

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!"

ISSUES

IN

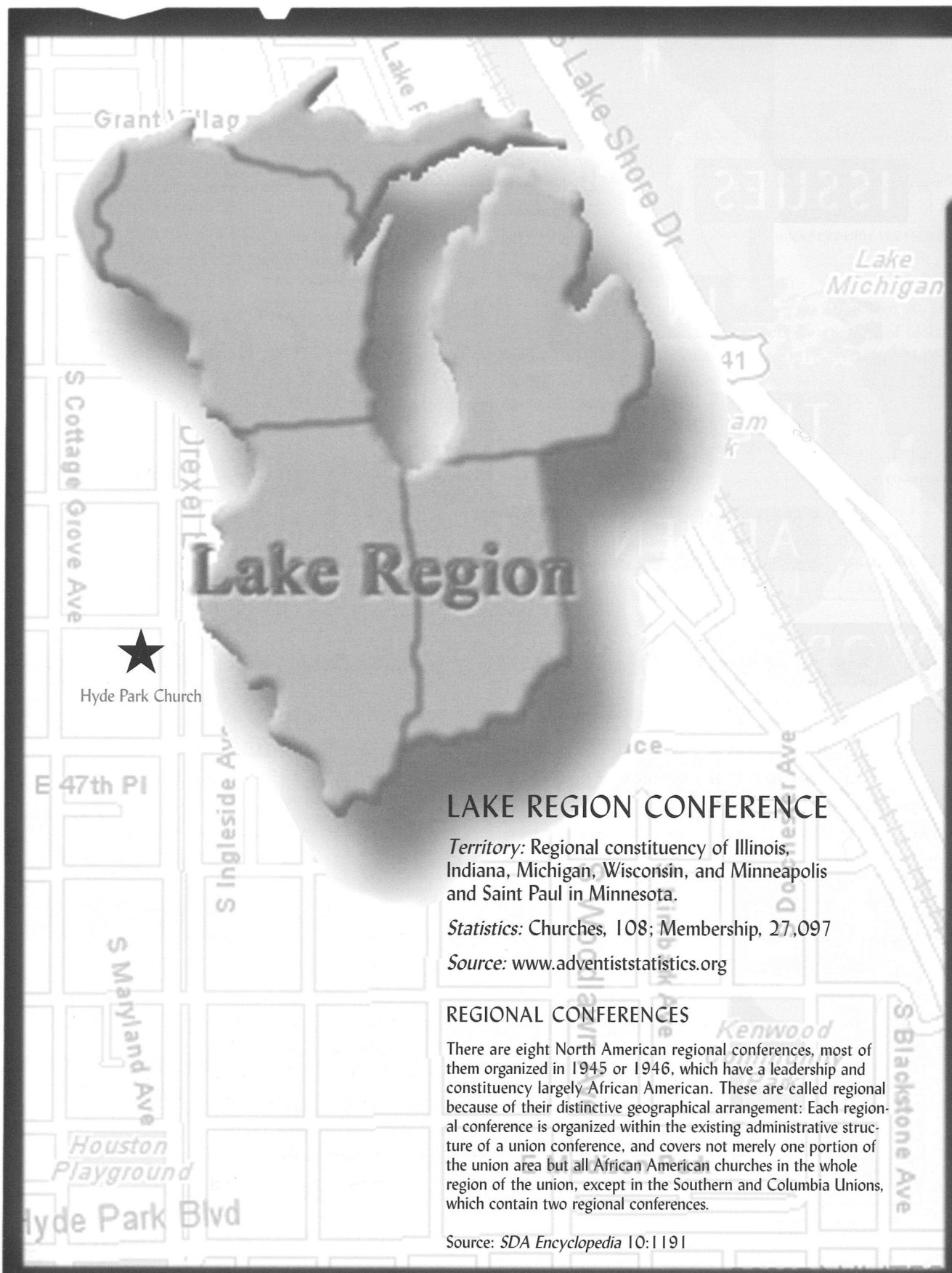
THE

ADVENTIST

WORLD

CHURCH





★
Hyde Park Church

LAKE REGION CONFERENCE

Territory: Regional constituency of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minneapolis and Saint Paul in Minnesota.

Statistics: Churches, 108; Membership, 27,097

Source: www.adventiststatistics.org

REGIONAL CONFERENCES

There are eight North American regional conferences, most of them organized in 1945 or 1946, which have a leadership and constituency largely African American. These are called regional because of their distinctive geographical arrangement: Each regional conference is organized within the existing administrative structure of a union conference, and covers not merely one portion of the union area but all African American churches in the whole region of the union, except in the Southern and Columbia Unions, which contain two regional conferences.

Source: *SDA Encyclopedia* 10:1191

Discussed: mysteries, rumors, resignations, firings, missing money, eighteen-hour long constituency meeting, politics, investigations, audits

Things Fall Apart

By Bonnie Dwyer and Alexander Carpenter

On November 3, 2004, Pastor Getulio Rodriguez kissed his wife Alicia goodbye and walked out to his car. That evening when the police searched the vehicle they found his briefcase in the front seat and his keys still in the ignition. But the car had never moved.

A recent immigrant from Argentina, Getulio, age sixty-three, had pastored throughout South America, and had, two years previously, arrived in America with an R-1 visa obtained through the Lake Region Conference. Moving to be near his daughter and grandchildren, he and his wife settled in the College Avenue apartment complex in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

For five hundred dollars a month, Getulio served as a Bible worker and head elder at the Bethel II church, a recent Spanish language church plant, part of the exploding congregational growth among the immigrant-rich farmworker communities of the Midwest.

On the day that he went missing, his daughter Heidi stopped by the apartment and mentioned the car outside to her mother. Not worried about her husband, Alicia told her daughter that he was probably just talking with the apartment maintenance man, who was also an Adventist.

Both men enjoyed talking together and Getulio often offered his friend spiritual advice. Busy with her day care duties, Alicia didn't give the car another thought and returned to watching the children dropped off by area Hispanic families.

That evening, after all the children had gone home, she went outside and noticed the car still there. Worried, she called her daughter, who then notified the police.

When the officers arrived, they asked Alicia, who can't speak English, about changes in her husband's behavior. She mentioned that Getulio had seemed worried lately, which seemed to confirm the officers' assumptions. The police quickly formed a profile of a depressed, poor man, worried about the approaching holidays and their financial burden. Unable by law to begin searching for forty-eight hours, they left and Alicia began praying.

By the time the search began, both sons had arrived—Roly from Florida and Favio from Argentina. They hired a pri-



vate investigator, brought in a nonprofit search dog service, and distributed flyers throughout the city, offering a thirty-five hundred dollar reward for Getulio, who was last seen wearing a blue jacket, gray pants, and black shoes. But he remained missing throughout November.

On December 5, 2004, a couple of hunters discovered him hanging from a tree in a swamp, fifteen miles from home. The police declared it a suicide. However, for his family, mysteries remain.

Lake Region Conference Mysteries

The death of Getulio Rodriguez looms as one of many mysteries that have emerged during the last two years in the Lake Region Conference (LRC), which has seen the resignation of Norman K. Miles, the president; the reassignment of Gregory Baker, the treasurer; the resignation of Leroy Hampton, the second treasurer; the termination of Lillian Williamson, the assistant treasurer; the termination of Hugo Gambetta, the vice president; and the suspension and later termination of Vernice Shorey, the accountant.

In addition, four of the Hispanic pastors were put on administrative leave in July 2005. By August, there were more disciplinary actions: Miles was put on administrative leave, thus removing him from the pulpit as well as the administrative offices. In addition, the attorney retained by the conference was let go. The new attorney immediately began assembling papers for a court action against several of the officers in an effort to produce information about their activities.

There were significant questions to be asked, given the fact that there were rumors—of conference bank accounts being used to pay personal bills, unsecured noninterest-bearing loans to officers that never were repaid, R-1 visas being sold at a profit, fake documents being created for immigrants, money laundering, and financial accounts that were in such a disarray that auditors had not been able to form an opinion on them for several years.

Concerned constituents of the conference have tried to solve the mysteries, but it is not easy. What happens when things go wrong? As the people of the Lake Region Conference have discovered, it is ultimately their responsibility to insure that change is made, because the union and division levels above the conference do not have line authority over the actions of conference officers. Union and division officials can exert their influence, but ultimately, when things go wrong, it is

up to the constituents to elect different leaders.

Election Woes

The last election of conference officers took place during an eighteen-hour constituency meeting April 18–19, 2004, in South Bend, Indiana.

There was little public knowledge of any trouble within the Hispanic community in April. There were some rumors about a potential Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) investigation, and a flyer was distributed outside the meeting criticizing Vice President Hugo Gambetta, but most delegates had other concerns.

President Norman K. Miles was in trouble at the constituency session because he had downsized the conference by laying off five senior pastors in 2003. Letters had been circulating among the constituent churches for a year asking questions:

For the past two years, we have been assured that we have paid off...debts and we are doing well financially. Now, like lightening falling out of clear blue sky, we hear that we must lay off five pastors due to our poor financial status. The question is: Why?....

At the meeting in Marion, the Treasurer explained that tithe for December 2002 was much less than that of December 2001. So low that it reduced an expected annual tithe increase of between 8 and 10 percent to only 1.2 percent. Thus the picture presented is: We have no debt. And we had a 1.2 percent increase in tithe, giving us the largest tithe in the history of the conference. In spite of this we are told it is absolutely necessary to lay off these five pastors. The question is: Why?

The treasurer, Gregory Baker, who had given the explanation in Marion, was officially reassigned in October 2003 "at his request" to a position that would allow him to travel less because of important family considerations. However, statements from the General Conference Auditing Service noted that he personally purchased a boat and trailer that he sold to the conference for thirty thousand dollars, even though auditors noted its book value as seventeen thousand dollars. The president did arrange to keep Baker on the payroll as his assistant.

Facing the constituency that held his re-election in their hands that April day in South Bend, Miles tried to

put a positive spin on the finances. He talked about a tithe gain of 6 percent in 2003 that brought the conference from a negative balance in 2002 to a positive one in 2003 and was the third highest tithe gain of all conferences in the North American Division. However, the audited financial report that was part of the delegate packet included information of serious concern, and a long, spirited debate took place after the president's morning report.

At 1:55 p.m. the nominating committee was seated, and the meeting finally broke for lunch. At 3:40, the afternoon session began with the audit reports. In the document prepared by the General Conference Auditing Service, there were several notable items, particularly the statement that it had not been able "to obtain sufficient competent evidential matter to afford a reasonable basis for an opinion regarding the 2003 and 2002 financial statements."

It also noted several things that were not in compliance with church policy, such as how funds were deposited: "We were unable to obtain evidence that the executive committee approved the opening of two accounts with TFC Bank during 2003."

Another finding that ran counter to church policy concerned noninterest-bearing, nontemporary loans made to employees for purposes other than (a) to secure real estate or an automobile, or (b) in connection with a move. The amount of such loans grew substantially each year, with a total at the end of December 2003 of more than \$274,000 to officers and employees. The organization had also withheld tithe of \$156,518 payable to the Lake Union Conference.

It was 6 p.m. by the time the auditing reports were concluded and the nominating committee began its work.

The first nomination for president came to the floor at 8:55 p.m., and it was not for the incumbent. Twice the delegation returned names to the nominating committee: both Ricardo Graham (currently president of the Northern California Conference) and local pastor William Joseph were rejected in a confusion of motions on the floor. There were delegates who argued that the vote be taken by secret ballot. That motion was defeated.

At one point, when Pastor Mack Wilson moved that the delegation vote to return Graham's name to the committee and come back with the name of Norman Miles, the chair (Walter Wright, president of the Lake Union) instructed Wilson that he could only move that Graham's name be returned. Neither he nor the delegation could instruct the committee to return with a specific name. Wright also refused to let anyone speak to the motion, so no one was allowed to say anything

TIMELINE

Lake Region Conference Story

1994 Norman K. Miles elected president.

1995 Hugo Gambetta named director of Hispanic Ministries.

1996 George Bryant elected director of Stewardship, Trust Services, and Religious Liberty.

1997 Gregory Baker elected treasurer.

1998 At 22nd Conference Constituency Meeting, unaudited financial papers included in delegate packets.

1999 George Bryant elected conference secretary.

2001 23rd Conference Constituency Meeting

2002 Auditors note inadequate records of plant funds, but issue opinion on financial statements of 2000 and 2001.

Conference seeks private investigation into immigration irregularities.

2003 Five senior pastors laid off.

Private investigation reports problems with R-1 Visas.

Concerned constituents circulate letter with questions about finances and layoffs and suggest requesting a special constituency meeting.

Treasurer Gregory Baker reassigned to role of assistant to the president. Leroy B. Hampton hired as treasurer.

2004 APRIL - 24th Conference Constituency Meeting lasts for eighteen hours. Disputes emerge over reports and elections. Norman Miles is challenged in presidential election, but prevails in late night vote. Hugo Gambetta is elected vice president. Auditors report inability to form opinion on financial statements for 2002 and 2003. Auditors note bank accounts that have not been approved by the Executive Committee

NOVEMBER - Getulio Rodriguez disappears. His body is found one month later.

2005 FEBRUARY - Lake Union Executive Committee votes for in-depth financial investigation into Lake Region Conference.

MARCH - Norman K. Miles resigns as president, effective May 1, 2005.

JULY - Six officials terminated, resigned, or put on administrative leave. Special constituency meeting called by 20 percent of the churches.

Dispute over how president is elected mid-term is resolved by requesting action from Bylaws Committee that will allow constituents to vote. Report from the Lake Union administration notes irregularities in 2001, 2003, and 2004 audits.

AUGUST - Executive Committee insists on electing president according to the provisions of the bylaws. Norman K. Miles is put on administrative leave from pastorate. Senior accountant Raoul Tejada is put on administrative leave. Virginia Shorey is terminated.



about Ricardo Graham. Not until 11:15 p.m. did the name of Norman Miles come to the floor from the nominating committee.

“Elder Alvin Kibble called for a season of prayer before the vote,” one delegate recalled in a letter urging each church to request a special constituency meeting.

He told the constituents, “this is a beautiful thing that you all are about to do here.” Was it appropriate for Elder Kibble to call for a season of prayer and make a comment about the beauty of what was about to happen since he made no request for prayer or comment about the beauty of the process when the other names were recommended? After the season of prayer, delegates were asked to stand and vote on the motion to return the name. Approximately 250 people voted to accept [Norman K. Miles].

As the session continued, more delegates left. When it concluded at around 4 a.m. in the morning the remaining delegates had elected the secretary George Bryant, the treasurer Leroy Hampton, and the executive committee members, but had agreed to allow the executive committee to elect the departmental directors. [They had also made Hugo Gambetta a vice president.] Do we really want our church officers elected in the middle of the night by a relatively small group of exhausted delegates? Is this a reasonable way to conduct an election?

Miles, the President King

Norman K. Miles was first elected president of the Lake Region Conference in 1994. At that time, the conference had not totally recovered from financial losses that had occurred in the 1980s, when a shopping mall had been purchased by the conference as an investment. Instead of generating income, the strip mall had been a financial disaster. There were still loans to be repaid. Furthermore, the membership growth was stagnant.

Miles put together a leadership team that included Gregory Baker as treasurer and Hugo Gambetta as Hispanic ministries coordinator. The two played key roles in motivating change in the Lake Region Conference. George C. Bryant became conference secretary in 1999.

Under Miles’s leadership, and with Gambetta’s help, the conference began to grow—particularly within the Hispanic community. By 1998, five new congregations

had been organized—all Hispanic—three in Chicago, one in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and one in Berwyn. Tithes were on the increase—by over a million dollars, according to unaudited financial statements shared with the constituents.

For pastors in the conference, Miles was known as someone who took care of those who supported him with generous housing and car allowances. For the pastor who had always wanted a Mercedes, the conference helped make it happen, and it included a built-in cell phone. If people needed advances on their salaries, they could get them. After all, that was something that Miles himself was known to have requested.

In May 2002, General Conference auditors told the administrative officers of the LRC, “The account due from the Lake Region president has grown to be very large as it more than doubled in 2001.” Their recommendation: “This account needs to be analyzed to see why it is growing so rapidly and what steps can be taken to reduce it.”

However, the culture within the conference was such that the president was rarely challenged. Pastors from within it described Miles as functioning like a king, and said that the Executive Committee seemed to support him no matter what he did or how much it cost the conference.

Within the American Black Caucus, as the group of presidents from the regional conferences is known, his stature grew. He was one of the architects of the Regional Retirement System voted into existence by the North American Division in 2001.

That same year at the Lake Region Conference constituency meeting, eleven congregations were received into the sisterhood of churches, and again the majority of them were Hispanic. What helped make the growth of the Hispanic churches possible was that pastors for the congregations were often listed as part-time employees of the conference. That way, the conference could add two congregations for the price of one.

However, finances continued to be problematic. The work of a blue ribbon committee had not lifted the conference out of the cycle of recurring losses and the corresponding decrease in operating assets.

In February 2003, the Executive Committee took action and voted a series of staff reductions—of senior pastors. The reaction from church members was immediate. An elder from one of the churches suggested that his congregation would consider pulling out of the conference. The town hall meetings scheduled around the conference seemed to generate more questions, rather than answer

them. By June, constituents were writing letters to the union and the division asking for an investigation.

Miles did not tell the constituents, or anyone else at that time, that an investigation was under way—of alleged illegal activity within the Hispanic community regarding its relationship to conference finances. When the private investigation uncovered questionable activity, Miles's response was not only to ignore the implications of the findings within his own conference, but to disavow them publicly in a meeting with leaders of the Hispanic work in other parts of the country.

The Pacific Union Conference, however, took the findings seriously, and it barred Hugo Gambetta from speaking in any of its pulpits. A report of the committee's voted action was sent to both Gambetta and Miles.

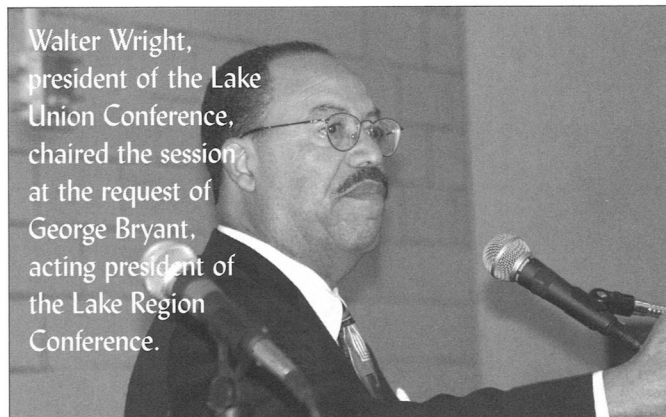
Gambetta, the Charismatic Shepherd

Two years before he died, Getulio Rodriguez had contacted Hugo Gambetta about getting an R-1 visa into the United States. Gambetta consented and didn't charge Getulio his usual fee, which was sometimes as high as five thousand dollars. An Argentine himself and a former theology teacher in Costa Rica, Gambetta joined the Lake Region Conference in 1995 as its Hispanic Ministries director. He was known for his energetic evangelistic campaigns and for helping immigrants who wanted to come to the United States.

Gambetta is a controversial figure throughout the South and Inter-American Divisions. There are Web sites that tout his interpretations of Daniel 17, and others that herald the bans put on him to prevent him from speaking in Argentina and Paraguay. His own independent ministry, *El Eterno Evangel*, promotes his 2004 crusade in Mexico, where more than a thousand people were baptized. The site also features a "Frequently Asked Questions" section easing fears about the independent flavor of his ministry and pointing out that criticism arises wherever the truth is preached.

"All the people talk about Gambetta," mentioned one Argentine familiar with the South American Adventist scene. That seemed to be true in the Lake Region Conference as well, where Gambetta ran all things Hispanic. He hired and moved pastors, preached many evangelistic crusades, and the Hispanic work flourished. With rapid Hispanic immigration into the United States, the evangelistic fields were ripe to be picked.

Pastors loved having him do crusades at their church-



Walter Wright, president of the Lake Union Conference, chaired the session at the request of George Bryant, acting president of the Lake Region Conference.

es. They would distribute DVDs of his preaching in the communities and then he would personally come to town and baptize up to fifty people at a time. And the pastors never had to draw up a budget or pay his expenses. Current LRC pastor Juan Rivera states that Gambetta is responsible for planting at least thirty-five churches.

But not all the Hispanic constituents were happy. Due to the bifurcated cultural mix of the LRC—with both Hispanic and African American churches—the leadership had formed a section within the youth department for Hispanic youth. Called the Hispanic Youth Federation (FEHJA), its president, José Romeo Sosa, and Gambetta did not get along.

Adventism in much of Central and South America is the faith of early missionary Adventism. It is a church that often defines itself in opposition to the two dominant and competing faiths of its milieu: Catholicism and Pentecostalism. As a result, it is a church defined primarily by its doctrinal difference.

Juan Rivera, current pastor of the Bethel II and Blue Island churches, says the Hispanic immigrant membership is conservative and overwhelmed with mainstream Adventism and American ideas. Thus, he adds, "they want the old gospel preached." He paraphrases what he hears. "They say to Adventist pastors, 'if you just preach Jesus Christ, then go be a Pentecostal.' They want to hear the Three Angels Message." Gambetta knew that world. And he preached it straight and true.

Compared to Gambetta, José Romeo Sosa, the head of the Hispanic Youth Federation, seemed like a big-city liberal. Mostly working with second- and third-generation urban Hispanic youth, some of whom don't even speak Spanish, he ran programs that appeared barely



Adventist to Gambetta's newly immigrated pastors. They complained that instead of Bible study, the youth played volleyball and listened to rock music. In addition, many of the pastors objected to Sosa's direct style and refused to help fund Youth Federation programs. Plus, they felt that the youth outside of Chicago were neglected.

As the tension increased over ideology and money, Sosa became a polarizing figure, especially in opposition to Gambetta. Things came to a head between the two at the LRC constituency meeting in April 2004. Sosa circulated a letter that brought several complaints against Hugo Gambetta. He stated that Gambetta had hired at least six pastors who had been fired in other countries due to adultery or other reasons, three of whom were on Gambetta's advisory committee. He suggested that Gambetta had "abused his position by bringing in hundreds of persons from different countries, but especially of Argentina and Dominican Republic." Sosa added: "these persons entered the United States with the famous Visa R-1."

Sosa suggested that, although brought in to work for the LRC, they didn't actually end up being employed by the conference. Those who had, though, were distributed to key churches to support Gambetta. Sosa also stated that Gambetta and a relative of his had offered support for the Youth Federation and a job at an Adventist academy if he would back Gambetta. Sosa objected to the job, pointing out

that he only had two years of college. Gambetta, he says, told him not to worry, that was something "he could fix."

During the disruptive constituency meeting Sosa left early—before the re-election of Gambetta in the early morning hours of April 19. Shortly thereafter, the eight- to nine-hundred member strong Youth Federation was reorganized into four separate sections—Michigan, Wisconsin, Chicago Suburbs, and Chicago Downtown. Sosa no longer works in the conference.

Things have not gone well since then for Gambetta, either. On July 11, 2005, Gambetta was put on administrative leave, and on July 22 he lost his credentials and was terminated. At the same time, the four members of his advisory council were also put on leave. His wife's Spanish language Adventist book store had already been closed before the last conference audit.

At the beginning of August, news releases from the Lake Union Conference said, "the union is still not aware of the timing or nature of any investigation by local, state, or federal authorities or if any investigations exist." But Carl Rusnok, regional communications director for U. S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security, said that there is an on-going investigation and that the Church knows about it.

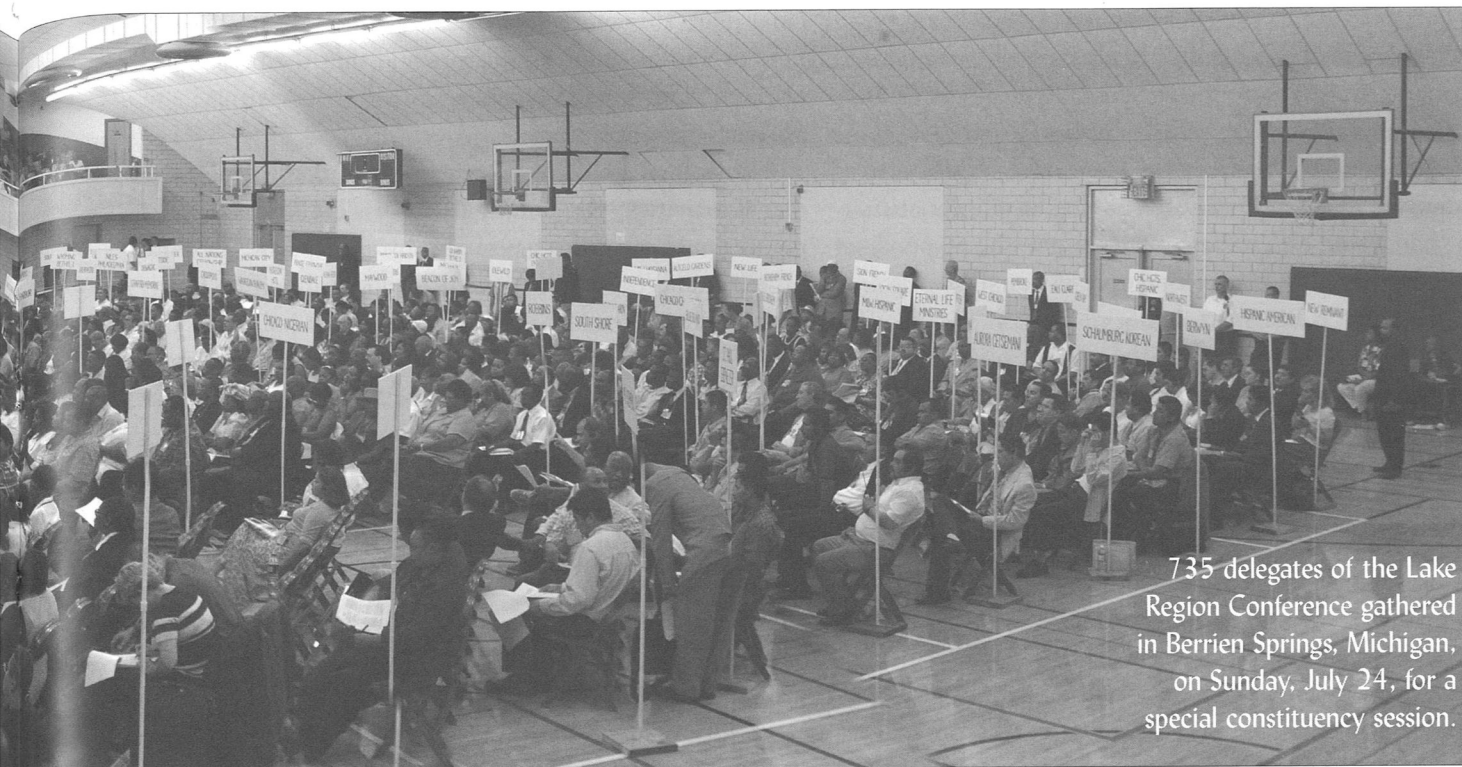


PHOTO FROM THE LAKE UNION HEADQUARTERS WEBSITE LUC.ADVENTIST.ORG/ARTICLE

735 delegates of the Lake Region Conference gathered in Berrien Springs, Michigan, on Sunday, July 24, for a special constituency session.

Investigations and Audits

By July 2005, trying to understand who was investigating whom, for what, and when almost required a diagram.

The General Conference Auditing Service was doing the annual audit of conference books as required by conference bylaws. But (as noted above) accounting records were in such a disarray that it was unable to form an opinion regarding the 2002 and 2003 financial statements. That the records continued to be in disarray was significant because the auditors had informed the conference in 2002 that major steps needed to be taken to reconcile bank statements on a timely basis, insure correct postings in the general ledger, complete an inventory of plant fund accounts, insure that offerings were passed on for their intended purposes, reconcile the many outstanding accounts receivable, and put into place checks and balances to manage the risk of fraud, among other things.

Within the Executive Committee of the conference a financial subcommittee headed by Donald Gothard, a retired General Motors executive, was putting pressure on Norman Miles. As a result, he resigned from the presidency in March 2005, according to one of his friends.

Word of concern about immigration violations had reached the Lake Union by 2005, and the union Executive Committee had voted to instigate an in-depth financial audit of its own. This investigation led to the

July action of the Executive Committee, in which six people found their employment status changed: among them, Lillian Williamson, assistant treasurer, terminated; Leroy B. Hampton, treasurer, resigned; Hugo Gambetta, vice president, terminated; Vernice Sorey, accountant, suspended. Also, four pastors were put on administrative leave: Ciro Aviles, Osmin Hernandez, William Rojas, and Alfredo Solis.

Special Constituency Meetings Begin

On July 24, 2005, the constituents got what they had wanted for a very long time—a special constituency meeting to elect a new president, duly called and posted by the required 20 percent of the churches.

However, by the time of the meeting, a close reading of the conference's constitution and bylaws called into question the ability of the constituents to elect the president between regularly scheduled meetings. Instead, there was a provision for a special committee, made up of the Executive Committee and remaining active members of the Nominating Committee from the previous session, to elect a president and bring a recommendation back to the delegates at a future session.

For the church members who questioned the way the election had been handled in 2004, there was great discomfort with having the same people responsible for another election.

A motion was made and passed to have the Bylaws Committee meet and propose changes in the constitution that would allow the constituents to be responsible for the election at a second special constituency meeting to be held in October

The session concluded with a report on the union's investigation into the internal activities of the confer-

ential man. He points out that hard times are nothing new to South American pastors and that the pressure of the holiday season is different for his Adventist Hispanic family culture.

Roly thinks that his father knew something about illegal activities surrounding Gambetta and his men. He points out that the dogs, provided by a nonprofit search organization (the police never used dogs), didn't go down to the railroad tracks behind the apartment building where Getulio and Alicia lived and where the police think Getulio walked for fifteen miles before hanging

Create a new organization-wide conversation about honesty, integrity and trust in the conference with increased credibility and trust among constituents and workers.

—Strategic Action Plan

ence and the serious irregularities found in the handling of accounts. A delegate asked how many people were being investigated. Lake Union president Walter Wright responded that they were not investigating people, but accounts and records; the appropriate people were then being held accountable for the irregularities found.

There was no mention of any investigation regarding Getulio Rodriguez.

A Son's Lament

Getulio had arrived in America via Gambetta. But he was paid his five-hundred dollar salary by the Bethel II church. According to Roly, Getulio's older son, his father and mother supplemented their income through odd jobs like temporary factory work and child care. Apparently, a few months before he went missing, Getulio had taken all their earnings and sent them to the Lake Region Conference. The conference had then sent back a check, minus some money—a system devised to satisfy visa requirements. Getulio apparently felt that the amount he received back wasn't right. He had sent more money, but the return check did not arrive until after he had disappeared.

Apparently bothered by the financial situation, Getulio had mentioned to his wife that he was going to look for another side job on November 3. But that day he also took along his Bible study guides and had forthcoming sermon dates penciled into his calendar, both of which were in his briefcase. Roly wonders how his father's behavior fits with the police profile of a sui-

himself. Instead, they immediately followed a scent through an open and unfinished building that provides access to the street on the side of the complex and away from the cameras at the apartment complex entrance. At the middle of the street, the dogs stopped.

Andres Abreu, the editor of the Michigan-wide Spanish newspaper, *El Vocero*, doesn't think that Getulio killed himself. He interviewed one of the hunters, who agrees, citing the branch height and cleanliness of the still-hanging body. The tree is about 150 feet away from a road and the railroad tracks, in the middle of a swampy area.

However, Lieutenant Paul Warwick of the Grand Rapids Police Department, echoes the police report, stating that Getulio was depressed about making ends meet and thus hanged himself. As quoted in an article published in *El Vocero*, written a few days after her father was found, daughter Heidi counters, suggesting that there is a difference between being worried and depressed.

Choking back tears, Roly says that Getulio was always a good father to his three children. Heidi and her husband and children have moved to Arizona. Alicia has gone to Florida, near Roly. They wonder what Getulio knew on November 3, 2004.

Driving from Grand Rapids to Chicago to cover Hernandez's Blue Island church, Pastor Rivera dismisses the rumors. "You hear a lot of crazy things," he says. In defense of Gambetta, he points out the church growth and evangelistic success. "Everything we have is from Gambetta," he notes. Then he recalls talking with his old boss after his termination. "He was sad, but didn't sound apologetic. Why do you apologize? He was working for the Lord."

The Last Sabbath

On a rainy Sabbath this August, it was after 11 o'clock at the Hyde Park Seventh-day Adventist Church when the organ segued into the opening processional for the elders. Making his way up the center aisle, Norman K. Miles stood out from the rest because of his white robe, striped with rich African fabric. The first four men took their places on the front row. Miles, the academy principal, and another minister climbed the stairs onto the platform and sat with the choir tightly around them.

The Scripture lesson for the day came from Ezra 9:5-9: "O, my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens. . . . And now for a little space grace hath been shown from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. . . ."

Miles offered the pastoral prayer, the prayer of David at his darkest hour: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness. . . . Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Blot out all my iniquities. . . . Amen. There is nobody here that doesn't need to pray that prayer," he said.

Children's story, the *Steps to Christ* mission project, comments from the academy principal, prayer for the students leaving for college, special music, offering—it was after 12:30 when Elder Miles rose to preach his sermon titled "A Nail in His Holy Place," based on the Scripture reading. He began with the Israelites and their repetitive problems with sin, then made the application to the congregation.

"Everybody here has done something wrong. Oh, you said you wouldn't do it again, and you did. That's the nature of sin to come back." Another aspect of sin, he noted, is how it affects everyone. It is not an individual thing. It has a ripple effect, like a rock in a lake. Naturally, this discussion of sin led to the need to repent.

"There is a power that comes in confession," Miles boldly proclaimed. "There is nothing weak about saying I was wrong, I didn't do right, and I need to talk to you about it." Then he stepped out of the pulpit and walked down the stairs to stand in front of the audience.

"God has a plan for every life here. Repentance is what we have to do." The organ began to play. A woman stepped to the microphone and with tears in her voice sang, "How many times does it take for us to learn?"

As she concluded her song, Miles made his call for

the congregation to repent of their sins, to come to the front and stand before their God. The organist played softly as he finished his words and then filled the room with music, but no one moved. Miles looked across the silent audience; the organist played on. Finally, one man rose and with head bowed walked to the front. Miles thanked him and acknowledged that this brother had requested baptism. The music from the organ continued. Miles waited, but no one else came forward. When the song ended, there was prayer. The service concluded.

A week and a day later, the Lake Region Executive Committee voted to put Norman K. Miles on administrative leave.

The People and Their Plans

The action taken by the Executive Committee to put Miles on administrative leave—after he had already resigned as president—was seen by some as a move to prevent him from being re-elected president, because his name had been mentioned as a possible candidate. It was just one of the notable actions of the committee in August. Consideration of possible court action against Norman K. Miles, Hugo Gambetta, and Leroy Hampton was also on the agenda.

The Executive Committee also went ahead with the procedure spelled out in the bylaws on the election of a president between sessions by the formation of the special committee. This happened in spite of the action taken by the constituents in July to convene another special session of the constituency specifically for the election of a president on October 2. In September, this special committee (Executive Committee plus the old Nominating Committee) intends to meet to act as a search committee. It plans to put together a list of potential presidential candidates.

Whoever is elected, job one has already been spelled out in a strategic action plan drafted by an advisory team for the July 24 constituency meeting. "Create a new organization-wide conversation about honesty, integrity and trust in the conference with increased credibility and trust among constituents and workers," it said. "Demonstrate open and honest communication."

Bonnie Dwyer is editor of *Spectrum* magazine. Alexander Carpenter worked on special projects at *Spectrum* until starting graduate studies this fall at the Graduate Theological Union, in Berkeley, California.

Discussed: new computer system, able chairpersons, the cross as a symbol of domination, sanctified moments, protocol for revising the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs, fear of creeds

Seventh-day Adventist Church Gets New Fundamental Belief—The First in a Quarter Century

By Lawrence T. Geraty

Twenty-five years after the adoption of the Statement of (27) Fundamental Beliefs at the 1980 Dallas Session of the General Conference, a twenty-eighth belief (“Growing in Christ”) was finally voted at the 2005 session of the General Conference in Saint Louis. But it came only after a fractured discussion that lasted over parts of five days.

One of the problems was that delegates had difficulty getting recognized by the chair because of a new computer system, which, when the “bugs” are worked out, will certainly be an improvement in comparison to past procedures.

Second, not enough time was allowed in one sitting for this important discussion; chairmen kept introducing other scheduled items, often of lesser consequence (including, for instance, the singing of “Happy Birthday” to one chair’s father). Consequently, the discussion stretched over almost a week in several isolated sessions that lacked continuity, sometimes even with different delegates in attendance.

A third issue was varying levels of skill among chairmen (all general vice presidents

of the General Conference) assigned to the business sessions. Often the way they applied parliamentary procedure complicated rather than fostered progress. Some chairmen sought the assistance of others on the platform, including the parliamentarian.

At one crucial point, newly reelected General Conference president Jan Paulsen saved the day by appealing to delegates that they refer the statement back to committee for reconsideration rather than trying to wordsmith it on the floor. Kudos go to the two most able chairs, both Canadians: Elders Lowell Cooper and Gerry Karst.

The substance of the new fundamental belief emphasizing personal spirituality and

victory over demonic forces is mostly innocuous. Many delegates from developed countries wondered why it was needed and what all the fuss was about, but they were assured it was necessary for the developing countries, where many new members still struggle with evil spirits and the power of the Devil.

In my view, the General Conference administration and those who were involved in presenting the new belief statement to the assembled delegates had designed a careful process leading up to Saint Louis. This was reflected in the way this item (Number 207 on the General Agenda) came to the delegates in three parts:

1. Procedure for Suggesting Additions or Revisions to the Fundamental Beliefs (actually presented as General Agenda item Number 213, "Protocol Statement on Additions or Revisions to the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs").
2. Proposal for a New Fundamental Belief.
3. Growing in Christ—New Fundamental Belief.

Part 1 suggested a seven-step process to be followed by the General Conference to involve the world church after a proposed addition or revision to the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs is received at headquarters (see sidebar, page 29, for text). The delegates were told that these were basically the steps followed after this particular belief was proposed.

Biblical Research Institute director Angel Rodriguez emphasized that "the nature of our fundamental beliefs is not a creed but is a list of beliefs that hold us together. This implies that truth is dynamic. It indicates that revisions and additions could be added in the future." The protocol was adopted by the delegates after some discussion and clarification.

Part 2 is an eight-page proposal that explains the issues surrounding this specific new belief statement. After an introduction, there follows a brief history of the development of fundamental beliefs in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, an explanation of the denomination's need for this new statement, a rationale for the content of the proposed new fundamental belief, an outline of the process itself in the case of this specific proposed statement, and a conclusion with some comments on the statement.

Finally, there is an appendix, "Chronology of the Development of the New Statement of Fundamental

Belief." This document, which was passed out on the floor, answered in advance many of the questions delegates would otherwise have had.

Part 3 contains the wording of the new statement itself. The delegates received an initial statement in their notebooks upon registration. During the floor discussions, the delegates received a slightly revised page. Then on the final day of discussion, after a behind-the-scenes committee tried to incorporate suggestions from the floor that made sense to them, they distributed a final (third) revised statement that was eventually voted, but only under the pressure of time and the encouragement of the chairman.

The new statement will take its place within the total of twenty-eight statements as number eleven, after number ten, "The Experience of Salvation," and before the old number eleven, "The Church," which is now number twelve (see page 28 for final version).

What were some of the issues raised in the fractured discussions? The main one was the way the proposed statement began: "By His cross, Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil." Because of their work with Muslims and Jews, Trans-European Division delegates in particular pointed out that for many of the people they try to reach, the cross is a symbol of domination, as seen during the Crusades, when Christians arrived in the Middle East as conquering armies.

These delegates, supported by several from other fields—notably Claude Richli from East Africa—appealed for changed wording that would say something like, "By His death on the cross, Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil."

While those on the platform (the committee assigned to work on the new statement: new General Conference vice president Mike Ryan, Biblical Research Institute director Angel Rodriguez, and Adventist Review editor Bill Johnsson) initially defended their original wording, as did delegates from the floor, the revised wording eventually won the day.

A suggestion that "by His death and resurrection Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil" was dismissed because the one who proposed it was trying to incorporate all theology into one statement; after all, a pre-



FINAL VERSION

Growing in Christ

By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us. Continually committed to Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are set free from the burden of our past deeds. No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church. As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience.

(Ps 1:1, 2; 23:4; 77:11, 12; Col 1:13, 14; 2:6, 14, 15; Luke 10:17–20; Eph 5:19, 20; 6:12–18; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Phil 3:7–14; 1 Thess 5:16–18; Matt 20:25–28; John 20:21; Gal 5:22–25; Rom 8:38, 39; 1 John 4:4; Heb 10:25.)

vious statement already dealt with the resurrection.

With regard to the second sentence in the statement, "He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom," a German delegate pointed out that the statement mentions only "external threats," but not "internal threats," such as mental illness. Only the cultural situations that prevailed in the third world carried the day, though a North American delegate noted that people in the developed world have problems with evil, too!

Several Australian delegates argued that "Continually committed to Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are set free from the burden of our past deeds," is not really true experientially, for we continue to live

with the consequences of our past deeds. So they suggested (unsuccessfully) that we are "set free from the guilt or power of our past deeds."

In addition, the Australians said that the last sentence was problematic: "As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit sanctifies every moment and every task." Are moments and tasks sanctified, rather than persons?

A lengthy discussion ensued, which resulted in the final wording: "His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience." In the process of these particular exchanges, an argument arose between some members of the Australian Biblical Research Committee and Elders Rodriguez and Johnsson as to whether or not the statement had been approved in their division.

Although the process on the floor was tortured (delegates voted the original wording, brought it back for further discussion, referred it to the behind-the-scenes committee to modify the wording, and finally voted the statement as it came back from the committee), I was among the delegates who felt satisfied with our accomplishment.

I am satisfied first because this was the first time in twenty-five years that the Preamble to the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs had been taken seriously and was frequently referred to in a positive manner. After all, the official book explicating the Twenty-Seven Fundamental Beliefs, authored by Gerard Damsteegt and published by the General Conference Ministerial Association, not only ignored the Preamble, it didn't even acknowledge its existence! That situation has thankfully changed.

Second, delegates from a world church attempted seriously to respond with sensitivity to a felt need of members in the most rapidly growing sectors of the Church.

Third and finally, the General Conference carefully thought through a process and protocol for revising or adding to the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs, which demonstrates that it can be modified (and how), and that it is thus not set in stone.

The latter was what denominational pioneer, John Loughborough, feared most, for it was he who said, "The first step of apostasy is to get up a creed, telling us what to believe. The second is to make that creed a test of fellowship. The third is to try members by that creed.

Protocol Statement on Additions or Revisions to the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs

In adding to and/or revising the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs it is imperative to involve the world church as much as possible in the process. Any suggestion should be based on a serious concern for the well-being of the world church and its message and mission, be biblically based, and informed by the writings of Ellen G. White. Considering the importance and necessity of involving the world church in the process of additions and/or revisions to the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs, any suggestion for possible changes should reach the office of the President of the General Conference not later than two (2) years before a General Conference Session.

If the perceived need for additions and/or revisions to the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs is initiated by the world field, the matter should be carefully discussed at each administrative level. In the evaluation of the suggested change the governing body at each level shall establish an appropriate process for evaluation, seeking wide input. The process at each level shall result in the governing body either recommending the proposed change to the next level of administration, or abandoning any further consideration of it. In this way the recommendation for changes in the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs arrive at the General Conference. Once the suggestions reach the General Conference, or if the suggestions originated at the General Conference, it shall appoint an ad hoc committee to coordinate the process and facilitate the dialogue.

The following procedure shall be used by the General Conference in seeking the consensus of the world church in favor of or against the proposed change:

1. The General Conference will coordinate and facilitate the process of discussion through Presidential and the members of the ad hoc committee.
2. A preliminary draft approved by the Spring Meeting or Annual Council will be sent to the Divisions for reactions and comments. It should be discussed at the Union and Conference/Mission levels and printed in the local church papers.
3. Involve Theology/Religion Departments and Seminaries.
4. Discuss it at the Biblical Research Institute Committee and other pertinent committees.
5. Publish a draft in the *Adventist Review*, the *Ministry*, and place it on the Internet for comments and reactions from church members.
6. The GC ad hoc committee will receive all the suggestions from the world field and prepare the final draft to be submitted to the Annual Council for further discussion before it is placed on the agenda of the General Conference Session.
7. Only the General Conference in session can approve additions or revisions to the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The fourth is to denounce as heretics those who do not believe that creed. And fifth to commence persecution against such." (Of course, it remains to be seen just how our church will now use the revised statement!)

Hopefully, the Church will not need to wait another twenty-five years for the next change or addition, and, hopefully, next time around there will be adequate time allotted for discussion. Furthermore, let's hope that someone who knows how to use parliamentary procedure to move things along will chair the process. Time discussing what we believe and the implications,

if spent wisely and in the right spirit, can draw a diverse church together—a goal we need to spend more time pursuing.

I think that, despite our problems in Saint Louis, this was the positive result of our time together.

A delegate to the General Conference Session, Lawrence T. Geraty is president of La Sierra University, in Riverside, California.



Discussed: apostasy, making disciples, nurture, leaving through the back door, hurting members, church of the margins, attractive and sustaining faith

Dropouts: Missional Challenge for a Maturing Church

By Monte Sahlin

Concern about apostasy, people leaving the Seventh-day Adventist Church, was at an all-time high during the Fifty-Eighth General Conference Session in Saint Louis. It came up in printed materials and in conversations, especially in reference to high dropout rates among young people.

One handout distributed at one of the many booths stated “70 percent of young people in developing nations drop out of the church.” During the “Let’s Talk” forum that General Conference president Jan Paulsen held with young adults at the session, which was broadcast live on the Hope Channel, one of the young people stated, “60 to 70 percent of young adults are leaving the church.” Paulsen said “we really don’t know the number,” and went on to express serious concern.¹

One missionary told me about the

large numbers joining the church where he serves. “A third are dropped from the membership rolls, another third are on the rolls but no longer attend, and only a third are active members.”

Official Statistics

The Session’s statistical report included for the first time an analysis of the numbers dropped from membership. Over the last five years, the Church grew from 10.9 million members to 13.9 million and “received

into membership over five million new believers... however, more than 1.4 million left... For every 100 accessions, more than 35 others decided to leave"—a rate "considerably more than the 24 subtracted for every 100 added"—in the previous five years (1995-99). In fact, the drop rate has increased by almost half.²

Table 1 (page 33) shows that the highest apostasy rates are in the Southern-Asia Pacific Division (SSD), the Euro-Asia Division, and the East-Central Africa Division. In fact, the SSD (principally the Philippines and Indonesia) lost many more members than it recruited in 2003 and 2004. There were less than 60,000 baptisms each of those years in the SSD, despite the work of many public evangelism teams from North America in recent years, with 136,741 members dropped in 2003 and an astounding 148,017 in 2004.³

The Euro-Asia Division consists of nations that emerged from the former Soviet Union. It, too, has been the focus of many evangelistic projects from North America over the last decade. In this division, losses have equaled two-thirds of accessions over the last five years, and in the two most recent years they have equaled 85 percent of baptisms. Accessions have declined each year from 17,798 in 2000 to 8,756 in 2004.

Three-quarters of the Adventists in the East-Central Africa Division (ESD) live in five nations clustered around Lake Victoria: Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Congo, and Uganda. Membership losses in these countries have averaged 62 percent of the number of baptisms and professions of faith over the last five-year period, and 88 percent during the last three years. In 2002, 2003, and 2004, the ESD made major statistical "adjustments," averaging almost 100,000 each year, and dropped many actual names from membership rolls.

The decision to adjust lists and drop names reflects efforts by administrators to clean lists in the aftermath of more than a decade of armed conflicts, civil unrest, and the emergence of large numbers of internal refugees in several nations of the region. Also important is the fact that rapid church growth has made it almost impossible for the denomination to keep pace with the record keeping.

In Europe and North America, losses have averaged just under 40 percent of the number of new members coming in. In the North American Division (NAD), where the Seventh-day Adventist Church has the longest tenure and is faced with an industrialized, urban, secular (postmodern) missionary context, the rate has jumped from 32 percent in 2001 to 48 percent in 2004.

In Latin America, fewer than one-third of the members

added are lost, and the proportion has actually declined over the most recent five-year period. Southern and Western Africa have even lower rates of loss, but the lowest is in continental Asia. In the Northern Asia-Pacific Division—Korea, China, and Japan—only 10 percent of the number of new members is lost, and in India only 5 percent.

Why Do People Leave?

Apostasy was the topic on the afternoon of Tuesday, July 5, which focused on mission challenges. Mark Finley, a new General Conference vice president, introduced the subject. He pointed out that the Great Commission of the Bible is not to get baptisms, but to "make disciples" (Matt. 28:18-20), perhaps a surprising admission from a man who has spent his career in public evangelism.

"When the Church fails to nurture its members, it really fails in accomplishing the Great Commission," he said. Finley's words set a decidedly different tone from that of ten years ago, when another General Conference officer told attendees at a college church that *nurture* was a bad word.

Finley listed for the delegates six reasons why people leave the Church: (1) conflict with the pastor or a church member; (2) discouragement over personal problems; (3) lack of friends in the congregation; (4) weak biblical faith; (5) feeling that the Church is irrelevant to real needs; and (6) lack of church buildings.

However, research gives a somewhat different picture, at least in the United States.

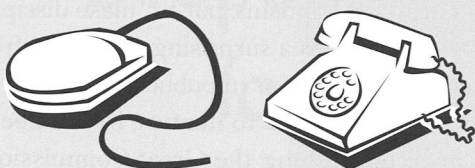
A summary of eight studies by Adventist researchers, published by the Center for Creative Ministry in 1998, indicates that personal problems and lack of friends are by far the most common reasons why members stop attending church. Conflict ranks much lower and doctrinal differences are virtually off the charts. Lack of church buildings is never mentioned in these studies.⁴

A more recent study conducted for the Pennsylvania Conference involved interviews with every new member added over the course of an entire year. These interviews were conducted twelve to twenty-four months after the converts had been baptized. About 28 percent had already quit attending. Of these, almost half indicated that they had stopped going to church because of personal problems, including the break-up of their marriages.



What Can You Do?

Reconnecting Ministries is a modest program that the North American Division (NAD) has funded for several years to help local churches reach out to nonattending and former members. The Center for Creative Ministry operates the official NAD resource center for this specialty and has a full menu of information, research, training, and consultants available on the Web at www.creativeministry.org or available via phone by dialing (800) 272-4664.



One-quarter said that they had never connected with the congregation or felt that they did not fit in or were never accepted. Another 18 percent said the Church was not meeting their needs in some other way. Only 10 percent mentioned problems with other members, and only 7 percent said that they disagreed with church doctrine.⁵

Patricia Gustin, director of the Institute for World Mission at Andrews University, also spoke briefly at the General Conference Session. "There is probably no part of what we do that is as neglected and as important as dealing with this question," she began. "We have to constantly remember that evangelism is not an event but a process.... There must be ongoing nurture, ... and we must never give the impression that once one has entered into our fellowship the process is over."

Open Discussion

During the ensuing discussion, fourteen delegates spoke at the microphones. The General Conference, divisions, and unions "cannot do very much about...apostasy," said Jochen Howlitschek of the Euro-Africa Division. It is a local problem. "Local pastors have to be involved in this," echoed Jesus Uriate of the North American Division.

Uriate suggested creation of "a department...to follow up on new disciples," and a "curriculum [to] involve new members in active participation in the

Church." Denis Hankinson of the South Pacific Division reported that in his conference weekly attendance counts provide a key indicator of "health or disease in [the division's] churches."

Artur Stele of the Euro-Asia Division presides over a division with some of the largest losses, and he focused on worship style and fellowship. "People must experience something that is real, that the Lord is present, that people are worshiping in a very lively manner. Often our worships remind me of funeral ceremonies." He also emphasized the need for small group ministries "that can help people to feel that they are loved, that somebody cares."

Basil Hall, of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, challenged denominational leaders to hold onto "influential pastors leaving [and] going independent." "Sister White tell us that when Lucifer decided to become Satan, God spent a lot of time trying to woo him back," Hall said. "I don't see the same spirit from the leadership of the Church."

Two of the three North American Division delegates who spoke addressed the issue of finances. It "is just as important to save the children in our families as to save new converts," stated Daniel Chaij. Chaij lamented a decline in the percentage of Adventist families that enroll their children in church schools and suggested that the Church sell its costly boarding academies.

"[P]arents don't want to send their children to boarding school," said Chaij. Instead, funds from their sale should be invested in an endowment that would help more children go to day schools. "We would lose less of them in later life," he asserted.

Robert Paulsen, who has accompanied public evangelism teams to India, saw a need for church buildings and appealed for the General Conference to put up one million dollars in a challenge grant and seek donors to match it as a fund for new construction.

Violeto Bocala, a member of the General Conference Executive Committee from the Philippines, picked up on the need for church construction and also stressed the need for pastors. "I would suggest to local missions or conferences that when they penetrate a new area, they should see to it that they have a pastor...in that newly established congregation [and] include in their budget funds for a church building."

Paul Tompkins, a delegate from the Trans-European Division, expressed concern for the "many young people who leave the church in their late teens or early twenties." "We just carry on [and] forget to maintain contact.... I would like us to develop a strategic plan over the next

five years to reach out to [these young adults]. I believe there are many who will come back to the church. They never left Jesus.”

Research does not support these solutions, despite their creativity. Nor does it support Finley’s analysis, especially his listing of “weak biblical faith,” which is commonly assumed to be a major cause of apostasy. Indeed, the related concept of *backslider* places blame on inactive members when it should be focused instead on what other members have neglected.⁶

A Real Problem

The number of people who leave through the “back door” presents a real challenge to the Adventist Church. These departures are becoming more and more of an issue as Adventism matures. People born into the faith have different spiritual needs than those who join as adult converts.

In the past, most members of the Adventist Church joined as adult converts, but this pattern is changing as the Baby Boom generation matures and the dropout rate among new converts remains high. Currently, the

majority of Adventists in North America were born into the Church. This middle-aged segment of Adventists by birth currently dominates most congregations.

According to one follow-up study of more than five thousand individuals baptized into the Adventist Church in Pennsylvania during the NET 95 satellite-linked evangelism campaign, only 10 percent had dropped out after a year or more.⁷ However, the dropout rate for the same category of converts rose to 28 percent five years later.

Other figures show discrepancies between active and official church figures. Double counting and confusion account partly for these differences, but they also point to shrinkage in local church life.


In 1990, the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) claimed that 668,000 Americans identified themselves as Seventh-day Adventists. This figure was 5 percent smaller than the official membership tally for the United States at that time, which stood at 701,657.

When ARIS restudied the subject in 2001, the gap increased by a factor of four. At that time, ARIS claimed that 724,000 Americans said they were Adventists—20 percent fewer than the 900,985 listed in official records.⁸

Another study, the Religious Congregations and Membership Study (RCMS), prepared an inter-faith census of religion in 2000 that relied on conference directories to identify membership at the local level. The results reported 86,191 fewer than General Conference totals. Evidently, the General Conference figure included members who cannot be identified with any particular local church.

There is little evidence that the decision to drop out among such large numbers of Adventists is, in fact, related to apostasy, a word that literally means “to turn against the faith.” Instead, research shows that most people dropped from official

Table 1: Adventist Church Membership Loss Ratios 2000–2004 by World Divisions



Southern Asia-Pacific Division	104.75
Euro-Asia Division*	65.02
East-Central Africa Division	61.79
Trans-European Division**	39.24
North American Division	39.17
Euro-Africa Division***	38.84
South Pacific Division	32.96
South American Division	31.02
Inter-American Division	29.51
Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division	19.34
West-Central Africa Division	12.65
Northern Asia-Pacific Division	10.38
Southern Asia Division	5.37

*The former USSR

**The official report includes a calculation error, which has been corrected here.

***This division currently includes very few members outside Europe.

Statistics taken from the General Conference Report from the Office of Archives and Statistics.

Church records still believe in key tenants of faith and see themselves as essentially Adventist.

The single most important factors that lead Adventists in North America to quit attending church are adverse life events and lack of caring responses from the congregation. When a church member goes through a divorce, becomes unemployed, or experiences some other personal crisis, the pastor and church often fail to respond helpfully. The hurting member feels rejected and begins to withdraw. Ignored by the pastor and most church members, the member continues to withdraw until entirely outside the church fold.¹⁰

After quitting, the offended member typically watches the reactions of the church for a while. Most in this category report that no one contacts them on behalf of the church. Often they eventually reinvest time and energy previously devoted to the church to other activities related to emotional and spiritual needs. For example, common or former and inactive members often spend Sabbaths enjoying nature or engaging in other peaceful activities that “bring [them] close to God.” Still, they continue to keep the Sabbath.

The Church of the Margins

Adventists have grown a large church of the margins, perhaps one million or more inactive and former members in North America. Those on the margins gather informally in small groups and may tell you, “I have church with my family.”

Members of this church of the margins can be found in the most surprising places! A pastor once told me to go to a certain coffee shop at 9:30 Sabbath morning. I followed his advice, and there I found a table full of men eating vegetarian omelettes and discussing the Bible. They told me they didn’t feel comfortable in church.

Recently, a friend of mine spent a week volunteering as a nurse for an Adventist summer camp. There she discovered some fifty families who drove up each Friday in their recreational vehicles to join the children around the campfire Friday night and Sabbath morning.

“We can’t find a church that we feel comfortable in; this is our church,” they told my friend.

Has the Adventist Church become too large to provide the quality of care that individuals and families need? Is a corporate focus on mass production eroding the quality of life for the people in the pews? Could our massive success plant the seeds of failure? The

Adventist Church is clearly an attractive faith—it is one of the fastest growing denominations in the world. But is it a sustaining faith?

Can it mature gracefully and meaningfully into the second and subsequent generations? Can it provide the same clear answers and sense of assurance for those born into Adventism that it does for adult converts?

These questions are core issues for the Adventist Church today. Clearly, we need to become more inclusive and compassionate. In his sermon on the last Sabbath of the General Conference Session, President Jan Paulsen pled for such qualities. “Do not post guardians at the door to test the genuineness of people before you let them in,” he said. “God loves all people globally.”

Paulsen pointed to the growing inclusion of women in positions of church leadership. Reminding the delegates of the women elected for the first time to vice presidential and secretariat offices at the General Conference, he asked, “Do you not see this as a sign? It is a door that our Lord has opened.”

Paulsen returned to the subject of youth participation in the church. “Please, for Christ’s sake, involve our youth.... Actively engage them as partners in our future.... Trust them and empower them.”

“It is important to understand [that] God is not owned by any one people,” said Paulsen. “I want Adventist churches to be known as houses of prayer for all people.... God has set before us an open door, which it is not our privilege to close and keep others out.”

Throughout his sermon, Paulsen frequently referred to the need for us to “open the door,” and he clearly he wants to open a way so that the church of the margins can come home.

Notes and References

1. The best research available on this specific item comes from the ten-year longitudinal study conducted by Roger Dudley, director of the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University. Depending on how his raw numbers are parsed, 45 to 55 percent of children raised in Adventist families leave the church by their early twenties. See Roger L. Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories from a 10-year Study* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2000).

2. Bert Haloviak, “Celebrating a Half-Century of Mission,” *Adventist Review* online, www.adventistreview.org/2005bulletin/bulletin8-4.html.

3. Ibid.

4. Paul Richardson, Monte Sahlin, and Norman Yergen, *Why Do Adventists Quit Coming to Church?* (Lincoln, Nebr.:

Center for Creative Ministry, 1998), 4–7.

5. Monte Sahlin and Paul Richardson, *People Joining the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Pennsylvania and Their Experience with the Church* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Center for Creative Ministry, 2002), 17–18.

6. Richardson, Sahlin, and Yergen, *Why Do Adventists Quit Coming to Church?* 4–5.

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8. Barry A. Kosmin, Egon Mayer, and Ariela Keysar, *American Religious Identification Survey—2001* (New York: Graduate Center of the City University of New York, 2002), 12; General Conference Office of Archives and Statistics, *128th Annual Statistical Report—*

1990 (Silver Spring, Md.: General Conference Office of Archives and Statistics, 1991), 16, 18; General Conference Office of Archives and Statistics, *139th Annual Statistical Report—2001* (Silver Spring, Md.: General Conference Office of Archives and Statistics, 2002), 20, 22.

9. Richardson, Sahlin, and Yergen, *Why Do Adventists Quit Coming to Church?* 4.

Monte Sahlin began to conduct research on church dropouts in 1980 and has personally interviewed more than six hundred inactive and former Adventists. He is vice president for Creative Ministries in the Columbia Union Conference and chairs the board for the Center for Creative Ministry in Lincoln, Nebraska. His e-mail address is msahlin@columbiaunion.net.

Mark Finley on Apostasy

This section is called “Challenges to Mission,” and we are focusing particularly today on a major challenge facing the Seventh-day Adventist Church and all Christian churches that experience growth.

In the past five years the Seventh-day Adventist Church has exploded in growth, and we can praise God that 5,049,157 accessions to the church through baptism and profession of faith have taken place. But at the same time we lament the fact that in this same five-year period 1,397,608 people have been dropped from church membership.

That becomes a serious problem. Is it possible to reverse the church’s high apostasy rate? And do we have any examples on a divisionwide basis in which there has been an intentional approach on the part of conferences and unions and divisions to reduce apostasy, and can we measure it statistically?

I would like to look at one division in particular. The South American Division has become a positive example of apostasy rate reversal. The secretary’s report for the South American Division in the year 2000 indicated that the apostasy rate in South America in 2000 was approximately what the apostasy rate is all over the world today. It was 33 percent in 2000. The South American Division took a look at that.

Recent discussions with Elder Roy Nagel indicate that the apostasy rate in South America is now running at 18 percent. Now, that is a dramatic reversal, so the question becomes, How was it achieved? The South American Division leadership

reports that they have implemented a strategy of small groups throughout that division that in their minds have made a dramatic difference in reversing those apostasy rates. That may be something for other divisions in the world to take a look at.

Church growth thinkers list the following reasons that people leave the Seventh-day Adventist Church and churches in general.

1. Conflict with a pastor or another church member.
2. Discouragement over personal problems.
3. Lack of friends. Church growth studies indicate that if you do not establish a set of new friends within the church within the first year after you are baptized, your likelihood of leaving increases.
4. A weak biblical faith. A number of studies indicate that when people have a weak biblical faith, when they do not understand what they are doing in joining a religious community of Seventh-day Adventists, they are likely to leave more quickly.
5. The perception on the part of some that have joined a church, a fellowship of believers, that it is not relevant to their needs.
6. Lack of a house of worship. In many places where there are mass baptisms, studies indicate that if a house of worship is not provided for those new believers, the likelihood for them to leave rises exponentially.

Source: *Adventist Review* online, www.adventistreview.org/2005bulletin/bulletin7-actions.html.

Discussed: remote
schools, parallel
society, vilification of
urban culture,
majoring in minors,
LIFEdevelopment,
urbanized generation,
strengthening power
of the Holy Spirit



The Parallel Society

By *Tim Puko*

To get from my room at Newbold College to London, the closest city of consequence, I start my journey with a thirty-five minute walk to the train station in the nearest town. The train ride takes another sixty-three minutes. From Waterloo Station, it's another ten to twenty minutes on the tube (subway), depending on the exact destination.

This, apparently, is close. Well, close for an Adventist school. Take, for example, the trip from Andrews University to Chicago: one hundred miles; Loma Linda University to Los Angeles: sixty miles; Friedensau Adventist University to Berlin; seventy-five miles; and the University of Montemorelos to Monterrey, Mexico: forty miles. Although there are schools in close proximity to major metropolitan areas, they are the exception. Distance is the rule—a rule that's hurting the Church.

Church leaders seem to recognize the problem of separation between the Church and the world's cities. At its recent Saint Louis session, the General Conference dedicated a special offering to a Global Mission project called Hope 4 the Big Cities. The project will target at least sixty of the world's

largest cities for evangelistic efforts.

This program may theoretically create hope for these big cities, which are thoroughly void of an Adventist presence, but it creates just as much hope for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, an institution depressed by lack of connection with and understanding of an increasingly urbanized society.

Church members often trumpet the historic Adventist idea of “being in the world but not of the world,” but many of them try as hard as possible to avoid being in the world, too. The location of our schools and universities is the quintessential example. Besides the universities listed above, scores of Adventist elementary church schools and secondary boarding schools dot the remote countryside and the far-removed exurbs.



Some were built in these locations for purely practical reasons—primarily cheap and available land. But the directives of Ellen White in the late 1800s also played a role as she encouraged organizations to keep a buffer zone between themselves and the perceived evil cities of the world. In following this advice so thoroughly, the Church has institutionalized a vilification of the world's urban centers, preventing it from reaching the citizens of those centers while creating an insular and unappealing church culture that endangers the progress of Adventism.

I believe in the distinct and logical gospel message of Adventism, and because of that I joined the Church just eight years ago. At the time, I was only a sophomore in high school; my parents had converted two years before. We lived just southeast of Pittsburgh, the metropolitan region with the second fewest Adventists per one thousand in the North American Division.

I went to public schools and secular colleges, where I continued to live outside the larger Adventist culture. My senior year of undergraduate school I rented an apartment one block from a stop on the elevated train system for which Chicago is famous. During graduate school last year, I lived in an apartment in uptown Manhattan, and I took the subway all over New York City, most frequently to Queens, from where I reported on life in the projects.

This year, I moved to England to volunteer at

Newbold College. Here I feel like an alien within the Adventist gates. Before arriving, I had never set foot on an Adventist campus. It seems that I had an atypical Adventist adolescence. I never went to Adventist school, attended Pathfinders, had Adventist friends my own age, or dated an Adventist girl.

Though Adventist in my heart and theology, my culture is very much that of an urban intellectual. The move from the United States to the United Kingdom shocked me very little compared to the move from an Ivy League school in uptown Manhattan to an Adventist school in Binfield Village.

What I understand now is that Adventists have created, as Newbold vice principal Mike Pearson once explained, a “parallel society” for themselves. Because we educate so many of our own in our own schools—and then employ so many of our own in our own schools, hospitals, and church institutions—we have become concentrated in communities that surround these organizations. The Adventist Church provides the setting and direction not only for spiritual lives, but also for Adventists careers and social lives.

This hurts church members themselves, especially those of the younger generation. Many I met at Newbold this year lack an appreciation of city life and the atmosphere that occurs in the crosshairs of a metropolis's cultural centers and theaters, its prestigious univer-



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sities and museums, and its history and diversity.

Numerous students from the United States that I met here seem to have come from identical backgrounds. They had Adventist parents and all Adventist friends, lived in Adventist communities, and then spent more than fifteen years—from kindergarten through college—in Adventist schools with Adventist teachers and Adventist classmates.

But something was missing. Exposure to diverse ideas and cultures creates the tension that inspires progress and strengthens conviction. The “parallel society” effect limits that exposure in the lives of Adventist youth. In this way, the Church's inability to connect with urbanites and youth intertwine.

There seems to be a population of secular Adventists who resent the Church and ignore the message, though they come from an Adventist heritage and still occasionally participate in Adventist culture.

In part, this has occurred as a result of a backlash against the Church's vilification of urban culture. The secular world seems exotic and appealing to many young people who have been kept from it so much of their lives. While trying to satiate their burning desires for diversity and exploration, they find it necessary to renounce Adventism because they were taught in their formative environments that such quests cannot be reconciled with true Adventism.

More subtly, but more dangerously, this isolation encourages an inward focus for the entire church community. Instead of surrounding themselves with those in need, instead of being surrounded by those who are unaware of the power Jesus can have in their lives, Adventists surround themselves with each other. In this environment, there is a paucity of encouragement to think about how to serve the ignorant, though plenty of encouragement to think about how to correct the enlightened.

I know about this because I fight the urge myself. At Newbold, people's choices for acceptable Sabbath activities have often irritated me, but I shamefully remind myself that this is not a matter of salvation and that I, a fallen human, am ignorant and unfit to judge. Adventists have a reputation for such “majoring in minors,” in another words, being legalistic.

Instead of taking care of the poor and widowed, we chastise the person who brings chicken to the church

picnic or the pastor's daughter who wears a spaghetti-strap tank top to vespers. Of course this has long been recognized as a problem in Adventism that has squeezed our youth from the Church. The problem's root is our own self-absorption, caused by isolation. Instead of windows to expand our field of vision, we have mirrors.

Not only will the Church continue to have difficulty retaining its youth in the present situation, it will also have trouble attracting young visionaries who could best move God's message forward. As mentioned at the General Conference Session in Saint Louis, more than 60 percent of the world's population will be urbanized by 2030, if not sooner. In the world's developed regions, almost 85 percent of the population will live in cities by that time.

Globalization, consolidation, high-tech commerce, and multinational corporations are pulling the world's citizens into megalopolises. The more talented and educated a person is, the stronger those forces pull. Many of the people who move to cities can capably differentiate between their positive attributes and opportunities and the depravity that inevitably festers in them.

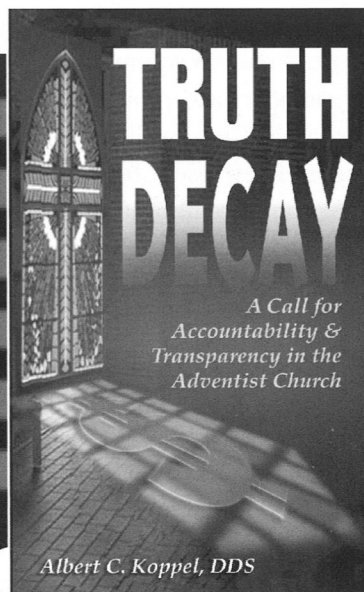
They (read: I) don't enjoy being part of an organization that vilifies the place they call home, a place that they likely learn to enjoy, even if they didn't enjoy it naturally. Although the Church has not legislated this vilification, the location of its institutions and the frequency with which it employs its members establishes a subtle rejection of the independent occupational and lifestyle pursuits of those talented individuals who are drawn to cities.

To use my personal example, should my calling be considered less sacred and less important than the calling of those in the ministry or in the medical profession because I chose the profession of journalism, writing for a diverse audience on issues of the day that can greatly impact readers' lives? I often feel that the church community thinks it should, and that's not a pleasant perception.

If I did not know better, if I had not recognized long ago that the message isn't always well represented by its followers, it would be hard for me to accept one that I felt did not accept me. It is difficult for any organization to reach a group of people when such dissonance arises in relation to the

Why does the Adventist Church . . .

- Mismanage millions in donations
- Stonewall and obstruct flow of information
- Pressure senile members to alter giving plans
- Channel funds away from local congregations



'Truth Decay: A Call for Accountability & Transparency in the Adventist Church' is a book that tells the first-hand account of a devout Adventist family that gave millions to the Church only to be rewarded by deceit, stonewalling, and mismanagement.

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purposes and identities of group members.

Kind words and thoughtful strategies implemented from the top down will not solve this type of problem when the attitude and, therefore, the problem itself has become ingrained in the culture. I am thrilled that church leaders are recognizing the Church's absence in the cities and calling for a solution, but the Church also needs a change of mindset at the grassroots level.

This is not to say that all Adventists should get up and move their entire church community into the closest city, but they can start accepting the city lifestyle as a legitimate alternative. City dwellers are not inherently decadent savages. They resent being treated as such, just as they resent condescending attitudes toward them as moral snobs. Let us not fall into that trap.

Instead, we must first accept others as Christ accepted people. Then a relationship can be formed between the Church and the cities that involves Adventists who are willing to commit themselves to living happily and respectfully side by side with city dwellers.

In his leadership presentation to the General Conference, Leslie Pollard, vice president for diversity at Loma Linda University, pointed to the wisdom of 1 Corinthians 9 for our time and place. Starting in verse 19, Paul writes, "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews... To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some."

Paul traveled to, lived in, and served the great cities of Rome, setting the example for today's Christians. Evangelistic efforts in cities cannot be reduced, as they often have been, to hit-and-run operations, where leaders arrive as outsiders and confirm their disdain by leaving as quickly as possible. Only a group of metropolitans, accepted, cherished, and actively supported by the larger church, can lead the Adventist march onward within the great cities of the world.

It is encouraging to read that at least one such program in Great Britain is doing that. The *Messenger*, the British Union Conference magazine, reported that Trans-European Division leaders arrived in Saint Louis touting 12 percent growth during the previous five years. The magazine credited "LIFEdevelopment" as one program helping foster that growth.

"It encourages existing members to make genuine

friendships with secular people, allowing them to belong to church communities before they have become believers," says the article. Cecil Perry, leader of the Church in Britain, told the *Messenger*, "We are re-orientating the minds of our members. They are now thinking outside of their own flock."

Jesus tried to encourage the same rationale among followers as he sought out the citizens of the world. He did not call his disciples and then run for the hills to live in isolation. They lived and ministered in the cities and towns, confronting the persecution of the Pharisees and serving the needs of sinners. He called his followers "the salt of the earth," which is useful only when interacting with other elements, like food or snow.

Furthermore, in Matthew 13 Jesus tells the parable of the wheat and the weeds, explaining that they must grow together and not be separated until the harvest. The world is both beautiful and corrupt. By the strengthening power of the Holy Spirit, we Christians can grow amid the corruption and still choose the beautiful.

The young, urbanized generation understands this mingling of sacred and profane. We are cynical and irreverent about fallen humanity. That does not mean we are incapable of loving a merciful God, but we cannot freely give our trust away to a church—a fallible institution. We've seen great political leaders and clergymen proven to be corrupt liars, and we are reluctant to give our faith away only to have our hearts broken again.

Our trust can only be earned with love, loyalty, and verifiable facts. We need to be convinced intellectually, exposed to a diversity of thought and culture, and put in an environment open to questions, disagreement, and confusion. We need to be accepted for our unique and modern talents and the desires they create, no matter how unorthodox or frightening they may seem to church folk.

Only if the Church removes the safety barriers of separation between itself and the cities—all those miles of country road—can the young and cosmopolitan be expected to remove barriers of their own that separate them from the Church.

Tim Puko recently graduated from the Columbia University School of Journalism.

Discussed: Made in America Adventism, common sense realism, democratization of theology, strange obsession with separation of church and state, the inevitable altar call, taxonomy of doctrine, theology of change



Culture and Adventism: Europe and the United States as a Case Study

By Reinder Bruinsma

Culture is usually defined as a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that members of a society use to cope with their world and with one another. These are transmitted from generation to generation through learning.

Even if we were to allow for the totally unjustified presupposition that a person enters this world as a *tabula rasa* (blank slate), we would need to agree that she would soon be subject to the forces of culture. She would shape her personality, acquire her worldview and belief system, norms, and behavior in constant, partly subconscious interaction with the dominant culture and the subculture(s) in which she participates.

Adventists are not immune to these influences. Adventism around the world has in varying degrees inherited a strong dose of American culture. Like it or not, Adventism was “made in America.” It started in a nineteenth-century American frontier setting, and there it acquired a definite flavor that remained a prominent feature as it traveled across the Midwest to California and into the South.¹

It is impossible to provide a comprehensive overview of all important aspects of this

Americanness of Adventism. But I would like to discuss a few aspects that I consider most significant from a European perspective.

Adventism’s American Roots

It seems to me that much of Adventism’s pragmatic and almost entrepreneurial spirit is closely linked to the philosophical outlook that has long dominated in the United States. Although America has experienced a variety of schools of philosophy that passed through the Western world, (Scottish) common sense realism pervaded the world of the Adventist pioneers, and no current of thought has been so consistently central in the United States as utilitarianism and other forms of pragmatism.²

The democratization of theology and church life in America is at least as important.³ The idea that the layperson and the theologian are equally qualified to understand and interpret the Bible



goes a long way toward explaining the hearing that uneducated people like William Miller, other Millerite leaders, and the Adventist pioneers received from so many people.

Furthermore, early Adventism was strongly influenced by a number of religious currents that were successful on the frontier, such as “primitive” forms of Protestantism like the Christian Connection and the American version of Methodism.⁴ Naturally, the strong Puritan hold on much of America’s early religious development also left its imprint on Adventism.

In addition, Adventism eagerly embraced the ideals of a number of reform movements promoted by other Christians in nineteenth-century America. Many early Adventists were involved with antislavery initiative, and they were deeply interested in the temperance movement and various aspects of health reform.⁵

Adventism did not develop its theology in a vacuum. The shadow of anti-Trinitarian thinking, which some of the pioneers inherited from their religious roots, continued to hover for decades over the new movement.⁶ Adventist theology also shows the marks of what has often been called “America’s obsession with the millennium.”⁷

Moreover, from the last decades of the nineteenth century onward, Seventh-day Adventism shared a strong anti-Catholic attitude with the majority of other Protestant Christians.⁸ A clear parallel can also be observed between waves of strong fundamentalist thinking in the Adventist Church and in American Protestantism in general.⁹

In administrative matters, the organizational patterns and terminology adopted by the Adventist Church were clearly inspired by ecclesiastical models current in nineteenth- and twentieth-century America and by American political structures.¹⁰ The fact that the Adventist Church has adopted a presidential system is clearly linked to this heritage.

Likewise, important institutions in Adventism were borrowed and adapted from other American denominations. The Sabbath School—for adults and children—was clearly modeled after the evangelical Sunday School that originated late in the eighteenth century and was consolidated by 1870.¹¹

European Adventism and American Adventism

Some Seventh-day Adventist historians have eagerly searched for Adventism’s European roots. Possible connections with the Reformation, and, in particular,

with certain strands of the Anabaptist movement (baptism and the Sabbath, for example) have been a prominent theme.¹² However interesting such searches may be, the fact remains that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was—more than anything else—an American church imported into Europe from the United States.¹³

Some of the first Adventist preachers and leaders in Europe were Americans born in Europe, or they were second-generation Americans. John Matteson and Louis R. Conradi are prime examples.¹⁴ Others, like James Erzberger, converted to Adventism in Europe, but almost immediately left for the United States for further training.¹⁵

Since then, European Adventism has retained many features that originated in the American cultural context. But interaction with other cultures has also influenced it, as can be seen among thousands of members who have migrated from the Caribbean region to Western Europe.¹⁶

The movement of members within Europe has complicated the picture, as, notably, members from Romania and other Central European countries have migrated westward. If anything, their arrival in Western Europe has underlined the fact that European Adventism comes in several distinct varieties. In addition, there are marked differences between the Adventist subcultures of Southern Europe and Northern Europe.

But even when we factor in these differences in the way Adventism manifests itself in Europe, there is every justification to distinguish between American and European Adventism.

Listed below are a number of significant differences I have observed while traveling widely in Europe and the United States. In many ways, the differences are more pronounced in Western Europe, but Central and Eastern European societies are changing at a breathtaking rate and, with them, the Adventist Church in this region. As a result, differences between Western and Central Europe are no longer as significant as they once were.

1 Both Europe and the United States are highly secular societies. Yet, there are major differences. Whereas a large percentage of Americans continues to attend church and support organized religion, a much smaller percentage of citizens in Europe do so.¹⁷ This pattern can also be seen in the Adventist Church, particularly on its fringes.

2 Europeans differ from Americans in their view of the church. Traditionally, many European countries have had a state church, or established church.¹⁸ Those who did not belong to these churches might attend “free” churches, but

they had fewer rights and less social prestige. Seventh-day Adventism has often been considered a sect in Europe, and it has long had a dubious reputation. This situation has changed considerably in recent decades, making Adventism more socially acceptable.

In contrast, the United States turned its back on the idea of an established church soon after its founding and opted instead for a pattern of voluntarism known as denominationalism. Although a pecking order still exists among denominations in terms of social prestige, Adventists in the United States have traditionally tended to place themselves on a higher social level than have their brothers and sisters in Europe.¹⁹

3 I believe that American Adventists tend to be more optimistic than European (certainly Western European) Adventists. Although Calvinism historically had a strong influence on American religion and Arminian tendencies have largely replaced the original widespread predestinarian beliefs, the stress on human free will carried inherent optimism. As a result, American religion became preeminently practical and individualistic.²⁰

As a result, it produced evangelists rather than theologians. American historian Henry Steele Commager once observed: "It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that during the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, religion prospered while theology went slowly bankrupt."²¹ The Adventist Church in Europe imported its evangelists from the United States, but it exported many of its theologians to America.²²

The pragmatic outlook of American Adventism can also be seen in a superabundance of independent ministries. No one knows how many there are. They vary in size from one-man, low budget operations to organizations with multimillion dollar budgets and hundreds of employees.²³

4 Periodic waves of extreme fundamentalism and Protestant right-wing ideas (abortion, capitalism, anti-socialism, and so forth) have probably influenced American Adventism to a greater extent than European Adventism.²⁴

5 In the eyes of many Europeans, American Adventists not only have a strange obsession with separation of church and state, but they also appear to be quite inconsistent. Prayer in public schools and at public events is deemed unacceptable, but there seems to be no problem with flying the American flag in church. This never ceases to amaze Europeans.

Europeans also note with interest that the Adventist Church in the United States has traditionally refused subsidies (for instance, with its educational system), whereas in many cases European Adventist leaders have actively sought them.²⁵

6 Most Adventists in North America have apparently abandoned the ideal of military noncombatancy. Adventist servicemen and women who return from active duty in the United States are not criticized for choosing military careers but tend to be applauded because of their patriotism. In Europe, by contrast, Adventists by and large continue to uphold the ideal of noncombatancy.

In European countries that until recently had a conscription system, many Adventists not only refused to bear arms, they also opted whenever possible for alternative (preferably humanitarian) service outside the military. It may well be that the bitter controversy about military service around World War I—which constituted one of the main issues in the schism between the Adventist Church and the Reformed Adventists—is still not fully forgotten.²⁶

In addition, it should be noted that European Adventists have tended to be less critical of labor union membership than have their American brethren.

7 Other notable differences also exist in the way American and Western European Adventists apply certain "Adventist" standards. European Adventists may be stricter in their Sabbath keeping. Eating out in restaurants on Sabbath and spending money on Sabbath (for example, buying fuel) are activities still largely taboo among Adventists in Europe. However, Europeans have always been more relaxed about wedding rings, and today are considerably more comfortable with modest amounts of jewelry.

In addition, large numbers of European Adventists have long objected to Christmas trees, and this attitude still lingers in some quarters, whereas American Adventists are more tolerant of them. For a long time, the American church also appeared more relaxed than its European counterpart in dealing with divorce and remarriage, but today those differences may be small. Furthermore, the European Church may now be more "understanding" with regard to cohabitation than is the Church in the United States.

As George R. Knight points out, Adventists have

never had a systematic procedure for the formation of standards and have still not moved beyond the ad hoc procedures of their forebears.²⁷

8 The status attributed to Ellen G. White probably differs among Adventists in Europe and the United States.

A number of factors may account for this. In some parts of Europe, Louis Conradi's reluctance—and subsequent unwillingness—to accept her as a prophet from God has lingered.²⁸

Also, the facts that not many Europeans in the past could read English and that few of Ellen White's books were available in their own languages also meant that they had limited access to her writings. In addition, many Europeans were probably reluctant to elevate her lest they be linked to what many perceived as an American sect—which, like Mormonism, had its own prophet.

9 I am not aware of any studies that compare differences in apocalyptic perceptions between American and European Adventists. On both continents, we currently see a wide spectrum of opinions. Adventists can be found on both who adamantly assert that traditional prophetic interpretations are still valid, whereas others insist just as forcefully that the Church should distance itself from its historicist approach to apocalyptic prophecy.²⁹

However, there is reason to think that America's alleged role in the end-time scenario has usually received less attention in Europe than in the United States. Also, American Adventists have traditionally manifested more concern about the danger of repressive Sunday laws than have their European counterparts.³⁰

10 Finally, there are distinct differences in the way European and American Adventists have traditionally conducted evangelism. Many in Europe have feared the inevitable altar call that comes with visits of American speakers!

Facing Diversity Constructively

Diversity within worldwide Adventism far exceeds differences between its American and European members. One must also remember that there are differences *within* American Adventism and *within* European Adventism, both theologically and culturally. But today, the greatest divide within the Church may not be rooted in national or regional cultures, or conservative, evangelical, or liberal theological orientations.

I am more and more convinced that another, ever-

widening abyss threatens the unity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Church is still in many parts of the world very modern in its thinking and operations, especially its bureaucratic structure. However, slowly but surely, it has a growing postmodern element in many parts of the Western World that has an entirely new way of relating to the Adventist metanarrative. Whether it will successfully meet this unprecedented challenge remains to be seen.³¹

It is not easy to answer the question, How much diversity can be tolerated? When it comes to cultural diversity, it would seem that at least in theory the degree of diversity that can be handled is related more to practical issues than theological and philosophical concerns.

Theological diversity is a different matter. I believe that a fair degree of diversity in theological views is both inevitable and desirable. It is inevitable, because of differences in cultural and educational backgrounds and because we have received the priceless gift of independent thought.

It is desirable because without dialogue—and without a continuous search for a better understanding of what it believes—the Church will soon cease to be a living body and will serve only as a museum for a particular nineteenth-century current of religious thought.

The issue is not whether diversity—particularly theological diversity—can be tolerated, but how much of it can exist without endangering the unity of the Church. This raises the question how much of Adventist theology must be shared by all, and how much can be considered optional without risking a schism or dangerous fragmentation.

Must all twenty-eight Fundamental Beliefs be upheld for a person to be considered an Adventist in good standing? What about other traditional Adventist views not listed among the Fundamental Beliefs, but nevertheless considered essential “pillars of the faith” by segments of the Church? Although some would hesitate to agree, in actual practice the Church seems to operate on the principle that not all of its doctrines are equally important.

Space does not permit an in-depth discussion in this article of a curious taxonomy of beliefs that can be detected at times. For instance, a person who denies the doctrine of the Trinity or has unorthodox views on the pre-existence of Christ or the doctrine of the atonement usually faces far fewer problems than someone who confesses to flexibility on the meaning of 1844.

Determining what parts of Adventist teaching are absolutely essential for maintaining an Adventist identity

is admittedly a highly subjective matter. I wonder whether a proposed taxonomy of doctrine by George Lindbeck, a distinguished historical theologian, might offer a profitable point of departure.³²

Following Lindbeck's lead, I would suggest that doctrines might be divided into three distinct categories: (1) doctrines universally held in Christianity; (2) doctrines unique to one church or several ecclesiastical bodies that largely determine the theological identity of that church or body; and (3) other doctrines and views generally held by members of a particular ecclesiastical body but that have varying degrees of support.

If the Fundamental Beliefs and other important views and practices of the Adventist Church were categorized along these lines, one might argue that the main substance of doctrines in categories one and two must be shared by all who want to be called Seventh-day Adventists, whereas considerable diversity might be tolerated with regard to category three.

I realize that consensus in this matter would not come easily. Some would welcome a reassessment of relative weights among various Fundamental Beliefs and would be prepared to classify some as less essential than others. Others would protest and suggest that any such attempts to classify doctrines would set the Church off on a slippery slope toward utter relativism.

However, it seems to me that the discussion cannot be avoided. Too many people have begun to wonder why previous generations of Adventist believers could remain in good and regular standing with far fewer Fundamental Beliefs than we currently have, yet they were able to deal constructively with far more diversity than many in today's Adventist Church are willing to consider.

In conclusion, let me suggest a few approaches that might help build bridges between different segments of the Adventist Church and assist leaders and members to deal more constructively and positively with diversity within it. Again, as a European Adventist, I will focus on the European situation.

1 It is important to realize that Christianity has been highly diverse from its inception, whether we think of first-century Christianity, medieval Christianity, or the church in the Reformation era.³³ Few Adventists appreciate this fact adequately.

Early Adventism was also far more diverse than many Adventists today realize. It would seem proper to stress

this diversity more prominently in our publications and preaching, because doing so would help members understand that considerable flexibility has always characterized the Church.

2 Many people fear change. This statement applies to Seventh-day Adventists as well as others. It is important to educate church members more fully about the reality of change—including doctrinal change—in the past.³⁴ Doing so will help members accept it more easily.

Our universities and colleges may need to be more intentional in providing prospective ministers with the skills to facilitate change. *Adventist Review* editor William Johnsson suggests that the Church needs a biblical view of change, possibly even a theology of change.³⁵

3 The legitimacy of contextualization needs more emphasis.³⁶ Although the Church's missiologists and better-informed leaders have gradually accepted the need for inculturation or contextualization, there is still enormous confusion at the grassroots level about the distinction between form and content. There is need for a concerted educational effort to increase awareness among members about the role of culture.

Members must be helped to appreciate the fact that biblical teaching must be deconstructed to discover the core beneath the cultural packaging in which it was delivered, and they must be helped to understand that the original message must be retranslated into current languages and repackaged in culturally relevant ways without compromising that message.

Most European Adventists at the grassroots level do not fully appreciate the extent to which Adventism has been packaged in American ways. Nor do they understand that many of these wrappings can be safely discarded and replaced with forms more appropriate to the European scene. This means that further Europeanization of Adventism is not only legitimate but also essential if the Church expects to reach its target audiences in Europe.

4 More specifically, the Adventist Church must be encouraged to deal with the realities of diversity it faces in a constructive and creative manner in sustained dialogue with various segments of local church constituencies. While remaining faithful to its core doctrines and values, Adventism must be packaged in culturally relevant ways.



The resulting diversity will be challenging at times, but refusing to allow it will create a greater danger. Present and coming generations will simply walk away from the Church if they find it does not speak to the actualities of their life situations.

5 Finally, it is important to encourage church leaders to forcefully resist the temptation to prescribe everything for the entire world through policies outlined in an ever-expanding church manual and other official documents. Church leadership at higher levels should focus on major, fundamental principles and leave the issue of how such principles might be translated into action to the church entities that know the cultures in which they operate.

Clearly, Adventist educators must play a vital role in building awareness of these issues, especially since they work in a unique environment of diversity, with teachers and students from many different backgrounds. Their goal should not be how to find ways of discouraging diversity. Instead, they must have a clear vision to creatively foster a climate in which people from all nations—regardless of cultural or ethnic background—gladly allow for a significant degree of theological diversity while standing united on a firm platform of essential truths and worshiping God in ways that are culturally satisfying.

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2. Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), 23–25; Bruce Kuklick, *A History of Philosophy in America 1720–2000* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001).

3. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

4. Bert Haloviak, "A Heritage of Freedom: The Christian Connection Roots to Seventh-day Adventism," unpublished paper; Russell L. Staples, "Adventism," in Donald W. Dayton and Robert

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6. Rolf J. Pöhler, *Continuity and Change in Adventist Teaching* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000), 36–39; George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald 2000), 100–17; Woodrow Whidden, Jerry Moon, and John W. Reeve, *The Trinity* (Hagerstown, Md: Review and Herald, 2002), 182–203.

7. Reinder Bruinsma, *Geloven in Amerika* (Zoetermeer, The Netherlands: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 1998), 139–40; Douglas Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic* (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 4–8.

8. Reinder Bruinsma, *Adventist Attitudes toward Roman Catholicism 1844–1965* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1994). The main arguments of this doctoral dissertation were summarized in idem, "Adventists and Catholics: Prophetic Preview or Prejudice," *Spectrum* 27.3 (summer 1999): 45–52.

9. Reinder Bruinsma, "Adventist and Protestant Fundamentalism." *Spectrum* 30.1 (winter 2002): 24–36.

10. George R. Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil: The Development of the Adventist Church Structure* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2001), 48–66; 90–91; Barry David Oliver, *SDA Organizational Structure: Past, Present and Future* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1989), 46–66 and passim. Both books provide in-depth analyses of the development of the Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiastical structure.

11. An excellent history of the American Sunday School movement is provided by Anne M. Boylan, *Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution—1790–1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988). Compare Richard W. Schwartz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, rev ed. (Nampa: Idaho: Pacific Press, 2000), 155–57.

12. It is no coincidence that a book about "The Story of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Europe" was titled *Heirs of the Reformation* (eds. Hugh Dunton et al.; Grantham U.K.: Stanborough Press, 1997). Bryan W. Ball, *The English Connection* (Cambridge, Eng.: James Clarke, 1981), 138–58; idem., *The Seventh-day Men: Sabbatarianism and Sabbatarianism in England and Wales, 1600–1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

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14. In regard to John G. Matteson, see Schwartz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 87, 137, 143, 209. On Louis R. Conradi, see G. Padderatz, *Conradi und Hamburg. Die Anfänge der Deutschen Adventgemeinde (1889–1914) unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung der Organisatorische, Finanziellen und Sozialen Aspekte* (Hamburg: By the author, 1978); Daniel Heinz, *Ludwig Richard Conradi: Missionar der*

Siebenten-Tags Adventisten in Europa (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1987); Reinder Bruinsma, "Patterns of Mission Involvement," in Erich W. Baumgartner, ed., *Re-Visioning Adventist Mission in Europe* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1998), 36–37.

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17. For trends in religious life in the United States, see George Barna, *Virtual America* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1994), 42–62. For trends in European religious life, see Sean Gill, et al., eds., *Religion in Europe: Contemporary Perspectives* (Kampen, The Netherlands: Pharos, 1994).

18. See the section on "Adventism and the European Environment," in Daniel Heinz, *Church, State, and Religious Dissent* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993), 44–48.

19. Bruinsma, *Geloven in Amerika*, 74–76. See, in particular, the chapter "Social Sources of Denominationalism Revisited," in Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion* (New Brunswick, N.Y.: Rutgers University Press), 106–47.

20. Richard E. Wenz, *The Shaping of Religious Traditions in the United States* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1990), 97–112; Robert L. Ferm, *Piety, Purity, Plenty: Images of Protestantism in America* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1991), 44, 45; James D. Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1984); Henry Steele Commager, *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the 1880s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), 7, 9; Richard Rice, *Believing, Behaving, Belonging: Finding New Love for the Church* (Roseville, Calif.: Association of Adventist Forums, 2002), 75–85; Robert N. Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 142–63.

21. Commager, *American Mind*, 165.

22. It would appear to me that the significant number of Adventist theologians with European roots (their number is disproportionate to the size of the Church in Europe) who have come to teach at Adventist institutions in America in recent decades, have not "Europeanized" Adventist theology to any major degree. It may well be that they came too late to do so.

23. Reinder Bruinsma, "Supporting Ministries," in Baumgartner, *Re-Visioning Adventist Mission in Europe*, 167–70.

24. Reinder Bruinsma, "Adventist and Protestant Fundamentalism," *Spectrum*, 30.1 (winter 2002): 24–36.

25. See Eric Syme, *A History of SDA Church-State Relations in the United States* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1973).

26. Johannes Hartlapp, "Military Service: A Comparative Study Between the New Testament Teaching and the Attitude of German Adventists" (master's thesis, Andrews University, 1993), argues that decisions by German church leadership that ignited the

controversy were less informed by theology than by the fear that the Church might be banned by the authorities. A few years ago, the Adventist Reformed Movement published a rather noncritical, but comprehensive history of its movement. It is surprising to see how large the issues concerning military service have loomed in its thinking. See A. Balbach, *History of the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement* (Virginia: Reformation Herald, 1999), 29–64, 172–81, 628–33.

27. George R. Knight, *The Fat Lady and the Kingdom: Confronting the Challenges of Change and Secularization* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1995), 116, 117.

28. Daniel Heinz, *Church, State, and Religious Dissent*, 94 ff.

29. Kai Arasola, *The End of Historicism* (Ph.D. diss., University of Uppsala, 1990).

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32. George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1984), 84–88; Rober C. Greer, *Mapping Postmodernism: A Survey of Christian Options* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2003), 170–75.

33. See, for instance, Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, rev. ed. (London: SCM, 1972).

34. See Knight: *Search for Identity*; and Schwartz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 160–74; 607–47.

35. William G. Johnsson, *The Fragmenting of Adventism* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1995), 120.

36. Over time, Ellen G. White gradually became aware of the need to adapt to culture. See Børge Schantz, "Development of Seventh-day Adventist Missionary Thought: Contemporary Appraisal" (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1983), 677–704; and Meredith Jones, "Ellen G. White's Attitudes to Cultural Differences as Revealed in her European Counsels" (unpublished paper, 1979).

Reinder Bruinsma is president of the Netherlands Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. An unedited version of this article was read during a meeting of the Newbold Center for Cultural Diversity, March 29, 2005. The author read a slightly different version at the European Theology Teachers Convention, Belgrade Theological Seminary, March 16–20, 2005.



PHOTO BY GERRY CHUDLEIGH



Linda Mei Lin Koh,
General Conference
Women's Ministries
director

The Saint Louis Gateway Arch

THE BACK STORY ON THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

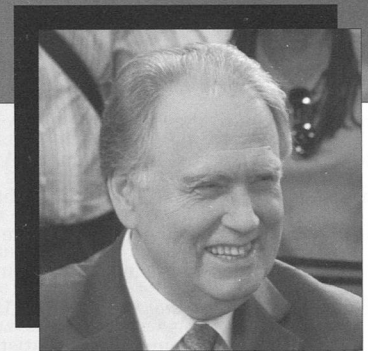


PHOTO BY ADAM BUJAK

Jan Paulson being
interviewed on "Let's Talk."

Present Tense Behind the General Conference Platform

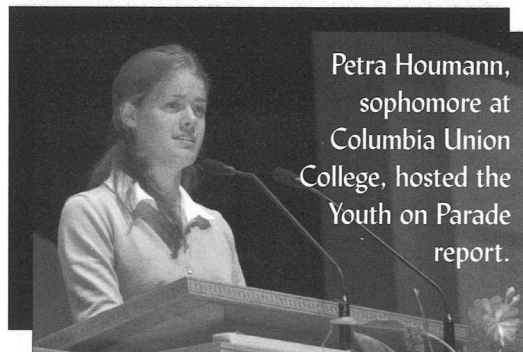
By Chris Blake

I flash my purple platform pass, mailed to me months earlier, and stroll past uniformed security people down silent white corridors tall and wide enough to hold three elephants.

My destination is as exclusive as a George W. Bush town hall meeting. Gary Swanson, editor of *CQ* (formerly *Collegiate Quarterly*), meets and directs me to Entry B Service Corridor to Room 176. In the two decades I have known Gary, he always dresses neatly and speaks in terse, clipped sentences—a precise poet.

About a minute into the dome's innards, I pass a door with a sign: "Rams locker room." The Rams have been my football team since the 1960s, during the reign of Roman Gabriel and the Fearsome Foursome, when they played in the Los Angeles Coliseum. Of course, it would be inappropriate now while I'm unattended to enter this private dressing area. It's locked, anyway.

As with other contemporary General Conference Sessions, Saint Louis's Edward Jones Dome at America's Center provides an odd setting for the 2005 proceedings. Logos of scores of advertisers stare down on us. (How would Jesus chase out these marketers?) I think of my own church-sponsored moribund Valic option as I read, "Don't fumble your retire-



Petra Houmann, sophomore at Columbia Union College, hosted the Youth on Parade report.

PHOTO BY GERRY CHUDLEIGH

ment—contact Edward Jones." Ringed around us in large block letters appear the names of legendary spiritual giants: Merlin Olsen, Dan Dierdorf, Eric Dickerson, Elroy "Crazylegs" Hirsch, Tom Mack, and David "Deacon" Jones. ("Will the Deacon please come forward and pick up the quarterback?")

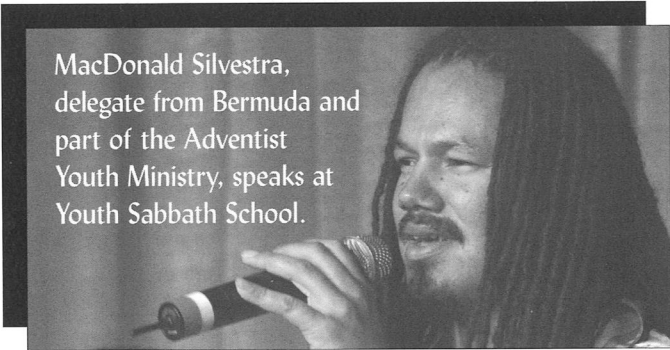
Outside, Saint Louis bustles with bizarre bipolar energy as Fourth of July parade floats queue up alongside Sabbath worshipers. Through the long weekend, fervent, sober Adventists will mingle with tens of thousands of exuberant (and drunk) celebrants. My family enjoys playing "Pick out

the Sevey” in downtown Saint Louis crowds. Generally it’s fairly easy pickings. (Still wearing their badges, dressed in suits, clutching plastic 3ABN bags, walking as fast as they can to avoid getting contaminated.)

I was asked to show up an hour before “0855 Platform Participants Enter and Seated,” and at this time not many people are backstage. Behind the ten-meter screen two rows of folding chairs simulate the seating arrangement out front. Every platform participant has his or her name written in black marker on a white paper that sits atop a designated chair facing literally acres of empty seats. An invariable context inside the dome is the sense of immense space.

It’s good to meet Jim Zackrison, the outgoing General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries director, with whom I’ll be sharing the podium. Jim is about seventy, a genial, laid-back fellow. His non-anxious presence dissolves some of the tension just before he informs me that this is the first General Conference Session Sabbath School covered by the Hope Channel, so we need to be precise in our timed assignments—dead space doesn’t play well on TV. The musical prelude will begin at 8:30.

PHOTO BY MELITA PULIC



MacDonald Silvestra, delegate from Bermuda and part of the Adventist Youth Ministry, speaks at Youth Sabbath School.

At 8:26 a.m., Gary Swanson returns from inspecting the platform. At 8:27 a.m., Don Driver, the platform organizer, receives a call on his cell phone. Gary listens in on the conversation before exclaiming indignantly, “Can you believe it?” He explains to me that someone is complaining about a dome worker who was seen vacuuming the stage. “Tell them it’s a union thing,” Gary suggests to Don. “We can’t do anything about it.”

(*Evil unions!*) I privately wonder whether the complainer called his/her hotel to request no housekeeping service today. Moreover, as I look around at the tech people scrambling like Crazylegs himself to bring this production to life, I speculate as to why their work is considered kosher. Perhaps the exertion is viewed as too exotic, more “virtual”—certainly not as plebian or bibli-

cally based as pushing a vacuum cleaner.

I meet Casey Wolverton, the telegenic young adult host of Sabbath School University on the Hope Channel, who tells me I probably don’t remember that we met in 1990 when I spoke outside Newcastle, Australia. He’s right. In the course of conversation, Casey remarks that in his New South Wales Conference, only 25 percent of students are Adventist in Avondale Adventist School, Central Coast Adventist School, and Macquarie College, a K–12 school. (“Everything’s a college there,” he adds. To which I reply, “Here everything’s a university;” and instantly reflect that, as host of one, he’s probably aware of this.)

“It’s changed everything,” Casey says. “We’re more evangelistic. More tolerant, of course. We struggle to follow up all the Bible study interests. And Adventist kids are stronger in their convictions as a result.” Central Coast and Macquarie each maintain one-and-one-half full-time chaplains plus volunteers, including student missionaries. What an astounding departure from most Adventist academies in North America.

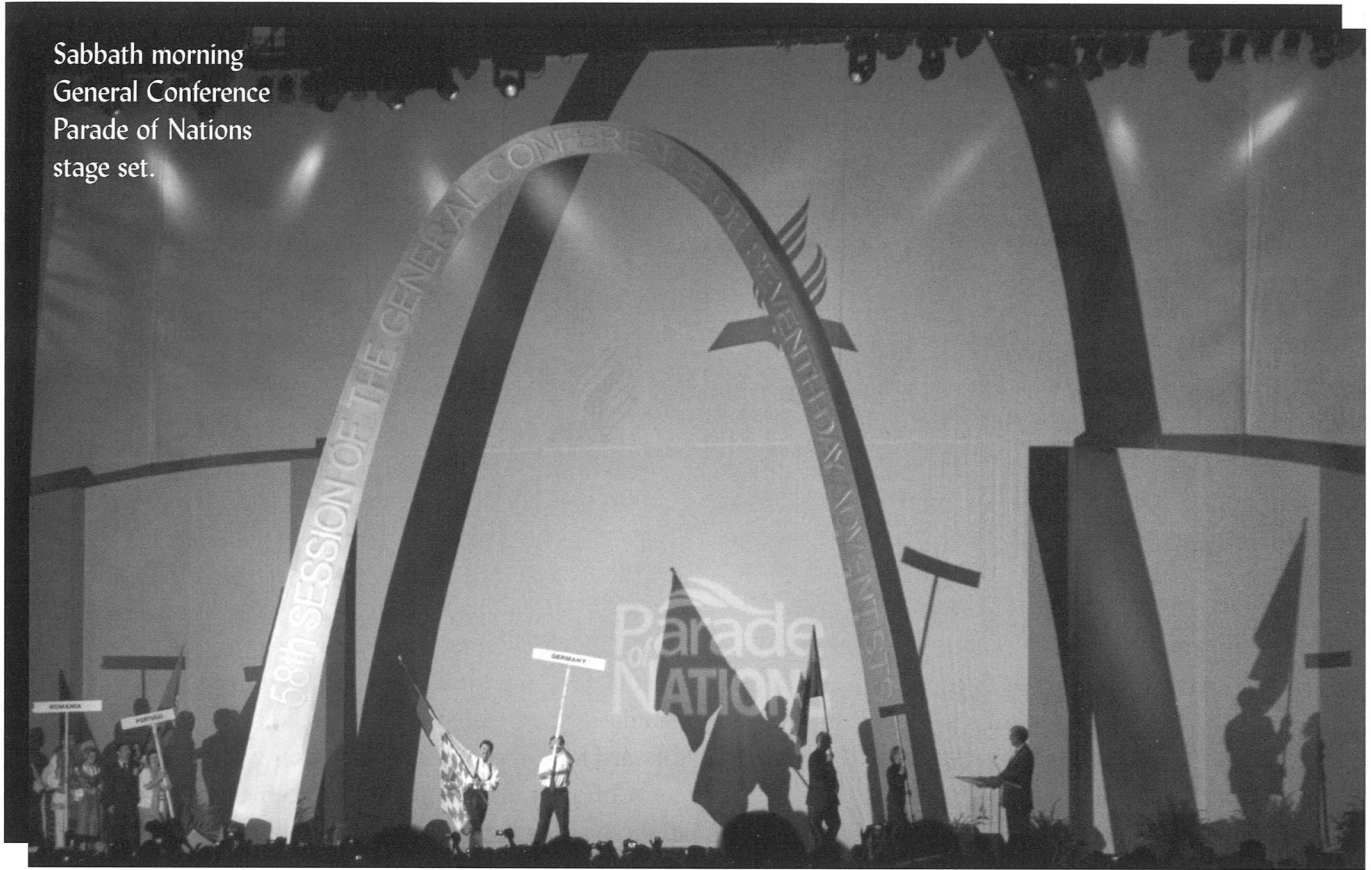
Onstage someone is hitting an immaculate high C. I hug my friend Carol Barron before she goes around front at 8:45 to belt out some hymns. I turn off my cell phone. Later, a friend will tell of sitting in a delegate’s seat and phoning another delegate who was standing at the microphone to make a comment. My friend crumpled in hysterics as he witnessed the delegate fumbling frantically to kill his phone.

Cliff Goldstein arrives, a bit breathless. He has a narrow face with chiseled cheekbones and gray-flecked black hair, and he talks and moves quickly and jerkily, giving a first impression of a ruffled politician with ADHD. Perhaps he’s nervous, though he admits to having felt more anxiety in Toronto five years ago.

I have always liked Cliff personally—he’s entertaining, candid, intelligent, and compassionate on an individual level. On that note he launches immediately into discussing a mutual friend who is struggling with the authenticity of the Sabbath and church politics in general. We share our assessments and concerns until he concludes by encouraging me to “give him a call. He’ll appreciate it.”

It strikes me strange that though they work there, Gary and Cliff both use the word *they* to refer to the General Conference. “They” are doing or not doing things because “they” don’t get it. Not surprisingly, this is the identical rhetorical tag people *outside* the General Conference use when speaking of the General Conference. Fans of sports teams will often say “*we* won” and “*they* lost.” Does

Sabbath morning
General Conference
Parade of Nations
stage set.



Jan Paulsen use the word *they* to refer to the General Conference when he doesn't like what's happening?

A last-minute flurry of activity brings all platform participants together to pray for inspiration and effectiveness. Then, on cue and in proper order, we file out into the lights. From our seats on about the goal line I can scarcely discern the audience far, far away. The only faces I recognize are those of Bill and Noelene Johnsson, who are sitting and smiling at the twenty-five yard line, waiting for the kickoff. The sound seems muffled on stage, doubtless because the speakers are turned from us.

We remain standing to sing a rather unfamiliar hymn, but we have no hymnals, no music or words, and the dome's seven jumbo screens obviously would not display the words. (Evil celebration tactic!) The lyrics are printed in the General Conference program books, translated into Russian and Zulu and Yoruba and Portuguese and Finnish and Twi and Lingala and more languages.

But we left our programs backstage, so we stand and stare at the thousands of singers. Cliff uses this opportunity to revisit our conversation about our friend. Throughout the first verse he speaks and gestures animatedly until Gary Swanson mutters from behind, "Hey, a little decorum!" I hope that Hope Channel wasn't focusing on us.

After the opening prayer, Jim introduces a video

that features my Something Else Sabbath School in Lincoln, Nebraska. Expressing their appreciation for the class are a few of my friends: Mark Robison, a colleague at Union College and a Ph.D candidate with an emphasis in Willa Cather studies; Marlyn Schwartz, a contractor and health club owner; and Al Chambers, a UPS driver who faithfully attended our class despite not being an Adventist.

They talk chiefly about prayer—the class encircling and placing our hands on Marlyn when he had cancer ("The peace I felt was indescribable"), and praying for Al's brother, who had achieved sixty days of sobriety ("That, to me, is a miracle"). Seeing Al projected on the screens in front of twenty thousand Adventists (with more arriving by the second) somehow gives me great glee. The video also lists ideas for improving fellowship from people in Sydney, Australia; Montemorelos, Mexico; Saint Thomas, Virgin Islands; Anchorage, Alaska; and Austin, Texas.

As we sit together watching the video, Casey is tapping in notes on his PDA, spurring Cliff to remark that

he usually preaches from his PDA but because he has only five minutes today to speak, he's scribbled his notes elsewhere. He holds up his right hand. On his palm are five lines in blue pen. (*A southpaw*. I resist the urge to use a "palm pilot" reference.) Sitting between them, I consider that I maybe should have brought a few notes myself.

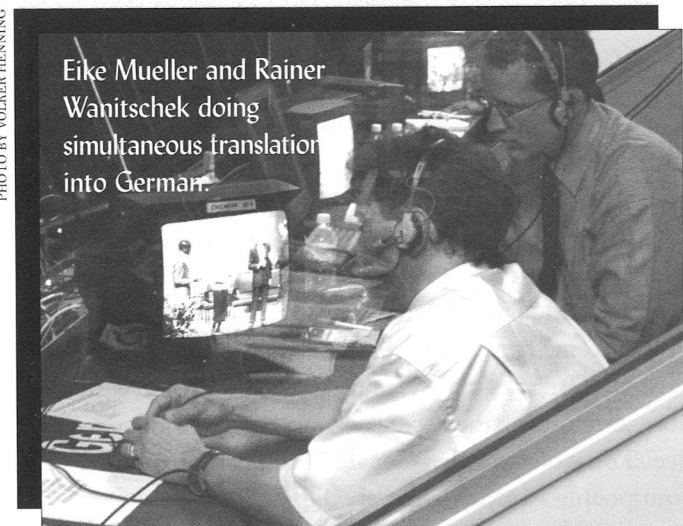
Just prior to the end of the video I walk to the podium for my part in enhancing fellowship in Sabbath Schools. After relating an anecdote about Ruth, who continued attending our class purely because I knew her name after one visit, I ask everyone in the dome to engage in "neighbor nudging," to connect with a neighbor and to leave out no one (especially the security guards) for two minutes and forty-nine seconds. During that time they are to learn one another's names, where home is, and where they were at the age of twelve. We "agree" that the conversations stop when hands are held high. "Ready?" I ask rhetorically. "Go."

The dome hums like a hive. People pivot in their seats to converse or seek out someone sitting alone thirty rows over in another section. I talk with Jim, and after 2:49 or so I walk to the podium and raise my hand and the hive—amazingly—hushes.

"If we can do this with twenty thousand, you can do this in your Sabbath School. Let's make certain no one in any class is left out, that all realize they are valued every week."

Jim steps up with the second part of our presenta-

tion—intercessory prayer. He states, "Now turn to the person you just met and ask what's one thing you could pray for that person. This is how we achieve depth of fellowship quickly in Sabbath School. Let's pray for each other now."



Eike Mueller and Rainer Wanitschek doing simultaneous translation into German.

tion—intercessory prayer. He states, "Now turn to the person you just met and ask what's one thing you could pray for that person. This is how we achieve depth of fellowship quickly in Sabbath School. Let's pray for each other now."

Jim and I pray together. All around, people are praying for one another. It's working. After a suitable time Jim approaches the podium, ends with a corporate

prayer, and summarizes how these two activities can be a part of every Sabbath School.

We are finished. I feel relief, exhilaration, and gratefulness. Getting twenty thousand people to cooperate is, after all, more than a perfunctory kick for the extra point.

Three petite women in colorful native dress from Korea, Japan, and Taiwan appear on stage in front of us. Instantly the floor swarms with flash and video cameras. I lean out around Taiwan, hoping for a mention in Asian photo albums ("Here are the three lovely ladies. I don't know who the smiling bearded guy is.").

Casey introduces the Sabbath School University video, which presents him as a moderator along with four bright, ethnically diverse Australian young adults offering responses to a question about the week's lesson. Although the production quality is good, I yearn for more dialectical drama. Perhaps they could take opposing sides of a question. ("Did Jesus come soon? What does 'soon' mean?") At least they would model how to engage tough questions and disagree agreeably, which would be an enormous step forward for many Sabbath Schools.

Cliff gets up to speak. "I've been an Adventist," he glances at his right palm, "for about twenty-five years." He goes on to describe how our salvation is sure only through the gracious sacrifice of Christ, how if we depend on any internal righteousness we are surely lost.

When he returns to his seat, I say, "Good job."

Cliff leans toward me. "I want to give them the *gospel*," he says. "I don't often get a chance to talk to this many people."

Next, the thirteen division presidents file in. They stand at attention while Jim introduces the quarter's lesson and the brief talks each president will provide.

"That worked out well," I murmur to Cliff.

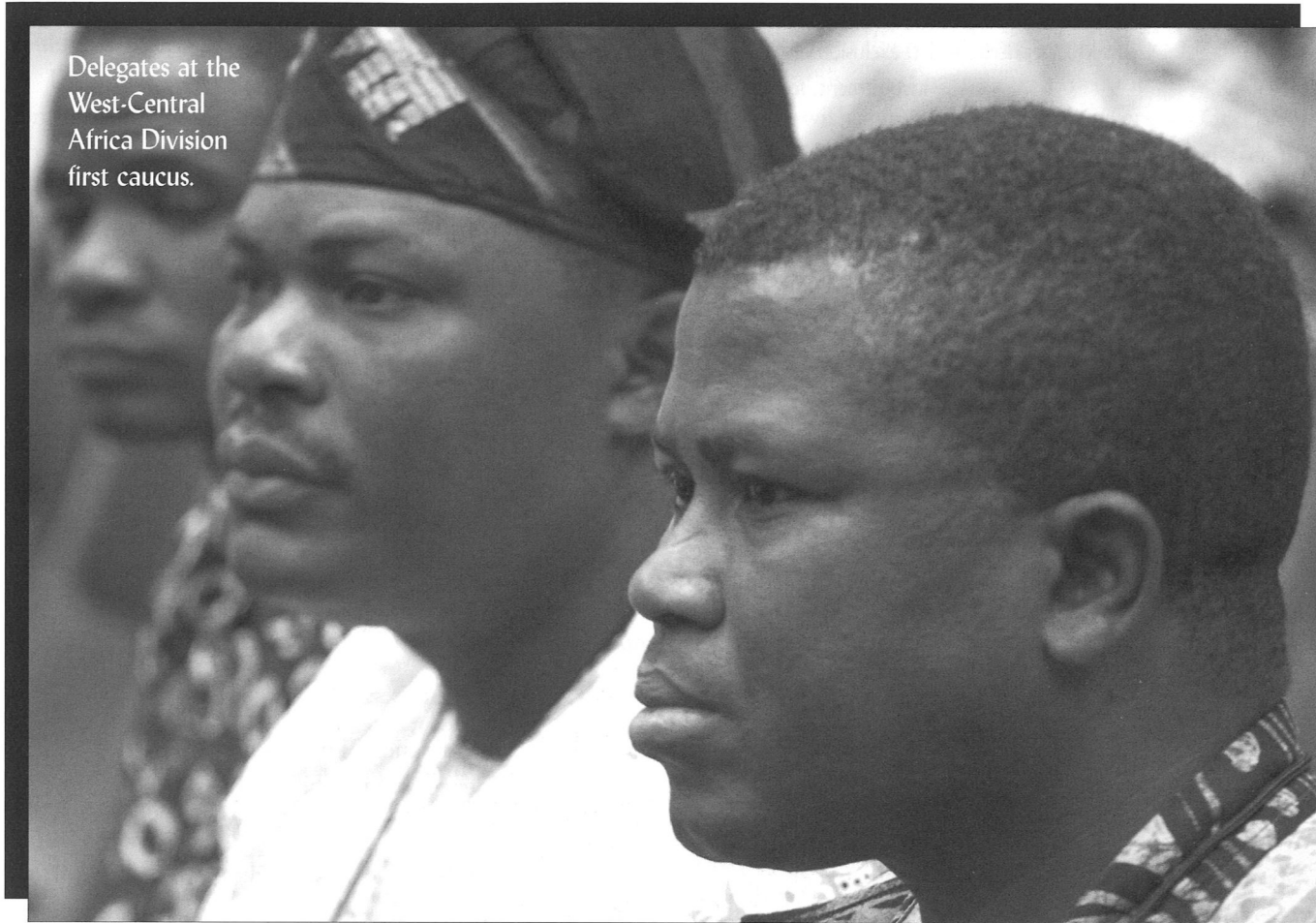
"Thirteen presidents and thirteen weeks in the quarter." He laughs. "Yeah."

Gary says in a stage whisper, "You can leave the platform if you want to." He tries to sound casual, but I think he wants a bit more decorum and a bit less us. I look around at the scene. *No way am I leaving. This is too good.* Dozens of photographers and videographers jockey for position in front of the stage. Flashes punctuate the air like a pulsing lightning storm.

"A media scrum," Casey observes.

We can see only their thirteen backs silhouetted by the stage lights. Apart from the paucity of gender and age differences, their racial spectrum—so many heights and hues—our marvelous diversity from my God's hand and voice, moves me, and I feel my throat constrict. As

Delegates at the
West-Central
Africa Division
first caucus.



I do at each General Conference Session, I've caught a fresh vision of the world Church.

Casey tells me about tuning in to a Saint Louis "Christian radio" station this morning and hearing an interview with Walter Rea. The interviewer was extremely hostile toward Adventists, selecting passages from *Counsels on Diet and Foods* before concluding, "This, ladies and gentlemen, is a false prophet!"

I ask, "How did Walter Rea sound?"

"Old," he says.

One of the division presidents is at the podium speaking smoothly and confidently. From behind, however, we can see his right leg vibrating like a fresh-plucked lute. I think, *That is courage.*

Gary confers briefly with Jim at the side of the podium, after which Gary sits behind me.

"Chris, they're running short," he says in my ear. "Would you be willing to go up to talk for a couple minutes?"

My mind races as a surge of energy consumes me.

"Sure," I say. Gary sits back. The world recedes.

What will I say to probably 25,000 people for two minutes?

I determine to talk about Sabbath School as a time for training people every week to be disciples of Jesus—to live out prayer, money, time, study, and social ministries. This is the familiar theme of our local Sabbath School. Gary is talking to me again.

"We won't need you," he says.

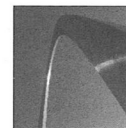
After Jim sums up, all five of us—Jim, Gary, Cliff, Casey, and I—leave the platform. A primed full orchestra sits to our right and the Oakwood College Aeolians stand on risers to our left. A moving line of people, including some women, streams by us to take our spots and start the worship service.

Once behind the screen, Jim exults, "We made it with thirty seconds to spare!"

"Well," I said, "That was fun."

Past tense.

Chris Blake is an associate professor of English at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.



Discussed: shepherd's heart, exclusion of women from church leadership, strategic values, lack of community involvement, too many boarding academies and colleges

Who Said What: Speeches Heard at the General Conference Session

Compiled by Alexander Carpenter

On the consideration of Item 302, to add: "The General Conference President shall be an ordained minister of experience." Before the Fifty-eighth General Conference Session, there was no rule that General Conference presidents be ordained.



LISA BEARDSLEY: I wholeheartedly agree that the General Conference president should have experience in ministry and that the General Conference president must have a shepherd's heart for the worldwide church. The General Conference president must also be visionary, a capable administrator of a multinational global organization, a compelling communicator, and a role model in integrity, humility, faith, and practice.

In recent years, however, ministerial ordination has been more specifically focused on those with a traditional pastoral experience and training. The proposed amendment overlooks the fact that pastoral experience can come from a variety of contexts, such as hospital or military chaplaincy, the ministry of education, the ministry of healing, literature evangelism, and media ministry, to name some of these contexts.

It also overlooks that church endorsement is also demonstrated through church creden-

tials other than ordination. The amendment presents no evidence that it is biblically based or informed by the writings of Ellen White; in fact, it seems to disregard Joel's description of the latter rain on the remnant church with a liberal and indiscriminating outpouring of God's Spirit on his people, young and old, male and female.

The amendment disregards the transforming power of Christ that equips all for ministry by erasing the oppressive distinctions of class, race, and gender that Paul describes in Galatians 3:28. This amendment would disqualify some otherwise qualified candidates who have demonstrated spiritual leadership in chaplaincy, Adventist education, the ministry of healing, or other contexts. This amendment might even disqualify some scholars with earned doctorates in biblical studies or biblical languages teaching in a seminary that prepares ministers.

This amendment would disqualify some university college presidents who faithfully nurture the collegiate flock and demonstrate spiri-

tual leadership and administrative skill. This amendment would also categorically disqualify all women in ministry.

I would prefer to continue to allow the Nominating Committee to consider the totality of a presidential candidate's qualifications and giftedness by God.

The spiritual needs of the worldwide church vary, and each president has brought his own unique experience to those needs. This amendment would constrain a full deliberation by the Nominating Committee. For these reasons, I move to refer this back to the Constitution and Bylaws Committee to consider a revision to read, "The General Conference president shall be an ordained or credentialed employee of experience."

Thank you.



LAWRENCE T. GERATY: I rise to speak against this proposal because it seems to me that it makes a mockery of the two resolutions we voted over the weekend: the resolutions on the Holy Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. It

seems to me that one will look in vain in those sources for authorization to exclude women from leadership positions in the church.

This morning, we had an excellent paper on leadership from Angel Rodríguez. On pages 55 and 56 of "Profiling Adventist Leadership," he talked about the importance of inclusion in several matters, including gender.

We all recognize that it is unlikely that the Seventh-day Adventist Church will elect a female president, but why vote a policy that from the beginning excludes more than half of our membership? This is telling God that even if he calls another Ellen White our church will not recognize her leadership.

Remember that in Christ there is no male or female, so why should it not be the same in this church that we love? I appeal to the delegates to reject this exclusionary policy. Let us stand for the inclusion that has been advocated in our leadership sessions. Let us not tie God's hands to bring into leadership those whom he will.

Thank you.

GUILLELMO MAGANA: I also agree with Dr. Geraty and speak in opposition of the amendment. I am going to come at it from the youth perspective. I attend Andrews University, and we have a fine seminary there.

There are a lot of students that would be great once they become ordained; however, there are also other students who are not in the seminary but are in other differ-

ent majors, and they would make fine General Conference presidents down the road if they would choose to do so.

I think this is just narrowing down the scope of those that would wish to pursue this or what persons God has in his plan. It would be like saying, in the political arena, that one has to be a lawyer in order to run for president of the United States.

So I speak in opposition of the motion.



ALVIN KIBBLE: Mr. Chairman, I stood earlier to express my approval and my affirmation of the strategic plan that had been presented before the assembly... Within that plan were three

strategic values that we also voted and approved of, those being that we value growth, that we value quality of life, and that we value unity.

Previously when I stood, it was for the purpose of asking how we were going to translate those key values throughout the world Church and within the divisions that make up the world body. Unless or until we have clear intentional targets, those values simply become wonderful sentiments.

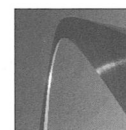
Mr. Chairman, it is noticeable that right after approving that wonderful strategic plan and those core values we would propose to take an action that would strongly strike at the inclusion of all genders in the selection of the leadership of our world church. It is for this reason that I would appeal that we reconsider the former action in recognition of the value of unity, and that we continue to pursue clearly a definition of what that value means in our operation and practice.



PATRICIA MUTCH: Mr. Chairman, It's my understanding from the presentation of this item that the rationale that caused the committee to present it to us is that it needed to be aligned with other parts of

the constitution or bylaws that restrict leadership in other levels of the church organization to ordained ministers.

I would like not only to speak against this item, but also to call into question the wisdom of those other items that this was intended to be aligned with. I believe that God



made the human being in two forms, male and female. And research on the brain as well as evidence from leadership around the world today shows that he gifted both forms of the human species with abilities and wisdom and capacity.

I speak against this motion.

The motion passed.

During a report on the Challenge of Missions



MICHAEL L. RYAN: The Seventh-day Adventist Church has had the biblical instruction to take the gospel of Jesus to the world. And as we look around the world, we recognize that it is made up of different cultures, different

peoples, different languages, and different customs. But the Bible is clear: we are to be the salt of the earth, and we are called to mingle with people. We are called to know their joys, their cares, their needs, and their fears.

It brings us to a very important question. How does the Church interact with society?

I just want to make a very quick review, if I can, of some of the challenges, some of the cares, some of the huge concerns, of the global family. At least 1.1 billion people live in extreme poverty; there is a strong possibility that that number has greatly increased. The prevalence of hunger can be as high as 30 percent in some regions of the world.

Twelve million American children experience hunger each year. Up to 70 percent of rural areas in some regions of the world lack access to good sanitation. Also, at the end of 2003, AIDS left 15 million children orphans. The illiteracy rate of the world is 18.3 percent.

When we come to a General Conference session, we hear reports, and I praise the Lord for these reports. Great things have been done. This church is one whose membership is growing at a rapid rate, and I praise the Lord for that, but there are certain issues that we need to be honest about. How does the Church score when it comes to interacting with society?

Surveys indicate that less than 20 percent of the Adventist Church is making an impact in their community, or interacting with their community. Among churches in North America, community service and ministry were priorities in only 15 percent of churches.

A healthy church must be active in relating with society, and it must first listen to the needs of the community. It has been called to reach and then respond proactively to meet those needs.

Let us turn to the Bible, and we are very familiar with what I would consider to be a biblical mandate. It says in John, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35 NKJV).

We can turn also to James, and there it is recorded, "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27 NKJV).

Also, in the Gospel of Matthew is a most dynamic and touching parable: "And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the king will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me'" (Matt. 25:33-36 NKJV).

These are those who are welcomed to the kingdom.... Today I think lack of community involvement is a serious problem.

CYNTHIA TUTSCH: I think that the underreported story in the Adventist Church today is Ellen White's involvement in social issues as well as the involvement of early Adventist pioneers in social activism. I think that as we look for ways to be involved with the community in social issues we will better capture the vision of our pioneers and be more able to finish the work.

GUILLERMO MAGANA: I am a student from Andrews University. The Church has done a wonderful job in certain areas, but not so in others.

The speaker spoke about mingling with other people, but we do not mingle very well with those of other faiths. I see many youth who are afraid to mingle with other people who are not in the Church. While we are young we need to make friends other than Adventists, because that's the only way we are going to be able to preach the Word to others.

Finally, I have read that 70 percent of the church members are under the age of thirty, yet there are only thirty-four delegates here who are under the age of thirty.

During a report from the General Conference Office of Archives and Statistics:

BERT HALOVIK: As we reflect upon our statistical growth during the past half century, I believe it is the God-given spirit of care for the needy of the world that helps account

for our remarkable growth. We began this half century with 972,000 members in 1954, 50 years ago. And our membership at the end of 2004 was 13,936,932, almost 14 million.

There is a very sobering side to this subject. Although more than 5 million new believers joined our community during the past quinquennium, more than 1.4 million left our community. The bottom line for this quinquennium is that for every 100 accessions, more than 35 others decided to leave. It meant that while 2,765 joined us each day, 821 left.

Our net growth was only 1,641 daily, with a resulting annual growth rate of 4.9 percent, the lowest since the 1960-1964 period.

During a discussion on apostasy:

DANIEL CHAIJ: I have a couple of recommendations specifically addressed to the field that I represent, which is the North American Division. We have heard of the high percentage of our youth that leave the church. I feel that the ministry to our children and youth is just as important as it is to the adults that we try to reach.

Now, the elementary and academy enrollment in our schools in North America has been going down. This is particularly because our parents don't want to send their children to boarding school.

We have, therefore, right now in North America a redundancy of academies and colleges. If we were to sell some of these properties and establish an endowment fund so that more of our children could go to the elementary schools that we have, we would lose less of them later in life.

That has been my observation and my experience. And I think that we would be doing a very important ministry that is just as important to save the children in our families as to save new converts.

I would propose that some serious consideration be made on this subject. I know that it goes against the established historical tradition, but we have too many boarding academies and colleges, and we need more elementary children in our schools.

Thank you.

Alexander Carpenter, who worked on special projects at *Spectrum*, helped represent the magazine at Saint Louis.

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

—Norman Cousins

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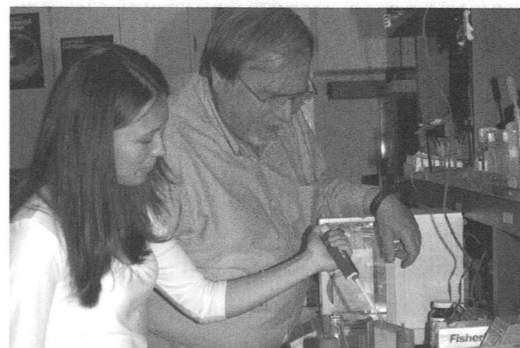
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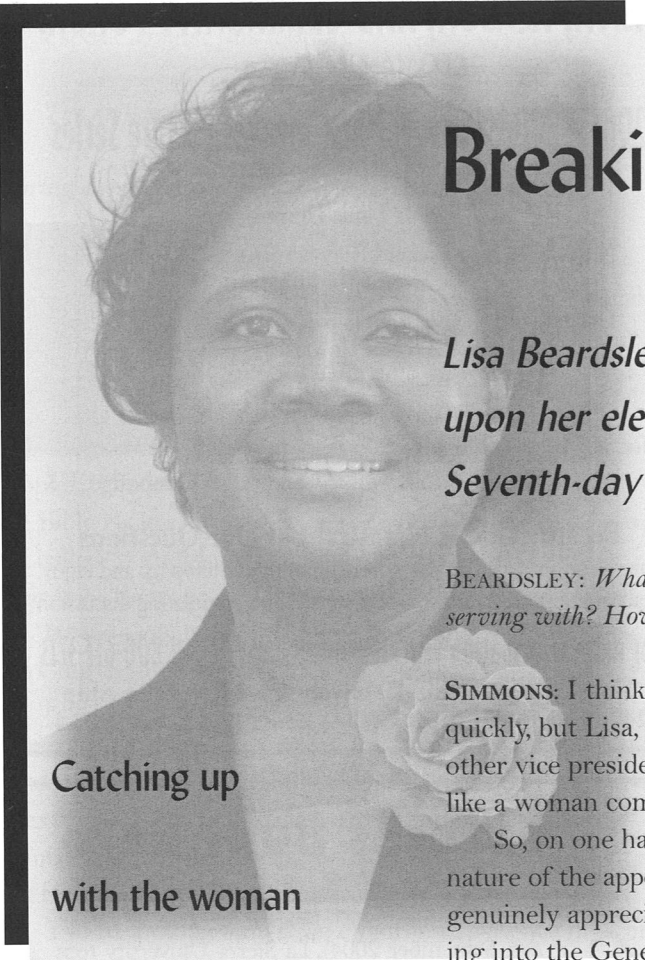
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Discussed: historic appointment, education, family support, hope for young women, equal bearing of responsibilities

PHOTO BY MELLITA PULIC



Breaking the Glass Ceiling

Lisa Beardsley interviews Ella Simmons upon her election as a general vice president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Catching up
with the woman

BEARDSLEY: *What is your experience with the other vice presidents that you will be serving with? How are they responding to you?*

SIMMONS: I think we're all a little surprised that everything happened so quickly, but Lisa, I am just so pleased to share with you and the world that the other vice presidents have received me so warmly. I have not felt necessarily like a woman coming into this position, but just another colleague coming in.

So, on one hand, they congratulate me and they talk about the historic nature of the appointment, but they welcome me as a colleague. I'm feeling genuinely appreciated as just another colleague with certain experiences coming into the General Conference leadership team.

who took

BEARDSLEY: *You said that you're already starting to think about the nuts and bolts of what you'll actually be doing. What are some of those nuts and bolts?*

the General

SIMMONS: Well, while Dr. Paulsen has not completed his assignment to our various portfolios yet, he has spoken with me about education particularly, and I think he spoke with the body about the fact that he wanted me to join the team because of my varied experiences in education.

Conference

I suspect there will be a few other departments added to my portfolio, and probably that these will be departments that have a natural match to education.

Session

BEARDSLEY: *Did you ever think that you would see this day come—not just for you, but in the Seventh-day Adventist Church?*

by surprise.

SIMMONS: I had hoped that it would come in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I never thought I would be involved in this way. You know how it is when we desire something that we believe is right, when we understand the nature of tradition and the nature of progress coming together as Christ works in and through us to bring about certain transformations.

Woman Elected to Church Vice Presidency and Other Surprises from the Nominating Committee

By *Bonnie Dwyer*

Ella Simmons, an African American woman and the former provost of La Sierra University, was nominated and elected to be a vice president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on Sunday, July 3. She is the first woman to be elected to a vice-presidential position within the General Conference. Included in Dr. Paulsen's announcement of Dr. Simmons's move was a comment that delegates should read nothing into her nomination about the ordination of women.

Reportedly, even the members of the Nominating Committee were surprised when newly reelected president Jan Paulsen suggested her name. But his intention to name a woman as a vice president has been rumored for several weeks. At his first press conference after his election on Friday, July 1, he was asked if women would ever ascend to the top levels of leadership within the Church. He said "Yes." To the follow-up question of "when," he replied with a smile: "the session is not over."

Even as he spoke, the Nominating Committee wrestled with his proposal, made when African-American members of the committee had suggested that their community has not been adequately represented at the General Conference since the retirement of former vice president Calvin Rock. The response from Paulsen was to suggest Dr. Simmons, an African American woman. Simmons was not the candidate they had expected or promoted. So there was extended debate on the appropriate African American woman.

Internal debates such as the one over Dr. Simmons made the drama within the 196-member Nominating Committee fascinating—that and the fact that the arguing was done out of the sight of the rest of the two thousand delegates, without any press presence, even from internal reporters. This year, the committee offered several surprises.

The first came from the at-large delegates, a group made up primarily of General Conference employees. When five retirees were included in their list of fourteen appointees to the committee there was a question about whether these people should be considered lay

delegates, and thus members of the North American Division delegation, where their membership exists, or as part of the at-large delegation as employees.

A careful constitutional reading was required before the five were seated with the at-large delegation to the committee, just in time for the discussion and vote on the president. As retirees, these individuals were vocal in the discussion of Dr. Paulsen's age—seventy—given the fact that some of them had retired at that age.

The second surprise came at noon on Friday. It was expected that the election of the president would have taken place by that time. However, the nominating committee had not come to a decision on the name to be brought before the delegates. While the committee debated the merits of four candidates, in the main auditorium the delegates listened to the reports of the secretary, archivist, and treasurer.

In the second round of committee voting, the field of four candidates—Jere Patzer, Lowell Cooper, Ted Wilson, and Jan Paulsen—narrowed to Wilson and Paulsen. The final vote was 98 to 91 (with seven people absent or abstaining). With this vote, Paulsen's name went to the floor, where it received unanimous approval.

Each division determines the people who represent it on the Nominating Committee. The numbers of spots for each division are determined by its church membership. The size of the at-large delegation from the General Conference is fourteen—which makes it larger than seven of the small divisions, such as the South Pacific Division.

Jere Patzer, president of the North Pacific Union Conference, was chosen to chair the Nominating Committee during its first meeting on Thursday night, when some members objected to the nomination of Niels-Erik Andreasen, who had chaired the committee in Toronto in 2000. Andreasen was then appointed associate chair. Delbert Baker, president of Oakwood College, was the committee's secretary, and Harold Lee was the associate secretary.

We believe it, we have faith, but sometimes we are still surprised when it happens, and it happened so quickly. Yes, I have to say I'm surprised

BEARDSLEY: *You're a mother, a grandmother, a wife. What does your family think about this?*

SIMMONS: Well, my family usually just takes all of these kinds of things in stride. I have been on the forefront of pioneering in other areas before, and they just sort of take it as: this is what she does.

My husband is a very special man—strong man—who supports me in all kinds of ways. And because he's an educator, he understands my work. He is a devout Seventh-day Adventist, as well, and so he has had certain aspirations for our Church. As we looked at this journey, as we thought about the possibility when the information first came to me, we thought, well it's a nice thought perhaps that this could happen—that a woman could be considered here.

But at one point after much prayer, my husband came to me and said, "If this comes to you, know that it is from the Lord, and you must do it." We had already decided a long time ago that whatever the Lord called us to do we would do. So he is just a very special man.

I have to mention our granddaughter. (We have a grandson, we have sons, and a daughter-in-law.) Our granddaughter called, and I heard some excitement in her voice that I usually don't hear. She's a teenager and teenagers don't get excited about things. But she said, "I heard!"

And she was just excited about it. The fact that she was excited indicates to me that she, as a developing young woman in our Church, sees hope for whatever it is that she might want to do. She wants to be physician, but I think there are many ways in which a physician can serve the Church, so this opens more doors for her.

BEARDSLEY: *Not only are you the first female general vice president of the General Conference, you are also African American. What does this mean for the African American community?*

SIMMONS: I think always the African American population of the United States seeks to move forward in our progress toward not just inclusion, but equal bearing of responsibilities. And I think in our Church the African American population is very concerned about making its fair share of contribution, and, yes, being represented at all levels of this Church.

African Americans have a very rich and long-standing heritage with this Church. We've been there all

along. Because of certain societal situations in this country, we have not always been represented, as you as a woman understand clearly. Because of this, while we appreciate the Church, love the Church, support the Church, we are ever ready to move the Church forward in its progress toward full inclusion. That means not only talking about that; it means stepping up and being willing to move into positions when invited to do so.

So for that reason, as many women have said to me, and many men of the African American community, this is a major step forward. I hasten to say that what I'm hearing is that there is no us-or-them mentality among African Americans; it's just if we are together, then we must be together through all things.

BEARDSLEY: *It means fuller participation by many members, women and people of color, as well.*

SIMMONS: That's right.

BEARDSLEY: *Ella, you get the last word. What would you like to tell our viewers?*

SIMMONS: Well, several people have made statements over the last two days that my appointment has brought hope to women and youth all over the world. They have been going on to ask me: What can you tell women and young people? What advice can you give?

My advice is to focus completely on the Lord. Develop and maintain, always seek to enhance the personal relationship with the Lord.

I would say from my own perspective that we do not set our sights on any given position or any title, anything like that. That's the Lord's work. We are simply to be responsible for the work which the Lord gives us at each step along the way. And all things will come.

I guess my final word, after that final word, is: Never think that the Lord has finished with you. There's always more for you to learn and more for your growth. But there's always more for your contribution as well.

BEARDSLEY: *Never think that the Lord has finished with you. There you have the last word from Dr. Ella Smith Simmons, general vice president of the General Conference.*

Lisa Beardsley is vice chancellor of Academic Affairs at Loma Linda University and co-host of the Loma Linda Broadcasting Network program "Faith at Work," for which this interview was videotaped.

Continued from page 5...

wind that runs before a thunderstorm.

The program tells the audience that Angela is “one of the leading Verdi sopranos performing today...” It quotes the *New York Times*: “At last an Aida,” and the *Opera News*: “the best Met Aida since Leontyne Price’s farewell performances.” It tells them she will sing Wagner, Puccini, and traditional spirituals. It tells them she will be accompanied by pianist Joseph Joubert.

The introduction tells them that she attended Oakwood College, that she studied to be a Bible worker. (There are a few small titters.) That her CD of spirituals, *Mosaic*, is for sale in the back.

No one tells them that she will break their hearts.

“How many of you have never been to an opera?” she asks. A few hands are raised. “Well, this is for you, honey. This is a sistah’s guide to opera.” The audience laughs—the mix of high culture and hip Blackness takes them by surprise.

And then the heart breaking begins. “O Mio Bambino Caro” lilts through the tent with piercing sweetness. The audience is transported by Verdi and Puccini to a land where emotions are larger than life.

Next, Gershwin—Porgy and Bess. After a solo by Joubert comes the familiar introduction to “Summertime.” A longing for the vast summers of childhood flows over them. The present moment spreads into forever: they are ten years old, and the fish really are jumping. The tent blooms with warm August light.

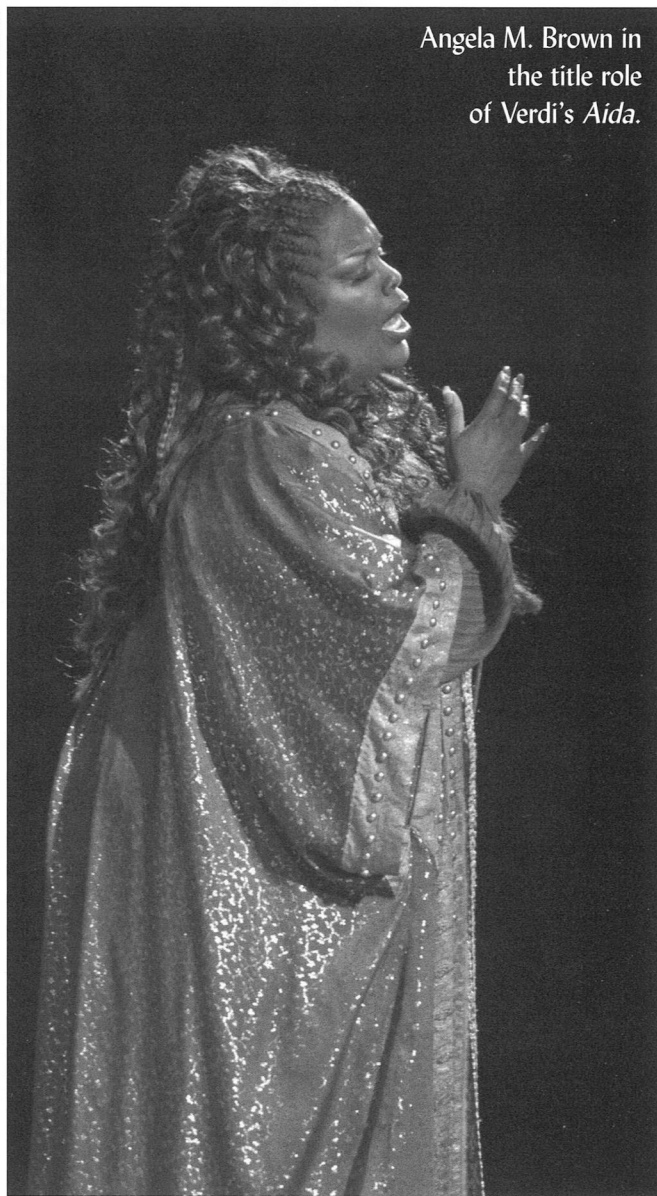
Finally, the spirituals. “Walk together, children, don’t you get weary—there’s a great camp meetin’ on the other side,” she sings. And to their infinite surprise, the great white tent is transformed, and they are there—at camp meeting—listening to the songs of hope and despair. “Come down angels, trouble the waters!”

Anything can happen now.

“This next song is so sad,” she tells them. “I picture a woman, alone, far from home, in a dirt-floored cabin. They kidnapped her, they beat her, and now they have sold her children.” The silence is broken only by the breeze flapping the canvas. She sings a capella in the richest, most sorrowful voice they can imagine: “Lord, how come me here?” she sings. “They sold my children away, Lord. I wish I never was born.”

The parents in the audience think of their own children. White, privileged—yes. But still vulnerable, traveling the roads of this dangerous, unpredictable

PHOTO: MARTY SOHIL/METROPOLITAN OPERA



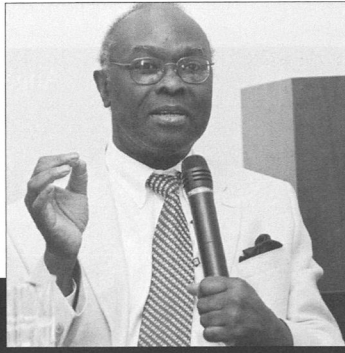
Angela M. Brown in the title role of Verdi’s *Aida*.

world. Few under the tent are untouched. All have sorrows, losses, disappointments. The trials of this lone slave woman seem to fill the whole world.

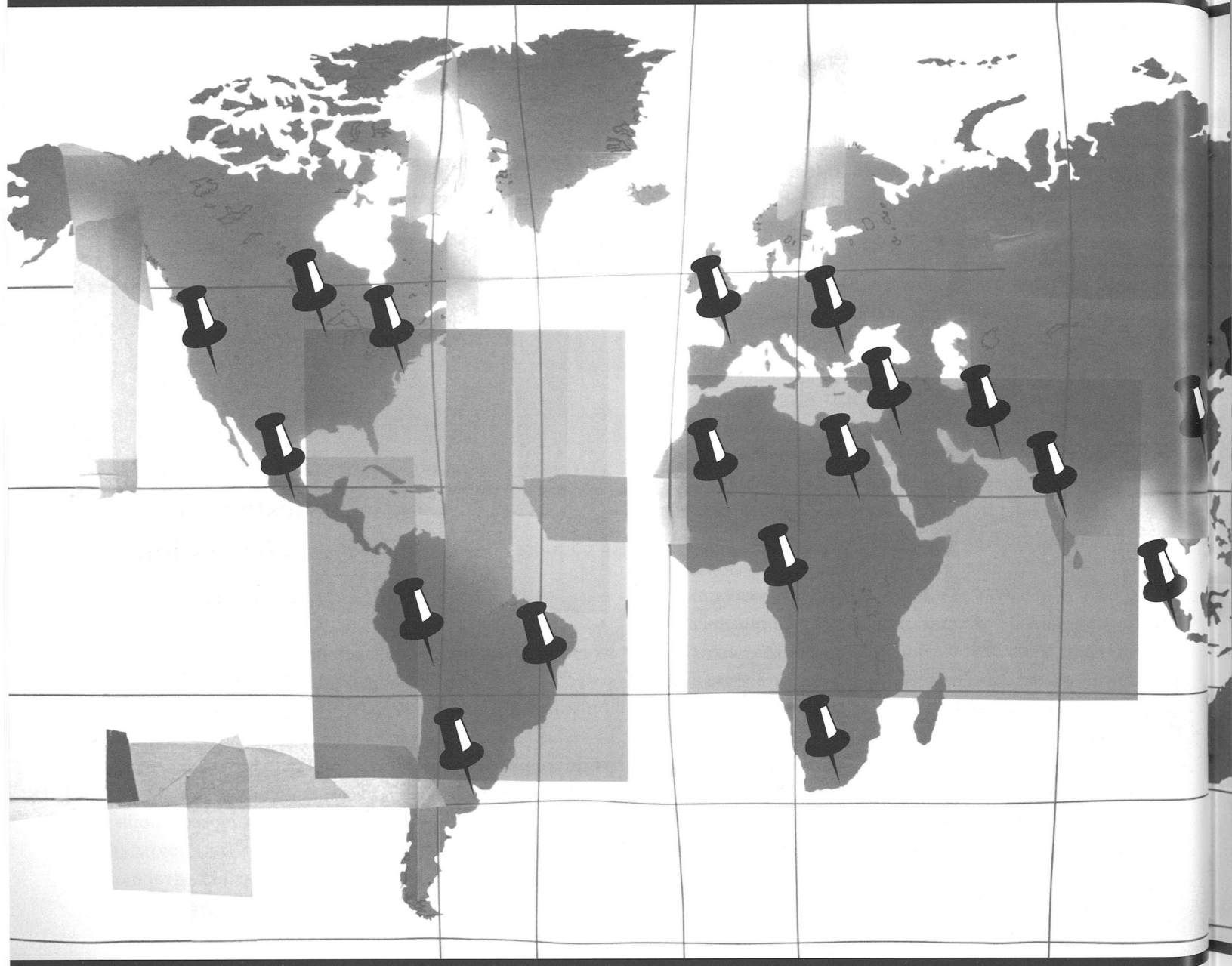
And then there is comfort. “He’s got the whole world in his hand,” she sings. “He’s got you and me, brother, sister, in his hand.” Terrorism, famine, flood. Accident, disease, war. The overwhelming unpredictability of life on planet earth washes over them. Yet they are in his hand. Whether they believe or not, grace abounds to them, and to the whole world.

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





ISSUES IN GLOBAL CHR



Discussed: Bible translation, tolerance, evolution, diversity, tribalism, culture of choice, commitment to secularism, nonwestern Christianity

CHRISTIANITY



Who Sets the Agenda for the World Church?

A Conversation with Lamin Sanneh

In his 2003 book *Whose Religion is Christianity?* Yale professor Lamin Sanneh discusses two streams in Christianity flowing in opposite directions: the contemporary confidence in the secular destiny of the West as an elevated stage of human civilization, which is matched by contrasting evidence of the resurgence of Christianity as a world religion.

We pick up the conversation in a question-and-answer format similar to the book and in anticipation of the conversation that will take place with him at the 2005 Association of Adventist Forums Conference, October 6–8, in Silver Spring, Maryland.



Growth

SPECTRUM: *In your book, you list several factors that fueled the growth of the Christian church in Africa: the end of colonialism, mother tongue development and Bible translation, indigenous cultural renewal and local agency, and the theological stimulation of the Christian adoption of the African names for God. Can you explain how each of those factors operates?*

SANNEH: The end of colonialism removed the obstacle to the growth of the church; mother tongue develop-

Since faith is a matter of being persuaded of the truth of religious claims, it puzzles me how faith should still be of any value once any number of social issues are deemed to be more important. That only makes the choice clearer, I would have thought. It is, however, a completely different matter if the argument is about how faith may help dissolve barriers between and among us. That requires work and patience.

SPECTRUM: *You take issue with explanations of the evolution of religion set forth by people such as Robertson Smith and Freud, who describe it as growing from polytheism,*

It surprises me still that the West can continue to be so sanguine about the unqualified benefits and promises of secularism for the world.

ment and Bible translation stimulated local response and allowed local theological reflection to happen, while the adoption of African names for God provided the indigenous background to Christianity. How “those factors operated” was tied to what each represented.

SPECTRUM: *What can the West learn from world Christianity? In that learning, how can it also preserve and impart the values of equality, solidarity, and science that transcend the tribalism, discrimination, and economic inequality that plagues the world?*

SANNEH: The West can learn that Christianity is a world religion that finds expression in the languages and idioms of the peoples and cultures of the world. About transcending tribalism, discrimination, and economic inequality, there is no foolproof formula for that, not at least on this side of eternity. In a more critical sense, equality and solidarity can never transcend anything; they can only help us to accept each other as who we are.

SPECTRUM: *What do you say to Christians who value their faith, but are wary of new convert fundamentalist commitments to traditional texts and cultural habits that hurt women, homosexuals, and ethnic minorities?*

SANNEH: I am not sure how believers in any religion can have both their religion as well the objections of those who are opposed to their religion. For example, some people object to any number of Christian claims as oppressive: the Bible, God, Christ, the Trinity, and so on.

tribal, and nonrational thought to self-knowledge and rational cosmos. Is not Christianity in the developing world just a higher step on that ladder of sociological progress?

SANNEH: The evidence cuts both ways, if you like, in the sense that Christianity has spread among people living in simple societies with a rural subsistence economy, from ancient Syria, Armenia, Egypt, Ethiopia, and India to modern examples, and that religion seems to be on the wane in advanced, sophisticated industrial countries of the West.

It should not be hard to remember that Christianity happened centuries before the theory of evolution. The question posed actually discounts Christianity as having any intrinsic merit, reducing it to a function of physical need. Once our needs are satisfied, then Christianity can be adopted as something ornamental. I am not sure that describes what the Church has understood as the gospel.

Culture

SPECTRUM: *You mention that Christianity is the religion of over two thousand different language groups in the world; more people pray and worship in more languages in Christianity than in any other religion. Furthermore, Christianity has been the impulse behind the creation of more dictionaries and grammars of the world's language than any other force in history. You have said this “shows that you don't have to be a religious agnostic in order to be a devout pluralist.” How will this organic diversity lead to tolerance and human solidarity?*

SANNEH: There is nothing mechanical or inevitable about tolerance and human solidarity, though it can be argued that there is no stronger basis for achieving those goals than the diversity and pluralism Christianity has pioneered. The issue is not really about whether diversity conflicts with tolerance and solidarity, but about whether you can have genuine tolerance and solidarity without diversity, and whether diversity amounts to anything worthwhile without a core commitment.

SPECTRUM: *Please comment on what the culture of the West has done to Christianity that differs from the emerging world Christian culture. You say that Christianity helped Africans become renewed Africans, not remade Europeans; what do you mean by that?*

SANNEH: In an earlier question you stated what you take to be the Western impact on Christianity, that is, the West submitting the religion to the stripping of evolution and the Enlightenment. That has resulted, with the West holding religion within the bounds of sovereign reason.

China, India, and Africa, for example, are constituted differently, and that allows Christianity to be received in cultures defined by a religious way of knowing and thinking. Still, in those cultures a privatized Christianity has struck root, thanks to the influence of the West, which is the source of that notion of religion.

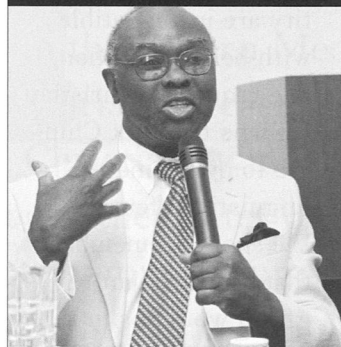
It is instructive to reflect that in spite of Western antagonism to the post-Western Christian resurgence, no country in the non-Western world has established a Christian theocratic state, whereas many countries have instituted secular Marxist regimes, along with massive abuses of human rights. Over half a million people were killed by one such regime in Africa in just two years.

Christian fundamentalism has not assumed state power and its attendant abuses the way secular fundamentalism has, in spite of the West's alarm about Christianity. It surprises me still that the West can continue to be so sanguine about the unqualified benefits and promises of secularism for the world. I think the way Japan and India, for example, have adapted secular ideas for their respective societies may be instructive for others, including Africa.

SPECTRUM: *So did Africans embrace Christianity because its values resonated with the old religions?*

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The West can learn
that Christianity
is a world religion
that finds expression
in the languages
and idioms of the
peoples and cultures
of the world.



SANNEH: That seems obvious. All of us receive new ideas on the basis of ideas we already have. For the first Christians, religion was what devout Jews believed and practiced. Christianity was accordingly framed in Jewish categories. When Greek-speaking Christians adopted the faith, they recast the religion in the mold of Greek ideas and categories: the Messiah of Jewish Christians became the "Christ" of Greek believers.

That pattern has been repeated throughout the history of Christianity. In the United States, freedom of religion is twinned with free enterprise, and that has transformed Christianity into something of a free market notion.

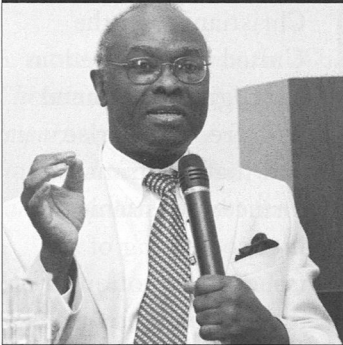
Africans are no exception to that rule, though in their case they are much closer to the tribal ethos of Jesus' Jewish background than are Americans.

SPECTRUM: *You disagree with claims that world Christianity is Third World syncretism, blended with vestigial paganism, cargo cultism, and implacable tribalism. What is the different picture that you see?*

SANNEH: The onus is on those who contend that non-Western appropriations of Christianity are illegitimate expressions of the gospel. It was not so long ago that English was considered a taboo and syncretistic language, with a ban on its use in the Church. Those who



Faith in God does not seem tied to economic success or failure, though the modern West is reluctant to accept any other way of looking at the subject.



does not make Christians necessarily unfaithful to the teachings of Jesus.

Christianity is not Islam, with its untranslated and untranslatable Koran. Translations of the Koran are deemed interpretations that may not substitute for the original Scripture in Arabic.

SPECTRUM: *You speak about a “fresh understanding of the gospel in history.” What do you mean?*

SANNEH: In the West, history is the story of nations and states, and their military and economic power. The meaning of history is the goal of national supremacy, and that means essentially the defeat of competitors. Fukuyama has developed that argument in his book, *The End of History*, where he sums up

violated the ban paid a horrendous price for their action.

After much blood was spilled in the cause, English finally triumphed as a language of Scripture and worship. The Church adopted the word *God* for the Supreme Being of Scripture and of the prophets even though *God* was an Anglo-Saxon pagan term used of warlords and heroes.

It seems a different issue about “implacable tribalism,” for the question assumes that ethnic and tribal identity are incompatible with being Christian, like requiring Christian Italians to speak Chinese to overcome their linguistic differences! We should remember that no Christian group worships in the language in which Jesus preached and worshiped, and yet that

the end of the Cold War as the inevitable triumph of a market-oriented West.

The spread of Christianity, however, has not been coterminous with the triumph of a market-oriented West, and that suggests a different ideological rationale for the gospel in history. Faith in God does not seem tied to economic success or failure, though the modern West is reluctant to accept any other way of looking at the subject.

SPECTRUM: *On the topic of a convergence between world Christianity and the liberal West, you acknowledge that to be a tough question. You point out that some writers say a major challenge is posed to Western civilization by the disconcerting fact that its critical religious and moral convictions are now primarily upheld by communities belonging to a post-Western Christianity. In that view, Christian militancy will rise to threaten the values of a liberal West.*

You add that Africa has become—or is becoming—a Christian continent in cultural as well as numerical terms, whereas on the same scale the West has become—or is rapidly becoming—a post-Christian society. What challenges loom in the future?

SANNEH: Appropriately, this is the mystery thirteenth question, and your guess is as good as mine. But I think the direction of future challenges seems set. The West is firmly committed to the pact with secularism and to the culture of individual choice, and it accommodates Christianity into that comprehensive commitment. As ecumenical leaders put it, it is the world that writes the agenda of the Church, not the other way round.

In the present mood of a post-Christian West, a resurgent post-Western Christianity is unwelcome because it threatens a return to religious intolerance and cultural backwardness. That was how many Western bishops reacted at the 1998 Lambeth Conference of the worldwide Anglican Communion convened in Canterbury.

The West is confident of its irreversible liberal secular gains, but Christianity is surging in the non-Western world. The two currents seem destined to converge in a collision. The West has added the cultural gap to the poverty gap to stigmatize the rest. But I see a glimmer of hope in less culturally compromised Christian groups in the West playing a helpful mediating role in this cleavage.

On va voir, as the French say.

Discussed: religious revival, modernization, integrated health, Scripture, secular state, Revelation,
gay bishops, wealth, prople



Living Through the Greatest Religious Change in History

By Philip Jenkins

CHRISTIANITY is changing rapidly worldwide. Through the early stages of its history, Christianity was centered in the eastern Mediterranean; there were as many Christians east of that point as west of that point. Over time, Christianity moved west. And then about 1945 or thereabouts, the center of Christianity left Europe and ever since has been going south and east. If I may use another phrase—going home. It's an African and an Asian religion that is now going home.

We are living through what I argue is the greatest religious change in history. Today, the largest Christian population on the planet is still centered in Europe, but that will change quite rapidly. By around 2025, Africa and Latin America will be vying for the title of the continent with the most Christians. But in the long term there's no doubt that Africa wins. (And that takes account of AIDS, as it has to.)

Presentation originally given at the Association of Adventist Forums 2004 Conference.

By the middle of the century, I argue, Christianity will overwhelmingly be a religion of Africa and the African Diaspora, especially in countries like Brazil. By that point, the proportion of the world's Christians, who will be non-Latino whites like myself, will be somewhere around one-fifth or one-sixth of the global total.

There are two sorts of churches—those that realize this change is happening and those who haven't figured it out yet. In my book, I tried to project the countries in the world that would have the largest Christian

populations. At the head you still have the United States, and then come countries in no particular order: Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria, Congo, Ethiopia, China, and the Philippines.

Let me give you a list of the countries that are not on that list: Britain, France, Spain, Italy. Is anyone living old enough to remember a mythical creature called Western Christianity? If it ever existed, it doesn't any more. The more you look at the development of religion today, the more you realize that its history is radically different from what many of us think it is.

So much of the most amazing growth has happened in Africa. I figure back in 1900 there were approximately 10 million Christians in Africa, representing about 10 percent of the continent's population. By 2000, there were 360 million Christians representing about 46 percent of the continent's population. Numerically alone, that is the largest religious change in human history—no exceptions.

I'm not sure how many people picked it up when they were looking back at the twentieth century. Most of Africa—certainly most of black Africa—has been in the middle of a major religious Christian revival since about the 1890s and it shows no signs of diminishing.

I would argue—other people have argued—that the key fact in understanding religious change over the coming years is the clash of generations. The northern world, the world of Europe and North America, is aging. This is partly because of people postponing child-bearing, not having children, having fewer children. But the result is an older and older northern world standing against a younger and younger southern world.

I can summarize this very easily. The average age of the population of Italy is forty. The average age of the population of Uganda is sixteen. You project that trend a little way into the future and you get an ever-older white northern world, an ever-younger black and yellow and brown southern world. If the northern world wishes to continue and function the only way it can do so is by immigration.

Many people around the world in the last fifty years have converted to Christianity, to different forms of Christianity. I want to suggest some of the reasons why they've converted and discuss their kinds of Christianity. And it's at this point that I'd like to talk particularly about what I call the Adventist dimensions of this change. The Adventists are succeeding very well—with exponential growth. Why? What have they been doing right?

Wholistic Health



All the factors that thirty years ago were meant to kill religion are the factors that have caused the most growth in Christianity. Thirty, forty years ago, everyone knew that Christianity was going to perish for certain reasons: modernization, urbanization, industrialization. People were going to move into big cities from little villages. They would realize that religion was something they would have to leave behind them. They would become secular, modern, and they would accept all these new ideas.

However, Christianity and Islam have been growing because of modernization, urbanization, and industrialization. People have moved into large cities, which had nothing to offer them—no facilities for welfare, education, or health—except what they provided themselves. Above all, the groups and institutions that have provided these services have been churches or mosques.

I would argue that the Adventist Church is very well placed to take advantage of the currents in global Christianity. First of all, if you look at the Christianity of Africa, of Asia, of Latin America, it has a central concern, which is health of mind and body, with no division at all between the two. The success of a church, the success of a religious tradition, is judged by how far it provides that kind of integrated health.

The most successful churches have often been Pentecostal, with a fervent belief in concepts of exorcism and spiritual healing. A church that presents itself in these terms is already well ahead in the argument.

Interpretation of Scripture



Christian churches often have a problem dealing with the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. We don't talk about the Old Testament; we call it the Hebrew Bible. Instead of the New Testament—this is the Christian Bible. In Africa, in Asia, they look for much more integration of Old and New Testaments. The idea that Old Testament laws and rules and requirements and concepts like the Sabbath are to be taken very seriously is an attractive and powerful message. The Adventist Church presents itself with a kind of consistency that other churches might not offer.

One appealing feature of Adventism is the idea that it lays down very specific rules. The more demanding churches that know exactly what they mean are the groups that are succeeding and have succeeded. One of the best remarks I've heard in recent dialogue was between an American and an African bishop in a Bible study group. The American was trying to present his point of view, and the African got more and more frustrated, until finally he used interesting language: "If you don't believe this Bible, why did you bring it to us in the first place?"

Emphasis on the Book of Revelation

One other thing that I suggest is the greatest advantage of an Adventist message is that interest in apocalyptic and the book of Revelation. I think that for many Americans Revelation is a very suspect kind of book, associated with the worst kind of messiahism, with its violent implications. In Africa and Asia and Latin America, people read Revelation as it was meant to be read, as a text about the evils of the present order and a statement of divine faithfulness and divine promise.

There is a fundamentally different attitude to secularism and the secular power. For most Americans—and you can criticize many parts of this—secular progress is a reality. Americans have grown up in a world in which civil rights have expanded inconceivably over what they were fifty years ago, where the courts and secular powers have served to liberalize, extend people's rights, basically do good. The church must catch up with the secular world.

Is the secular state a standard to be emulated in Africa, Asia, or Latin America? Ask an Iraqi, ask a Nigerian, ask a Colombian. The secular state represents potentially an evil force—who knows, perhaps a diabolical force. The church represents a refuge, a bastion, against that. In other words, it's very much the kind of vision that you have in Revelation, which says that the world, the secular order, is in the hands of evil forces that are ultimately demonic.

It says that these forces consistently rule through deceit, deception, falsehood, and manipulation, and that their ultimate symbol is money and commercial power. Well, so far if you live in Nigeria or Brazil, this is a political science textbook. Revelation viewed as an analysis and a statement of faith and belief and power

has an enormous value for that kind of audience. In the global South, there is a radically different attitude to evil. People there believe very seriously in evil. They believe in a demonic, satanic force within the churches.

When you think about this, there is one fundamental difference that separates Christians in the United States from those in Nigeria. For Americans, paganism is not a present reality except as what I call an academic curiosity. You have neo-paganism, or Wicca, and so on, basically very benevolent, harmless forces. The main charge you can make against them is that they look silly.

But think about the bishops and leaders of the African or Asian churches, who are first- or second-generation converts from pagan religions, from animism, from traditional religions, who when they read accounts of the works of Baal in the Old Testament see it as a present reality.

When Nigerian archbishop Peter Akinola praised the conservative American bishops who had voted against ordaining a gay bishop, he praised them as the forty-five prophets who refused to bow the knee to Baal. In the West when you accuse somebody of worshipping Baal, at best it's an overwhelming figure of speech. But for somebody who comes from a first- or second-generation Christian community, that carries a remarkably different power.

Pull somebody from a thought group like that and the images in Revelation are immensely powerful. Revelation is one of the most popular books among Latin American liberation theologians because they speak of oppression as diabolical forces. They talk about demonic forces such as corporate exploitation, domestic violence, and pornography. They speak in demonic terms and they refer to Revelation.

It might be that quite apart from the Adventist tradition, more interesting, creative, and innovative work and exegesis has been done on the book of Revelation in the last fifty years in Africa and Asia and Latin America than has been done in North America in the last four hundred. This is a very exciting time for that kind of study.

I'm not saying there is one thing called southern Christianity. Of course, there isn't, there are southern Christianities. Something that is going to happen in all denominations is that as European and American churches divide by issues of gender, sexuality, sexual preference (and they are going to be divided by all those if they haven't so far), there is going to be north/south conflict.

Increasingly, northern conservatives will align with the southern. You've seen that very much with the Anglican tradition, within the Episcopal Church. There's a group, for instance, called the Anglican Mission in America, which is a group of American conservative Episcopalians who basically declared independence from their own bishops and authorities and placed themselves under the authority of bishops in Uganda and Singapore and Nigeria.

Interesting name, the Anglican Mission in America—people who bring orthodoxy to missionary territory. I think that's going to be very widespread.

I think the best single remark I came across while I was working on this book was from Saint Vincent de Paul, a great seventeenth-century French writer and activist. He was writing in 1640 (arguably the worst year in European history before 1940), when Protestants were killing Catholics, Catholics were killing Protestants, Christians were killing Jews; everyone was killing people whom they believed to be witches. It was an awful time. He said something very wise: Jesus said his church would last until the end of time, but he never mentioned the word *Europe*.

The church of the future, Saint Vincent said in 1640, would be the church of Africa, South America, China, and Japan. We can argue with the word *Japan*, though Japan in the twentieth century did produce the greatest Catholic novelist and, arguably, Christian novelist of modern times, Shusaku Endo. I would say that at the moment Europe is very much fulfilling Saint Vincent's comment. Europe is secularizing and de-Christianizing at a remarkable rate.

However, Christianity is showing signs of being reintroduced as an immigrant religion. The largest Christian congregation in Europe today is in Kiev, in the Ukraine. The church in Kiev was founded by a man who was brought over from Nigeria by the former Soviet Union in the 1980s as a student. He arrived, and the Soviet Union collapsed around him. He set up a new church.

Apparently, it has thirty thousand members, but it's growing very fast and nobody's really counting. Fortunately, in places like Kiev you have these vast union halls and party assemblies built by the former communists. By the way, the appeal of that church is fundamentally based on health—health and cure. And if you look at its Web site, it says that it offers cures for diseases, including cancer and AIDS.

In London, you have an equivalent character who runs one of these great Nigerian transnational ministries. He has a huge video and audiotape ministry and

speaks on cable across West Africa and Europe. He arrived in London in 1992. By 2000, he had built the largest new church built in Britain since 1851, which seats more than Westminster Abbey. It's an extremely successful church, also growing very fast.

A couple years ago, he started something called a Britain Barriers Crusade because he wanted to spread the gospel to white people. What he actually said was this: You can't expect people to feel comfortable among folks who look different from them with a very different culture. So what he tried to do was to present the gospel in terms that white British people could understand and feel comfortable with. But "unfortunately," he says, "they won't see us as a God-thing; they see us as a black-thing." This might be the story of Christianity in Europe.

The story in America, I think, will be very different in a sense that the underlying Christianity is very strong. When European visitors come to see me in America, they look at those ultimate symbols of aspiration and faith in the future, the church parking lots, and they're amazed at their size. Back home, the churches that go out of use (as they do so very regularly) become apartments, coffeehouses, and mosques. When churches fall out of use in the United States, what do they become? New churches! Korean churches, Chinese churches, Nigerian churches. Unlike in Europe, America is not replacing the older Christianity; it's adding new levels.

When I look at the Adventist experience as I understand it, I'm not for a second surprised that you have the kind of growth and change that you have.

I'm going to end with a question. We'll be looking at a world where, say, 10 percent of your church might be non-Latino white. What portion of the wealth and the resources of the Church does that 10 percent hold—90 percent, 95 percent? That's absolutely typical.

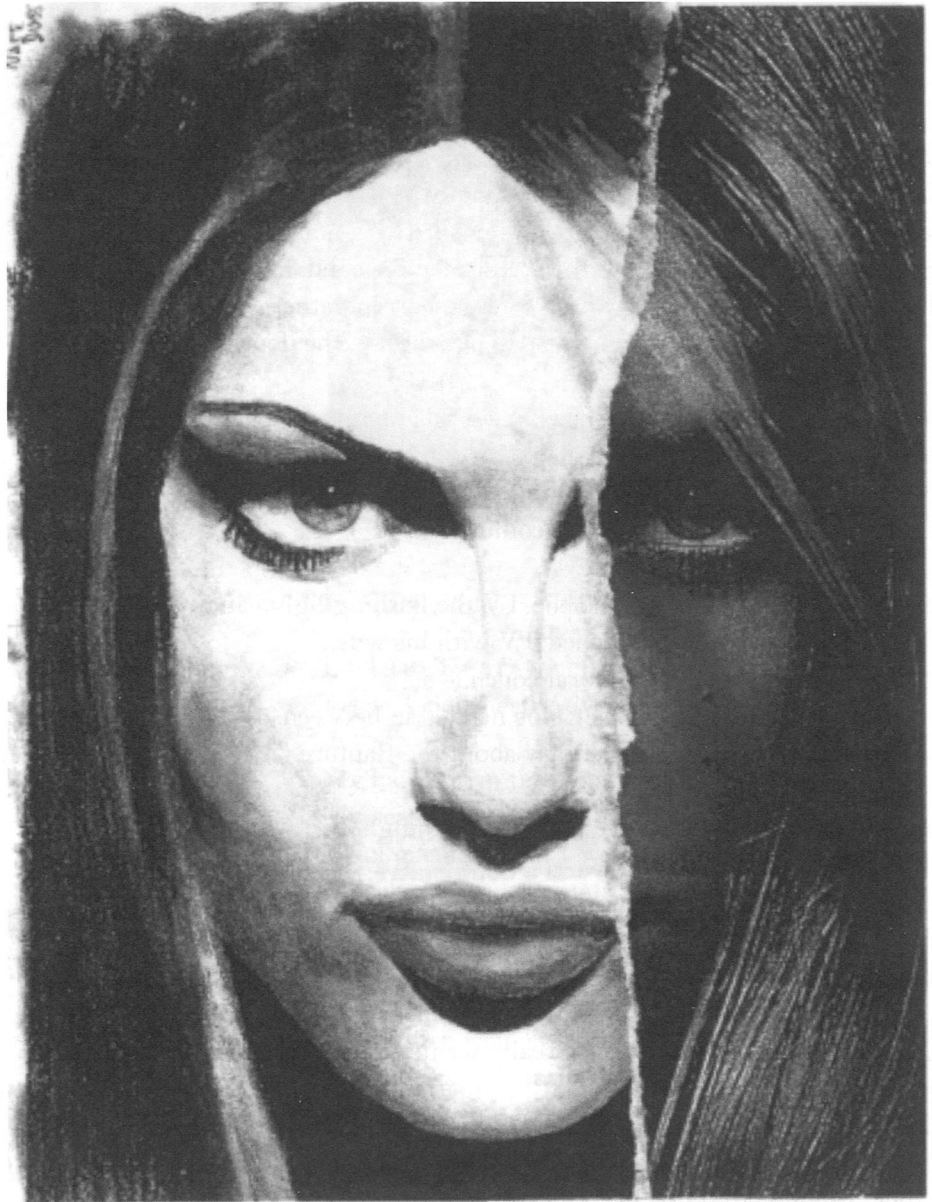
That may be the most important issue for Christian churches in the next one hundred years—the near total contrast between where the wealth is and where the people are. Sometimes in my more pessimistic moments, I put these factors together and I wonder if maybe Christians in the global south churches will look at the book of Revelation and start thinking that Babylon is not just the global north, but also the churches of the global north.

On that cheery note, I will draw to an end.

Philip Jenkins is distinguished professor of history and religious studies at Pennsylvania State University. He is the author of *The Next Christendom*.

The Best of the Literary Journals

from Adventist Colleges and Universities



Untitled
NATE DUBS
Legacy – Southern Adventist University

Before I Left for College

ELISABETH JANE CATALANO

Gadfly - Walla Walla College

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My grandfather flickers now, the man called husband, father,
the brother that sat in a pew each week, the grandfather
who prayed behind his filled plate. He hunches by the door,

hand outstretched, fingers cupped, his head rotating sideways.
"Someone, go get the door for Bapa," Mom says. I twist the knob,
the hinges rattle, as I let him in.
I notice his awkward stance, he's confused.

Usually, he doesn't understand the TV, the flashing lights and recorded sound.
Two days before, he had watched TV with his wife,
the two sat together on the floral couch,
the dog he still remembers as Chloe nestled in between.
3ABN was on, with a documentary about the Rapture.

Remember, he did not believe that sort of thing.

Mom drops the wooden spoon spinning in the vegetable broth.
She grabs Bapa's bony shoulders in her moist fingers,
encouraging words flow down through his crusty ears.
The dam finally breaks, and through the noise of a
rushing kind, she hears what he really wants to say.

"Gone, all gone," he finishes.

"Do you think that Jesus came, and you were left here?" Mom says,
as my crumpled grandpa begins to shake.



Untitled

ERIKA JENKINS

Legacy - Southern
Adventist University

Call Me Ishmael (and other excuses)

MINDY MILLS

Parnassus - Andrews University

I have spent the entire day drifting
Like an un-manned ship
From room to room. I sat
On the kitchen counter, tapping the knives against the stove.
I read poetry aloud from a book

As if to a crowd, although alone.
I stared out of the
Window at the rain. Then
The snow. And I hummed to myself while I washed dishes,
Throwing leftovers into the trash bin.

But my sailing is distracted by
The tug of something.
The rope that has me moored?
Or from the scrape of my hull on the rocks of a shallow reef?
Or maybe the tide has gone out and I'm

Only circling the tide pool. Maybe
I'm not even the
Captain and that stutter
Has nothing to do with a boat, with ropes, or even stones.
Maybe it's Morse code, and maybe I'm the

One that's doing all of the tapping.
Maybe I'm it: the
Only living crew of
A freak naval disaster, and that feeling is just my
Life jacket, riding up against my chin.



Walker

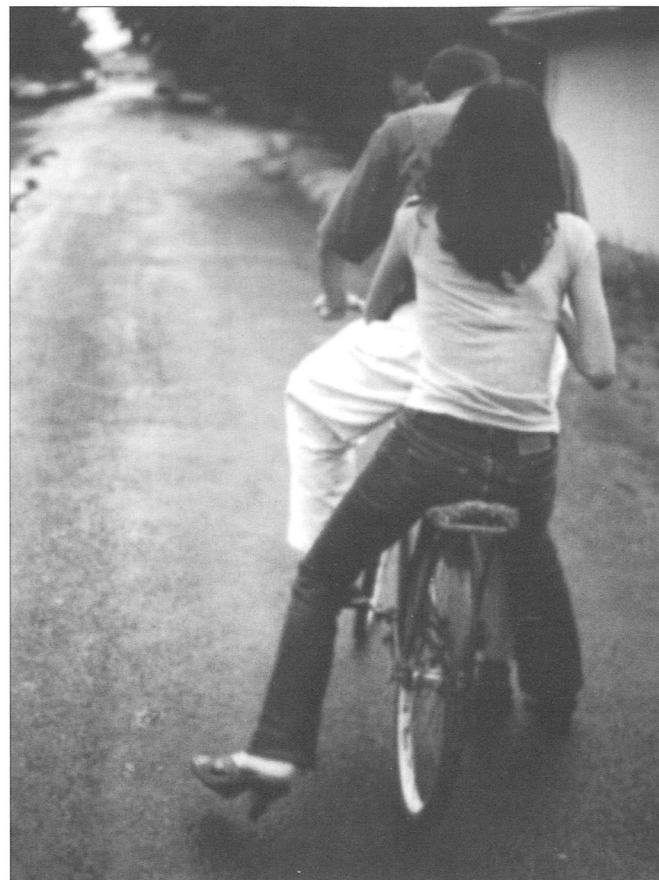
JASON
HAINAULT
Quicksilver -
Pacific Union
College

Rain

JENNY STEWART

Gadfly - Walla Walla College

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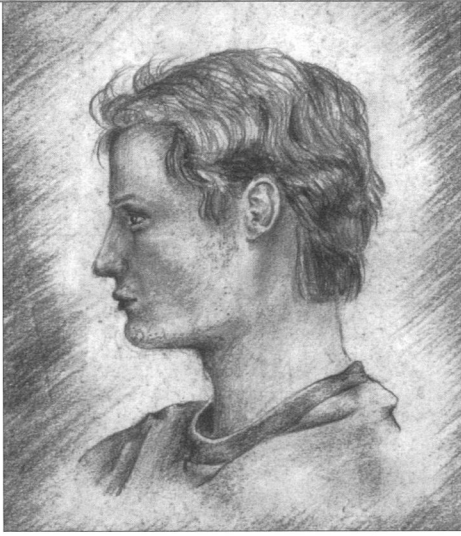


Lonely

LARRY TATIANA BAXTER

Legacy - Southern Adventist University

My hands grip tight the oar that lies before
My seat as icy waves soak through the thin
Wool garment that I wear. I search for shore
In vain. I shrink away from men packed in
With me to bursting on this tiny boat.
My vision blurs when blistered hands release
The oar and clutch the rocking craft afloat
In thunder, rain, and biting wind increased
By darkness penetrating deep. For where
Is that eternal God who promises
To keep us safe? I seek and see out there
A ghost. And now all my faith vanishes.
But specter turns to solid man who boards
My craft; the storm destroyed with just His words.



Graphite Drawing
TAM WAI
Musings – La Sierra University

Guardian

CAROL JUNE HOOKER
The Montage - Columbia Union College

Five feet tall,
Ambrosia artemisiifolia—
Food of the holy
Leaves protecting young children—
Guards the playground fence corner.

Five feet tall,
Ambrosia artemisiifolia
Spews yellow-green pollen.
Pollen sticks to school windows.
Young children wheeze.

“Cut it down,” I say.
“It is only common ragweed.”
“Later,” says the janitor.
“It is five feet tall.
There is too much else to do.”

Five feet tall,
Ambrosia artemisiifolia
Pulls lead from the air,
Sucks lead from the playground soil
Into its leaves.

Five feet tall
Ambrosia artemisiifolia
Food of the holy,
Leaves protecting young children,
Poisons itself, so children can learn.

“Discrimaniggawhitegurl”

KATIE J. RODDY
Gumbo – Oakwood College

Like Ashley “the pieces of me” are scattered throughout these trees, these acorns, and these Oaks
Been here for twenty years, see this here is all I know
Grew up not showing what shade I was knowing
Guess I didn’t see the difference between me and the next shade of brown girl
Maybe I was ignorant or just livin’ in King’s Dream world
Took fifteen years for me to understand the problem
Been five more and still I haven’t solved it
It’s been real and it gets tough
And these two together make me real tough enough
Almost called it quits in high school, me and Kim said this is enough
So I left the place that I grew up in
Still calling it home ‘cause it was where I was raised and born
And all they would say was Katie come back you know you’re black . . .
In other words you’re too cool to be the race you are so we gladly accept you into ours
But I took it as an insult almost causing me to revolt
But I sat back and realized that I know and they don’t
What if I called ya’ll white
Would you still have black pride or would it make you angry inside
My father came here in the sixties back when Oakwood didn’t take kindly to those white hippies
So any story I could ever bring to my mom and him
They’d say Katie we’ve been there done that came back and took a nap
And you see we’re still standing outlasting many of the “Reverse Racists”
Two wrongs don’t make a right
And these two wrongs don’t make me white
They make me fight for what is right
Why reject someone for being born who’s different from your norm
Why get mad at me for falling in love with someone who’s “too black for me?”
That’s ignorant Open your mind ‘cause we’re running out of time
The Lord is coming soon and in heaven there’s no room for Racism

Rattlesnakes Fear the Rabbits

KYLE LEMMON

Quicksilver - Pacific Union College

paint's still dripping from grandpa's cherry barn
the grass stays tall every summer
his old herds purge their appetite in another yarn
but Rebekah's mud-caked toes still lightly circle
counting the rings around the old oak
that briny soil still supple and strangely fertile

I dither to grapple what kept me here all these summers
the water from the spigot outside tastes like copper
and the tattered swing out back fails to seduce anymore lovers

everything sags in all the wrong places
probing for shade is a chore in itself
that indolent yellow eye burns on countless faces

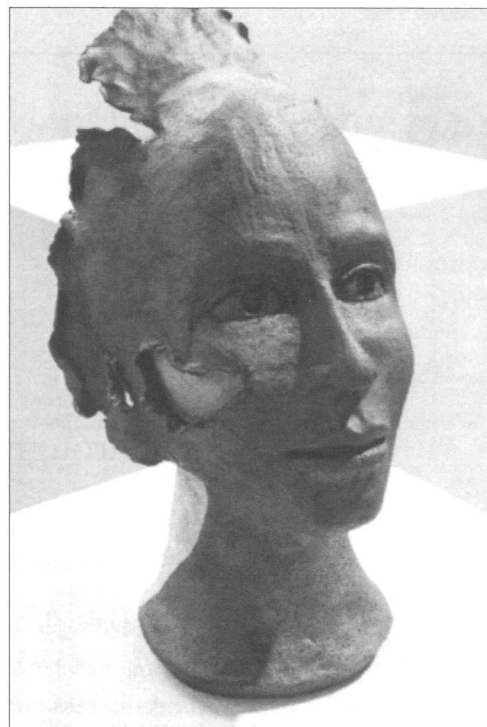
a string-less banjo with a peregrine falcon and a humpback whale
remind me of daddy's breath at the ocean
and a mother's caress, her skeletal son sips tea so frail

canonizing the land with a tumbled brow and a taut chin
my wife cots my young son in a scratchy wool sheet
our reflection in his watery eyes, hope for my kith and kin

accident brought me here I suppose, other mechanisms
keep me still
not unlike how craggy hands taught me to helm the land
and how small children best not steal sweets from the sill

I've realized that art is in early spring's dormant bonfire
and the love of tracing a fallen hero through roundabout orchards
another young man may sketch the same conclusions
lighting their own pyre

two hungry black birds escort his habits
the strong scent of eucalyptus fill his house
a place where rattlesnakes fear rabbits



Head Sculpture

RUSTY OFT

Quicksilver -

Pacific Union College

the opiate

ISHMAEL FACUNDO

Musings - La Sierra University

I believe in god, but I believe the Beatles.

I believe in love, like camels going through needles.

I am a saint, now I really am complete.

I forgot to mention, my clay are made of feet.

Sanctity, the choice of many free;

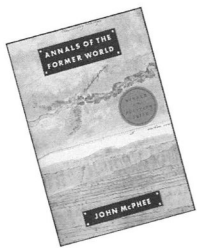
Validity, a.k.a. complacency;

She wrote the gospels, with severity.

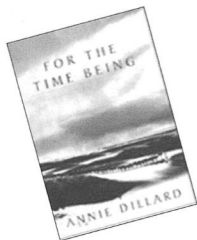
I am a prophet, but it's spelled with F-I-T.

I believe in afterlife. Yes I am king.

I do believe in miracles, and I am a sexy thing.



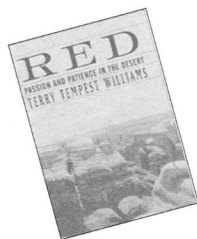
John McPhee, *Annals of the Former World* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998)



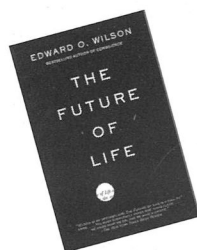
Annie Dillard, *For the Time Being* (New York: Knopf, 1999)



Brad Leithauser, *Darlington's Fall: A Novel in Verse* (New York: Knopf, 2002)



Terry Tempest Williams, *Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert* (New York: Pantheon, 2001)



Edward O. Wilson, *The Future of Life* (New York: Knopf, 2002)

Five on Nature

By James L. Hayward

Through memoir, poetic fiction, essay, and exposition, five accomplished writers examine the sublime, the puzzling, the powerful, the weird, the majestic, and the magical of nature.

In *Annals of the Former World*, journalist John McPhee has assembled five earlier works into a thick but personal memoir of visits to landforms and roadcuts along Interstate Highway 80. Local phenomena serve as launch sites for planetary perspectives. "The poles," begins McPhee, "have wandered. The equator has apparently moved. The continents, perched on their plates, are thought to have been carried so very far and to be going in so many directions that it seems an act of almost pure hubris to assert that some landmark of our world is fixed..."

Plate tectonics provides the subtext for an epic narrative of earth and human history writ large, of lithic and mental processes that shape what we see and think. *Annals of the Former World* is at once the majestic tale of a rocky planet and the intimate sketch of some of those who people it. This book won McPhee a Pulitzer Prize for General Nonfiction in 1999.

Darlington's Fall: A Novel in Verse probes the question of meaning through the life of Russel Darlington, a quixotic boy-naturalist-turned-natural-history-museum-curator. In the face of great adversity, this kind but tragic figure gradually comes to terms with the benign indifference of a Darwinian

world. He eventually finds personal, if not universal, resolution to the problem of theodicy when he risks falling into the life of a woman he secretly has loved for years.

In this intricately patterned tale, poet, professor, and Guggenheim Fellow Brad Leithauser weaves a brilliantly layered but accessible story in the once-popular genre of narrative verse. For most people, wading through a poem several hundred pages long would require an act of courage. Not so with this piece. The reader moves effortlessly from one stanza to another; rhythm and rhyme are barely evident at the conscious level, but move the text along with uncommon elegance and grace.

In *For the Time Being*, writer-naturalist and Pulitzer Prize winner Annie Dillard probes the paradoxes of birth, suffering, and death. Dillard's quirky curiosity and penetrating vision fascinate and perturb. Each chapter stitches together ten crazy-quilt patterns: birth, sand, China, clouds, numbers, Israel, encounters, thinker, evil, now. Her technique underscores her point: Life begs understanding.

Bird-headed dwarfs, buried clay soldiers, English clouds, aerial detritus—all

things teach us what we'll never know. Dillard writes of the enigmatic Divine and, with Augustine, asks: "What wonder is it that you do not understand? If you do understand, then it is not God." Dillard finds meaning through doing: "God decants the universe of time in a stream," she writes, "and our best hope is, by our own awareness, to step into the stream and serve, empty as flumes, to keep it moving." Brilliantly disturbing, *For the Time Being* challenges our most basic assumptions.

"Red is the most joyful and dreadful thing in the Universe," wrote G. K. Chesterton. "It is the fiercest note, the highest light." Biologist and writer Terry Tempest Williams knows red...the red rock upon which she lives, the red passion she feels for the Utah desert...the red rage she feels toward those who desecrate this land.

In *Red*, Williams shares passionate encounters with the rocks, the water, and the petroglyphs of Utah's Redrock Wilderness. "I want to keep my worlds wild," she writes. She succeeds. This is a book of erotic love, of fiery determination to hang on to what remains of the Utah wilderness and of the spiritual renewal that springs from such a place. This is the most personal, passionate writing ever by the acclaimed Mormon-born author of *Refuge* and *Leap*.

For more than a half century, Edward O. Wilson has prodded, moved, and reshaped the science of ecology. Now this elder statesman of science turns his attention to caring for a planet he has helped us understand. *The Future of Life* is a realistic but hopeful look at the state of the earth and our eventual environmental legacy. Wilson's prologue, "A Letter to Thoreau," is itself worth the book's modest price.

In the seven artfully crafted chapters that follow, Wilson contemplates the miracles of life, ponders its current troubles, assesses its worth, offers a realistic approach to environmental stewardship, and moves the reader to celebrate its wonders. "A civilization able to envision God and to embark on the colonization of space," he opines, "will surely find a way to save the integrity of this planet and the magnificent life it harbors."

For anyone who loves the creation, this is a great-hearted book by a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner and "prophet for the earth."

James L. Hayward is a professor in the Biology Department at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

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- 10/8 Dr. Gordon Doss, *Wealth and Poverty in Global Perspective*
- 10/15 Malinda Berry, *Issues of War and Pacifism in Theological Perspective*
- 10/22 Dr. Jim Wideman, *The Binding of Isaac: Different Perspective*
- 10/29 Robert Darken, *Where the Revolution Begins*
- 11/5 Terry L. Anderson, *Our Relationship to God: child-parent, vassal-Lord, oppressed-champion*
- 11/12 Dr. Michael Zbarashuk, *The Roots and Wings of Adventism*
- 11/19 The King's Men, male choir based at Atlantic Union College
- 11/28 Dr. Lester Wright, *The Gospel of Relationships: Ephesians*
- 12/3 Terry L. Anderson, *An Ethical Lesson from the Bible*
- 12/10 Dr. Robert Johnston, *Understanding Parables*
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Cornfield Experience

I enjoy reading *Spectrum's* articles. On the subject of whether or not Hiram Edson saw a vision (Ross E. Winkle, "Disappearing Act: Hiram Edson's Cornfield Experience," 33.1 [winter 2005]:46-52), I remember reading in a book written by Edson himself that "a thought" came to his mind in the field, not a vision or impression. This makes sense to me.

The fact that only God the Father knows the day and hour tells me that he did not inspire the declaration of 1844 as the date for Christ's coming or for his passage from the holy to the most holy place. If both Paul and John saw Jesus sitting at the right hand of the Father, how could he have first entered the most holy place in 1844?

How, then, could Hiram Edson have had a vision of this event?

*Abimael Acosta
Via the Internet*

I read with fascination Ross E. Winkle's article on Hiram Edson (winter 2005).

When reading the list of possible reasons for why Hiram's "experience" in the cornfield hasn't gotten much traction in the annals of Adventist history, I wondered if Winkle left out one very important possibility.

I would like to suggest that any religious denomination cannot survive

with more than one prophet or prophetess at the same time and in the same geographical region—especially in its embryonic stage!

*Dennis W. McOmber
Florida*

Glacier View

Gregory Schneider's "Twenty-Five Years after Glacier View and Who Cares?" (winter 2005) is one of the most painful pieces I have ever read.

The simple truth is that Glacier View is the most painful experience of my life. Even though I remain an Adventist, there are still times I catch myself responding to bad news for the Church with, "It serves them right."

The tragedy of Glacier View is that it was unnecessary and achieved nothing positive. We thought we had to defend the truth to prove our status as the remnant church. But are we a church, a historical society, or a debating club? Where was evidence that we were a loving community, dedicated to exploring the truth of God's word, submitting our opinions to his?

Today, I hear impassioned calls for greater spirituality in the Church. I think in response, "You want us to study the Bible more? Didn't you see the trouble that caused Desmond Ford?"

Once a division youth leader told me about his excitement over a youth

program in which he was involved. "These young people, don't know who Ford is," he said. "They don't care about the sanctuary or righteousness by faith. They're just on fire for the Lord."

How much progress have we made when the young people have lost enthusiasm for studying the Word?

*Author's name
withheld by request*

Sunday Worship

The comment by Pastor Rick Kuykendall on Sunday worship ("Letters," spring 2005) interests me. How can he ignore the fact that the examples of God's people, and most notably Christ, compensate for the fact that Scripture declines to command us how to observe the Sabbath? (Lev. 23:3, 8; Num. 29:25; Luke 4:16-20; Acts 13:14, 15, 27; 42-44; 15:21; 16:13; 1 Pet. 2:21.)

Did Christ worship on Sunday? Although it is true that he did not forbid worship on the first day of the week, neither did he encourage it. Churches gradually took the place of synagogues as places of worship when Jews opposed and persecuted the first Christians. When one participates in Sunday worship in a church of a different faith, isn't the line of distinction blurred?

The Spirit of Prophecy states that Sunday observance is an act of homage

to and the mark of the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, which we believe will play a significant part in events at the end of time (Ellen White, *Great Controversy*, 446, 448, 449). Did Ellen White err or was she misinformed?

When Sunday observance becomes enforced by law and the fires of persecution are kindled, will Pastor Kuykendall still be preaching to his congregation on that day?

*Jim Benko
Woodbridge, N.J.*

Suicide

Thank you for printing Becky Wang Cheng's thoughtful article, "How Does God View Suicide?" (spring 2005).

Cheng asserts that the Scriptures record only three suicides. I would like to suggest another, and that it was an assisted suicide. Samson prayed, "Let me die with the Philistines!" and God himself provided the strength for his homicide-suicide (Judg. 16:30). Even more interesting is the fact that Samson is listed in Hebrews 11 as a hero of faith.

Does this imply that suicide is necessarily part of God's plan for some people? That might be taking things a bit far, but it does provide hope. If God's understanding and compassion permits Samson to be counted among the faithful, perhaps there is grace enough for others.

*Steve Parwluk
Collegedale, Tenn.*

Your spring 2005 issue is excellent—particularly the collection on suicide. There are several issues that I think need further comment.

Thank you Elder Venden for reminding us that the Scriptures affirm that NOTHING can separate us from the love of God. I believe this partly answers Dr. Cheng's question. I believe the rest of that question is answered by Jesus, and is something every Christian either forgets or chooses to overlook. Jesus committed suicide.

I can hear the screams, NO! However, allow me to remind you that the most powerful being in the universe voluntarily came to earth knowing he would die a painful, ignominious death, that he could easily have prevented. Even in the Garden of Gethsemane he admitted that if he did not want to die, he could have called ten thousand angels to deliver him. That is suicide.

But there were a number of things you left unsaid or uncovered. For example, you gave no coverage at all to the side of the discussion that supports physician assisted suicide.

Who benefits from the ethics of not hastening an inevitable end in the midst of great suffering? The medical establishment? Certainly not the patient. Probably not the insurance industry. Society? How?

I think there very well may be a place not only for passive euthanasia, but for active as well. So why do we spend so much energy avoiding death when even the Bible proclaims it our lot?

In the consensus statement, two types of "euthanasia" were mentioned: active and passive. The statement failed to add self-administered euthanasia. Furthermore, no discussion was given to the ethics of the suffering of those for whom passive euthanasia is chosen.

Does any reasonable person think there is no suffering involved in starvation or dehydration? What is

the moral effect on the staff taking care of a person in this setting. If one wants to be morally consistent in opposing active euthanasia, then one should oppose all forms of euthanasia.

The fundamental weakness in American psychiatry is that it treats patients for longevity, not for quality of life. Furthermore, the insurance industry has not come up to the plate. In spite of all the increases in knowledge and information about mental health diseases, the insurance industry still does not fund mental health problems as a disease. Insurance on my brain costs ten thousand dollars every two years. Insurance on my body costs over one million dollars. For me, my brain is more important than my body, but not for my insurance company.

Unfortunately, this is the norm nationwide. Only a few states have passed insurance parity laws. I believe that mental health care in the United States would improve drastically if the funding for it were as good as for any one of a number of other major illnesses.

As a Seventh-day Adventist member who is concerned about my fellow humans, I find it important to know that a large segment of people in the United States are homeless because they cannot get good mental health care, and they have lost their homes, their families, and their systems of support. Helping them is something we could do to improve the lot of our fellow humans. We could go to bat for changing the attitudes of the insurance industry, and for forcing legal parity in mental health care.

There is so much that could be said on the topics you so rightfully presented.

*Dave Reynolds
Sandi, Oregon*



A Symphony of Girlfriends

FROM
AAF

I am newly married. And it's the new marriage that takes me to the matter of girlfriends. My wife Becky has three sons, and each has a girlfriend. One is Colombian, or more precisely, German-Colombian. One is Filipino. One is African American.

Becky herself, by the way, is Chinese American. And my own son, it turns out, is dating a young woman who is Anglo Latina. So I, of mixed European stock, have lately swerved into new awareness of what may be called the new diversity.

Awareness, but not, I'm sure, full understanding.

The new diversity is new for being so varied, so staggeringly complex. Diversity is not just race relations. It's the tumult of difference all around us—difference of hair and skin (and gender), but also of politics, culture, and religion. And if all this can be winsome, as when we enjoy ever-more-intriguing foods and friendships, it can also be alarming. We know now that difference fueled by resentment can harden into hate, and that hate, unredeemed, can make people burn a cross or board a bus with a bomb.

What shall we make of all this? How can difference be... well, be more symphonic than cacophonous?

Variety in human circumstance and heritage, and what variety means, has long attracted scholarly attention. Now, with words like *globalization* and *postmodern* passing into everyday vocabularies, we're all wondering about things that, just decades ago, occupied only the minds of professors. And in the process, we've all gotten a little worried. We've also become more suspicious of certitude.

I remember when Adventists could quote the Gospel Commission—"Go . . . and make disciples of all nations"—without fretting about anything but logistics. Now anyone who is thoughtful wonders how to make sense of these words. You can't feel any longer that European lineage makes you the standard everyone "overseas" should aim for. Nor can you think that being Adventist, or even being Christian, gives you an unassailable lock on truth. Now those who would override or abolish all claims that compete with their own come across arrogant as crows.

But there's another fly in the ointment: if you say "tolerance" is everything, and all opinions should be respected, that seems crazy, too. You can't defer to Nazism. You can't tip your hat to suicide bombers.

One more thing: the new diversity is also about shift-

ing centers of power and influence. And as for Christianity, the center is clearly shifting south. The dominance of Euro-American Christianity, including dominion over the interpretation of Scripture, is on the wane as believers of different hue and background gain in number and in confidence. If you are a second- or third-generation Adventist from one of the Church's older strongholds, the new diversity challenges not only your perspective but also your position.

You don't want to sleepwalk through changes so momentous. That's why the Adventist Forum's 2005 national conference will take up the theme of "The New Diversity: Renewing the Heart of Adventism." On October 6-8, in Silver Spring, Maryland, conference participants will consider how to proclaim Jesus, the Sabbath, and the Second Coming in a postmodern context. Presenters who are diverse in age, gender, culture, and homeland will ask: What does Adventism's passion for worldwide witness mean today?

I hope you come. Conversation opportunities, in circles both small and large, will give every attendee a voice, and every voice will matter.

One of the arresting facts about the Gospel Commission is this: of the eleven disciples who, according to Matthew 28, heard it, "some doubted." From day one, it seems, the questions were difficult, and the difficulty acknowledged. And I imagine that from day one the interactions about all this were honest, passionate, and life changing.

Heaven knows life needs to change. Awareness of the new diversity is not full understanding. And without better understanding, difference is bound to bring danger—a world too discordant and too smug, too fearful, and too violent.

In this light we may well remember that if the heart of Adventism is about anything, it is about the Prince of Peace, the one who brings to earth a rich and satisfying harmony.

So we need to talk.

Charles Scriven
AAF Board Chairman

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PILGRIM

By Lindsey Bauer

*My religion makes no sense
And does not help me
Therefore I pursue it.*

Anne Carson

Think of me in predawn hours
When sleep still fills your eyes
And you can barely make yourself bathe
Away last night's dreams.

I will be there when the whole world
Prepares to spark and flame
On the day you will call most beautiful
Because of its oranges and reds.

Think of me as you watch an infant
Learn to hold his head up,
Gaze about in amazement at his feet
And see me for the first time.

And as fog moves through a backdrop
Of deep pines and island fields,
As this valley gets swallowed by a layer
Of grey make-up, think of me.

And when everything else has gone
From your brain and I am a memory—
Think of me as wind shivers
And rumples water's skin.

I am your pilgrimage
Whether or not you sense it
Open your eyes and ears
While beauty and grace perform.

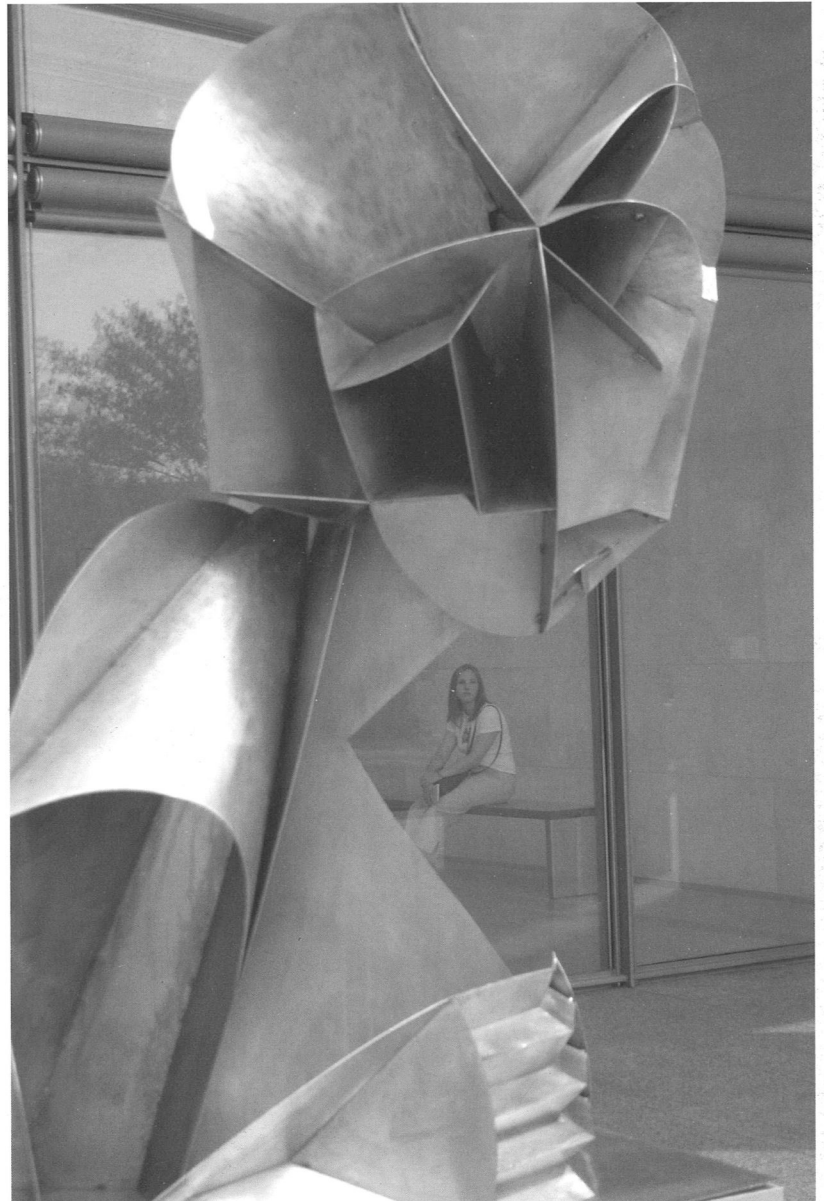


Photo: *Pilgrim*,
by Winona Wendth