



More than One Thousand Comments

Report from the Spectrum Blog | BY ALEXANDER CARPENTER

On January 17, 2007, the *Spectrum Blog* recorded its millesimal comment. Thanks to those of you who have dropped by to join the new, online Adventist Forum conversation. Clifford Goldstein has been mixing it up over Genesis with some very quick-witted *Spectrum* community members. It's great to be among those who entertain and challenge views that differ.

In honor of the one-thousandth comment, the *Spectrum Blog* invited short submissions that address the following question:

What would I change about the Church?

I REMEMBER my early Sabbaths as a new believer, the anticipation of them, the wonder of them, the expectation, surrounded by newfound family, beautiful melodies filling the air. My friends seemed to know all the songs and verses by heart. The messages drew me still higher. The whole experience seemed to approximate heaven. Our corporate expectations were high.

Church-wide things are more subdued now; our expectations are not so lofty. What have we lost? Was our expectation just an illusion? In my new

experience with Jesus was my thankfulness just spilling over and coloring all of my church experience? I think not.

We knew we were special (not superior). We knew we were blessed in an extraordinary measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over. We recognized God's mercy as a catalyst, substitution a means and not only an end. Our vision needs to be clear; our blessings still remain but are largely unrecognized and I fear unappreciated. Extol them from the heart and the anticipation, wonder, and expectation will return.

Posted by: Kenneth M. Ray, Jr.

Kalispell, Montana

ADVENTISM WOULDN'T even be an "ism." We would be so soaked in the Holy Spirit that people would sense the scent of the Savior in us. Society, wherever we Adventists were, would be so saturated with our presence that it would be as though Christ once again walked this weary world. The marginalized masses would know that there is a way out of this morass.

I would return us to a "movement" mentality. Museums and mausoleums have their place, but we're here to prepare a people to meet the Messiah.

A marbled message won't do it. God (truth) never changes but our understanding should always grow.

I would seek to have that truth (God) written in our hearts, not on a wall somewhere. It would be where truth made a difference in today and not just a hope for the future. Our meetings would always be Christo-centric, no matter what the topic. And we could safely say, "Follow me, as I follow Christ."

Church would be a changing room. It would be a place where people could find safety to change into Christ's likeness. But church would also be a charging room. It would be a place where people would be empowered with the passion of Christ to seek and save the lost...

What would I change? Don't get me started. Better yet, "Lord, let the change start with me."

Posted by: Michael Cook, Pastor

Prescott, Arizona

I WOULD CHANGE the way the Church handles negative information about itself. Many like myself have deep and painful issues surrounding the Church. Protection of the organization takes precedence over the safety and spiritual well-being of those in the pews.

As a victim of childhood sexual abuse in the Church, I have experienced this firsthand. When one follows the guidelines the Church has provided for such grievances, the

abuse continues mentally and spiritually and increases the victim's shame and isolation. Most of us must leave the Church to find an environment that is free of these institutional toxins to healing.

The Church could provide much healing and help to those who have experienced abuse by providing an outside, objective organization to deal with the allegations. It could do much more to prevent the abuses that continue to happen by being honest about the need, by refusing to transfer those who are known to abuse to new positions, and by demanding that thorough background checks are done on *all* those in leadership.

They could take their spiritual responsibilities to heal the heart and mind as seriously as they do their commitment to physical healing.

Posted by: JeriAnne Berry
Knoxville, Tennessee

I DISAGREE WITH the church of my childhood on many significant points. It may surprise those who have shared cyberspace with me to learn that there is only one thing I would change about contemporary Adventism.

Adventism grew out of the willingness of our pioneers to challenge established beliefs of their time. Their studies convinced them to adopt new ideas and doctrines that were so distinctive that they were forced out of the communities that had once welcomed them. So convincing were the arguments they had to support their new positions that someone had the brilliant idea to declare that "We have the truth." Those four words have changed a thriving organism into a groaning organization.

Those who have the truth do not need to seek and those who do not seek cannot grow; those who do not grow are dead no matter how much they may sway in the wind. This is all I would change about Adventism. If you are constantly challenging your positions then it matters not if you are wrong today for you will correct the error tomorrow. But if you are correct the world benefits little if you are dead.

Posted by: Darius Lecointe
Muncie, Indiana

THE CHANGE I'd really like to see in Adventism is that *all* of us become, functionally at least, Universalists; that we step down from feeling so "set apart" and "special" and "remnant" and "right," and just learn to accept that maybe *everyone* is just as special—in the eyes of God—as we are.

Why not take literally the reality expressed in 1 Corinthians 15:22 (NIV)—"For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (same idea in Romans 5:18)? We understand (and mourn) the "all" of Adam's death; how is it we miss the "all" of the Life Christ brings? (That "true light" is giving to *every* man!—John 1:9.) Why do we so resist the implications of the obvious meaning of this text? Because we are so sure God divides up people, we do the same. What might happen if we all started acting *as if* we are *all*, already, on the "right team"—the one labeled "Children of God"....

Do we dare believe this is true? Do we dare act like it might be? Let's just leave the "saving and damning" to God—and act as if we are *all* in this together....

Posted by: Bob Riggsby
Altamonte Springs, Florida

I WOULD DEFUSE the culture of its spirit of fear.

Somehow "the fear of the Lord," which can be a good thing, has moved far beyond the beginning of wisdom to embrace an unhealthy fear of church authority, a fear of embarrassment by misbehaving Adventists in the public media, fear for careers if one's true beliefs on various subjects were widely known, fear of what other members would think about this or that minor infraction.

Then there are the "biggies"—fear of the "time of trial," the apocalypse, the judgment. Way, way too much fear. Time for all of them to go under the bed, back in the closet, maybe into the lake of fire.

Posted by: Jiggs Gallagher
Cathedral City, California

TWO COMMENTS:

Please, tell me these were all written by Adventists! Much much better than my contribution! Are these people members of the same church that I am? Wow: I bet there are a whole lot of similar dreams and wishes and hopes for Adventism.... That if the lot of us got together, and instead of giving up on Adventism because of our feelings of isolation and loneliness and helplessness, we actually helped each other? If only to listen and cry together?

Posted by: Bob Riggsby

Thanks Bob! What a thought! Yes, indeed, I'm a Seventh-day Adventist. I'm suddenly reminded of a bit of humor. Remember Rowan and Martin's "Laugh-in," on NBC? (I'm dating myself here.) It was a three-liner, delivered by two of the stars: "I'm a Fifth-day Adventist." "No, silly, it's Seventh-day Adventist." "But I take the weekend off." (Bada-bing.)

Posted by: Jiggs Gallagher