



## Meetings, Meetings, Meetings

### Colleges Confront Money Problems

BY GARY CHARTIER

Major transitions may be in the offing for at least three Seventh-day Adventist colleges: Pacific Union College, Atlantic Union College, and Columbia Union College.

PUC faces significant ongoing fiscal challenges. Administrators have sought to address them by means of a plan to develop some of the land owned by PUC and located near the college site. The planned development would lead to an "Angwin eco-village," a "a state-of-the-art 'green' community," according to the college.

Complicating these efforts has been many community members' concern that a projected residential development would disrupt the lifestyle California's Napa County has worked hard to preserve. County leaders are considering changing development rules in ways that preclude the creation of the "eco-village."

Students were excused from classes on October 16, 2007, in order to participate in PUC's efforts to lobby a joint meeting of the county's board of supervisors and planning commission. However, community opposition has led to a "no" vote by the supervisors

regarding even the limited development plan proposed by the college. Another meeting of the supervisors concerned with the issue is expected March 4, 2008.

Whereas PUC is facing "real problems," according to alumnus and former La Sierra University president Lawrence Geraty, AUC and CUC can each be said to be confronting a "crisis."

Atlantic Union College is facing immediate challenges. Administrative and financial difficulties led to serious concern about the college's future on the part of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, which accredits AUC. However, although AUC's institutional health and credibility have evidently improved during the past two years from the perspective of the NEASC, a significant revenue shortfall has led to serious concern about its continued viability on the part of at least some of its trustees.

New AUC president Norman Wendth is considering a range of options. Some apparently involve the significant redefinition of AUC's identity and the adoption of a narrower institutional focus, with the goal of staking a claim to a carefully defined market niche. Wendth has not yet publicly indicated what course of action he will recommend to the board

when it meets via teleconference on November 12, 2007, with an in-person discussion slated for December 9–10.

Columbia Union College continues to be beset by revenue problems. A recent proposal to transfer control of the college to Adventist Health met with stiff resistance at the college level. However, the college's ongoing financial difficulties have returned the question of CUC's identity to the agenda of its trustees and its acting president, Gaspar Colón. Approximately twenty-five million dollars could have been created by the sale of the college's radio license, but this plan was rejected by the trustees on September 20 after intense community pressure. Because start-up funds have not been available, the college has also been unable to move forward with plans to draw on state matching funds for new construction. A "summit" meeting regarding the future of the college is planned for the CUC trustees and the executive committees of the constituent conferences.

The challenges that confront these colleges and the diverse responses under consideration highlight the difficulties posed for Adventist higher education by substantial cost increases and the willingness of students and parents to consider a broader range of higher educational options than ever

before. They also call attention to the fact that each college seems largely to be facing the future alone, with little assistance beyond the confines of its own constituency. General Conference-sponsored educational institutions—Loma Linda University, Andrews University, and Oakwood College—may receive additional church funds this year, but additional central church support seems unlikely to be forthcoming for union-sponsored universities and colleges in North America. It remains to be seen whether creative, strategic thinking will prove able to create new and welcome possibilities for Adventist higher education at this difficult time. ■

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## Forum Meeting Includes Response to Bull and Lockhart

BY GARY LAND

Review of *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream*, 2d ed., by Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007)

When published in 1989, the first edition of *Seeking a Sanctuary* established itself as the best available study of American Seventh-day Adventism. Now updated and enlarged, the volume remains the foremost work on this denomination. Combining historical, sociological, and cultural studies methodologies, Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, respectively a teacher at Oxford University and a London-based journalist, offer a readable and

penetrating analysis indispensable to scholars and general readers wanting to understand Adventism. For Adventists themselves, it offers a sympathetic outsider's perspective that increases self-awareness.

The authors argue two intertwined theses. First, as indicated by their title and subtitle, they believe that Adventism provides an alternative means of achieving the American dream of spiritual fulfillment and material progress. Second, they dispute the interpretation put forward by scholars within and outside the denomination that Adventism is in the process of transforming from a sect into a denomination; in contrast, they believe that it remains a sect.

In presenting these arguments, the authors divide their book into three parts. The first, "Adventist Theology," addresses authority, identity, eschatology, and the sanctuary doctrine. Although they do not use the term, the authors see several dialectics at work in Adventist theology: the Bible as the source of Adventist belief over against Ellen White as the final interpreter of the Bible; the hope for versus the delay in Christ's second coming; identity tied to specific beliefs in contrast with identity expressed through loyalty to denominational structure; and the Arian tendencies embedded in the sanctuary doctrine in conflict with the Church's twentieth-century trinitarianism.

Viewing these issues historically, *Seeking a Sanctuary* incorporates them into an almost Hegelian pattern: the thesis of Adventist radicalism produced the antithesis of fundamentalism, out of which came the synthesis of evangelicalism. Interestingly, however, and in keeping with the argument that

Adventism is not progressing to denominational status, as this synthesis became the new thesis, the antithesis that it produced was a return to fundamentalism rather than a step to a higher stage of development.

Part 2 examines "The Adventist Experience and the American Dream." Here again, we see some dialectics at work, beginning with the concept that in opposition to a flawed republic, Adventism has developed an "alternative social system" (114). Although the Church originated in the United States, most of its growth is now taking place in other parts of the world; in its homeland the Church is disproportionately female, old, black, and immigrant. As health and family life (sexuality) lost their eschatological meaning and became ends in themselves, they became optional behaviors. The Church's orientation toward time as embodied in the Sabbath and the eschaton placed it in opposition to American society but also produced internal schisms and shapes artistic expression.

Contrasting Adventism with Mormonism, another indigenous American religion, the authors state, "In Adventism the American dream is reinterpreted, in Mormonism, Christianity is reinterpreted. Adventists have become un-American in an effort to become more truly Christian. Mormons have become un-Christian in order to become more American" (254).

In Part 3, the authors examine the "Adventist Subculture," including gender, race, ministry, medicine, education, and the self-supporting movement. This portion of the book might be understood as a subset of Part 2, exploring in more detail

important elements of this "alternative social system." Again, a number of dialectics emerge (I hope I am not pushing this concept too far, but it is something that struck me when reading my notes before writing this review). Adventism, according to Bull and Lockhart, is a women's movement that goes against traditional male values; as a result, men find entering into the church bureaucracy the only acceptable way to express their masculinity.

Although Adventism represents the ethnic variety of American culture to a degree not found in other churches, it still practices segregation, most fully illustrated by regional conferences.

Ministers, who personify the Adventist response to the American nation, are often misunderstood and underappreciated by the laity and receive inadequate support, especially during personal crises, from their conferences.

The Adventist health system constitutes an alternative administrative and economic structure—for doctors and hospital administrators are the only church employees with the financial resources to successfully challenge clerical control.

Adventist education did not develop a distinctive philosophy until a couple of decades after the founding of Battle Creek College; today that philosophy may inform long-term goals as expressed in mission statements but has little influence on short-term operations, which are very similar to those of other schools.

The ultimate dialectic, however, is that the most distinctive or pure expression of Adventist values appears in the self-supporting movement that exists outside the control

of the institutional church. But even this movement, the authors write, "which represents the ideal of egalitarian cooperation, has been promoted by the power of individual capital concentration, while mainstream Adventism, which espouses a set of values a little closer to the American ethos, is founded on centrally managed schemes of funding" (346).

The authors' arguments are grounded in prodigious research, documented in almost a hundred pages of notes. Sources include almost every imaginable type of work published by the denomination and independent publishers related to Adventism, as well as those published by commercial and academic presses. The bibliographical essay that closes the book helpfully sorts out and comments on the most helpful of these sources.

Compared to the first edition, there are some significant changes in the second. In addition to updated statistical information and accounts of recent events such as the Branch Davidian tragedy and General Conference votes on the ordination of women, the authors have added a chapter on "The Ethics of Schism."

They have also revised their original chapter titles "Women" and "Blacks" to "Gender" and "Race," the latter change opening space for discussion of Hispanics and Asians as well as Blacks.

The visual appeal of the new edition is enhanced by the inclusion of several illustrations. There does not seem to be any major revision of the book's arguments, however.

Any book of this scope is bound to raise questions. Because the authors' discussion of the "revolving door" is primarily sociological, it

does not address the role that theological disagreement has played since the 1980s in departures from the Church. Is there a connection between the grace orientation of those former Adventists for whom the magazine *Proclamation!* is published, and rising social status? Or is the issue truly theological?

Also, what is meant by the Church? Is it the official bureaucratic structure or the membership? Although Bull and Lockhart are sensitive to this distinction, I have often wondered how many lay members really understand or deem important the inner workings of the sanctuary doctrine or the details of eschatology that appear in Adventist publications.

Finally, while I appreciate the reasons why the authors challenge the sect-to-denomination interpretation of Adventism, I am not fully convinced. The very Adventist theologians, for example, who represent a return to fundamentalism appear to be aligned with the Evangelical Theological Society. There is also evidence that Adventist scholars, in biblical studies as well as other fields, are increasingly writing for nondenominational publishers.

None of this belies *Seeking a Sanctuary's* thesis, but it does suggest that Adventism's trajectory may be moving in several directions at once. These questions are minor, at best, and in no way lessen Bull and Lockhart's monumental achievement. Hopefully, the appearance of this new edition will draw the attention of a new generation of readers and push scholars to more fully incorporate its interpretations into their studies of Seventh-day Adventism.

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## "Golden Age" Distortions

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BY DOUGLAS MORGAN

The following two articles are responses to the series of presentations titled, "Adventism's Futures," by Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, authors of *Seeking a Sanctuary*, on September 29, 2007, at the Adventist Forum Conference, Santa Rosa, California.

Although I hope to show that it has serious limitations as a treatment of the Adventist experience in historical perspective, *Seeking a Sanctuary* is nothing short of a spectacular achievement.<sup>1</sup> No other work on Adventism comes close to its scope, imaginativeness, and interdisciplinary agility.

Anyone interested in better understanding Adventism—whether reflecting on it from within or observing it from without—owes Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart an enormous debt of gratitude, both for a vast wealth of information and for provocative interpretations that open seemingly endless possibilities for further investigation and advances in understanding.

One critically important aspect aside, I think the central argument of the book is not only accurate, it is extraordinarily insightful and important—even urgent—for those who care about the future of the Adventist movement. *Seeking a Sanctuary* shows how Adventism rejected America as a vehicle of redemption and offered a comprehensive, socially embodied alternative based on its apocalyptic vision of the future. In our present era

of the American empire's global dominance and Adventist internationalization, this relationship to the nation takes on the heightened significance, touched upon in the Prologue and Epilogue, of Adventism being something of a counter globalization movement.

I could go on at length about points of agreement, appreciation, and admiration. Not wishing, however, to go overboard in providing further evidence to support the authors' frequently made point about the Adventist tendency to avoid confrontation and mask dissent with a quiet, unobtrusive presence, I should move quickly to points of contention.

My central dispute with *Seeking a Sanctuary* has to do with the designation of "sanctuary" as the dominant metaphor for the alternative Adventism created, which, in turn, has to do with making the early middle decades of the twentieth century (approximately the 1920s–1950s) the prism for interpreting the Adventist experience through its entire history.

"Sanctuary" in *Seeking a Sanctuary* points to refuge, escape, avoidance of defilement and conflict, and insularity. These connotations of "sanctuary" may indeed go quite a way in an analysis of the 1920s–1950s, which the authors designate as the period of "fundamentalist Adventism" and its "Golden Age." However, making "sanctuary" the controlling metaphor for the Adventist story in the nineteenth century—which the authors term the era of "Adventist radicalism"—results in confusion.

In that period—which extends into the first two decades of the twentieth century—we see what strikes me as

impressive initiative, energy, and boldness in formulating a path to restoration of human wholeness. Adventism structured a comprehensive alternative that offered reintegration of the spiritual, physical, and intellectual dimensions of life that had been separated by Enlightenment modernity.

Thus, historian Martin Marty places Adventism (with Christian Science, the Social Gospel, and therapeutic philosophies) in the category of "trans-moderns," as opposed to more predominantly reactive "counter-moderns," such as the Protestant fundamentalists.<sup>2</sup> This alternative did offer a nurturing haven from the assaults of modernity, but it was established and sustained only through robust engagement with the surrounding society through medical missionary and benevolent work, endeavors for religious liberty, and public health, as well as evangelism.

Although I find much that is rewarding, even brilliant, in Bull and Lockhart's treatment of nineteenth-century Adventism, the recurring tendency is to view that history in much the same way as Adventists themselves often did by the mid-twentieth century, with much of the creative vitality and contextual richness strained out. The result is a greatly diminished and, at times, inaccurate view of the Church's history.

A good example of the mixture of acute insight and serious deficiency comes in Chapter 3 ("The End of the World"). Here we find excellent contextualization of early Adventism's critique of the American Republic. The Adventist protest against Sunday laws originated at a time when leaders of the culturally dominant Protestant denomi-

nations (sometimes termed the "Protestant empire") regarded such laws as crucial to preserving the morals of the citizenry and the well-being of society.

The Adventist view of the nation, fitting the profile of the second beast depicted in Revelation 13 by sustaining the practice of slavery in violation of its principles, paralleled the radical views of the nation's foremost abolitionist, William Lloyd Garrison. Both Garrison and J. N. Andrews, who, in 1851, was the first to set forth the Adventist understanding of America in apocalyptic prophecy, characterized slavery as evidence of fatal moral compromise that placed the nation under divine judgment (57–59).

But then, as if taking once again the lens of twentieth-century "fundamentalist Adventism," the authors blur Andrews's 1851 treatise with later-elaborated conceptions of the heavenly millennium, and then the emotional turbulence experienced by late twentieth-century Adventists as a result of reading Ellen White's frightening depictions of the time of trouble. Andrews own message in the 1850s is thereby not only distorted, but also cited in support of a point that is, in an important sense, the opposite of his meaning.

Andrews, we are told, opposed the prevailing postmillennial view of America's glorious progress with the Adventist teaching about a "heavenly millennium" (59). This is important for the book's overall argument because Bull and Lockhart contend that Adventists drew inspiration and ethical guidance for the "sanctuary" they created in America from the heavenly life in which they expected to share during the millennium.

The determinative features of the

heavenly realm are rigid order, hierarchy, and restraint of passions. Preparation for this realm required such behaviors as political passivity and minimal indulgence in sex, in short, the "refined morality of the angels" as opposed to "the robust ethical code of the ancient Hebrews" (219; see also 70, 201–3, 236, 249–50).

But this conception of the "heavenly millennium" is not what J. N. Andrews wrote about in 1851. The quotes cited on page 59 themselves clearly indicate that he was talking about a very robust and revolutionary turn of affairs on earth. The "Just One" is soon to come and check the "astonishing career" of the slave-holding republic, and then "the Lamb" will "reign *in person* over the whole earth (emphasis mine)."

Twenty-first century Adventists may be frightened or repelled by Andrews' stark assertion that Jesus will soon return to overthrow the American government (and all earthly powers) and set up his personal reign over the earth. We may also be confused as to where the anticipated thousand years in heaven fits into this picture. A few may find it useful for developing a renewed counterimperial witness in our time, though this may be largely wishful thinking on my part. The point here is that the twentieth-century filter makes for an inaccurate reading of history, and thus of the Adventist story as a whole.

Although nineteenth-century Adventists did conclude that the millennium would be spent in heaven while the earth remained desolate, they never forgot that was not the end of the story. The "world to come," or the "new earth," mentioned only in passing by Bull and Lockhart,

seems to have been more prominent in their thinking. Ellen White envisioned that in this new earth,

*immortal minds will contemplate with never-failing delight the wonders of creative power, the mysteries of redeeming love. There will be no cruel, deceiving foe to tempt to forgetfulness of God. Every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased. The acquirement of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body.<sup>3</sup>*

The innovative, progressive, and enterprising dimensions of Adventism suggest that anticipation of this kind of future had at least as much influence as the more static and restrained features of the heavenly realm that Bull and Lockhart highlight.

Chapter 10 ("The Politics of Liberty") is similarly problematic in its treatment of several aspects of Adventist interaction with the wider society. Bull and Lockhart assert that the Church never reached "an agreed moral stance on participation in the Civil War" (187), and that "Adventists did not start out as pacifists" (417). These statements run contrary to clear historical evidence.

In August 1864, the Church appealed to the U.S. provost marshal general for exemption from participation in combat "because of their views of the ten commandments and the

teachings of the New Testament cannot engage in bloodshed." In this appeal, the Adventists leaders explicitly placed themselves in the same category as the Quakers as "a non-combatant people." This agreed-upon stance and its theological grounding in both "the commandments of God" and the "faith of Jesus" was reaffirmed by General Conference resolutions in 1865, 1867, and 1868.

Bull and Lockhart dismiss the application for noncombatant recognition in 1864 as a matter of "expediency," prompted by passage of a law "that contained special provisions for those not prepared to bear arms." They emphasize James and Ellen White's rebuke of Iowa Adventists who declared their pacifism in 1862 as evidence for absence of commitment to pacifism on the part of the church leadership.

This interpretation ignores the fact that the dispute with the Iowans was a matter of timing and approach, not over the noncombatant ethic. In 1862, no draft law compelled Adventists (or anyone) to engage in military combat. The Whites indeed did not wish to draw public attention to the noncombatant convictions prevailing in the Church because they did not want Adventists to be identified as proslavery or sympathizers with the Confederate rebellion.

After the draft law was enacted in March 1863, it remained possible to avoid conscription by paying a commutation fee. The Battle Creek-led Adventists took advantage of the commutation provision, rather than seek governmental recognition, until revisions to the draft law in July 1864 restricted that option to members of a recognized pacifist church. Such

members would also have the options of alternative duty in hospitals or caring for freedmen, as provided for in a February 1864 amendment to the draft law.

Faced with a law that made it impossible for them legally to follow their convictions without government recognition as a pacifist church, the Adventists moved swiftly and vigorously. In addition to the recognition gained in August 1864, they published a twenty-seven page pamphlet, *Extracts from the Publications of Seventh-day Adventists, Setting Forth Their Views of the Sinfulness of War* in March 1865, a point at which the duration, if not the outcome, of the war was still very uncertain.

The success in gaining recognition as a "non-combatant people" at the federal level, however, provided no easy "out" from service in the Union army. Some Adventists who sought to claim the hospital or freedmen's aid alternative faced severe hardship from uninformed or hostile officers and local officials. In the absence of "agreed moral stance" behind all this, the "expedient" thing would have been to do nothing. As the late historian of pacifism Peter Brock put it, the Adventist leaders' concern to preserve their movement's noncombatant position was "entirely genuine."<sup>4</sup>

As with the question of pacifism, *Seeking a Sanctuary's* treatment of such matters as race relations, political action, and religious liberty centers on Adventism's preference for a "quiet" approach to controversial matters in the public arena. On race relations, Bull and Lockhart emphasize that, in his mission to evangelize black com-

munities in the South during the 1890s, Edson White "took great care not to antagonize whites in doing so" (279). If this was a goal of White's mission, however, he failed.

Responding to his mother's repeated calls for a multidimensional mission that would empower southern blacks with education and economic opportunity, Edson took a risky initiative that provoked a violent reaction from the white power structure.<sup>5</sup> In response, White and his colleague F. R. Rogers (285) indeed made clear that the Adventist mission was not about a frontal assault on the social order of the South.

This approach paralleled that of the foremost black leader of the day, Booker T. Washington, whose Atlanta Compromise speech in 1895, the same year White launched his mission, advocated concentration on gradual educational and economic uplift and deferral of demands for immediate social and political equality.

The fact that the Adventists favored Washington's approach does not prove either them or him right, but recognition of the parallel, as well as the transformational purpose driving a courageous initiative, brings greater depth and nuance to the depiction of this historical episode. In other words, understanding Adventism's relation to this and other public issues requires close attention to two contexts: (1) that of American society at the time under discussion; and (2) that of the full story of the Adventist experience with that issue through time.

In this instance, consideration of these contexts makes it difficult, if not impossible, to see accommodation to injustice as the determinative or preeminent feature of Adventism with regard

to race relations. The radical and benevolent impulses for equality widely evident in Adventism during the 1890s are just as much a part of the story.<sup>6</sup>

A distorting emphasis on Ellen White's admonitions about avoiding unnecessary provocation of governmental authorities also leads to one of a number of puzzling assertions in *Seeking a Sanctuary* about Adventists and religious liberty. Adventists, with their quiet approach to public issues, are contrasted with Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, "who were not afraid to impress themselves on society" (193).

Other than a more confrontational proselytizing style, one wonders what evidence would support such a statement, particularly in view of the impress on society made by Adventist medical and educational institutions alone, which find no parallels among the Witnesses.

Beyond that, there is the Adventist record of close to 120 years of unrelenting and often intensive, if rarely flashy, activism for religious liberty. In their chapter, "The Politics of Liberty," Bull and Lockhart provide illuminating material on that record, but their effort to fit the historical evidence into the book's themes appears to have generated further puzzling statements.

We are told that the changing titles of the denomination's religious liberty journal from *Sabbath Sentinel* to *American Sentinel* to *Liberty* "indicated the Adventist equation of the freedom to worship on Saturday with the Declaration of Independence" (196), and that for Adventists in America, "religious liberty was at root the freedom

to worship on Saturday" (195).

It is genuinely difficult to know what to make of such statements. They may simply intend to convey the accurate message that for Adventists, Sabbath-Sunday was the crucial, central issue at which religious liberty was at stake and the starting point for their activism on behalf of liberty. But they seem to be saying something else, something carrying the implication that Adventists were so preoccupied with the Saturday Sabbath that they had no vision of or interest in underlying principles of human rights and religious liberty, or a broader range of specific issues regarding which those principles needed defending.

Other than a brief nod to one of the voluminous works of A. T. Jones, no analysis is given of the principles that Adventists developed and articulated as the grounding for their advocacy. As for the reasons for changes in the name of the religious liberty journal, the stated purpose in the change from *Sabbath Sentinel* to *American Sentinel* indicated a broadening of the scope of concern and action beyond the Sabbath-Sunday issue.

The observations I offer here do not constitute a review of *Seeking a Sanctuary*, but deal only with some historical aspects about which I feel best equipped to comment. The book as a whole, just as the superbly crafted presentations at the conference, offers an abundance of insights to which anyone interested in the directions taken by the Church in the era of globalization would be foolish not to give careful consideration. In tak-

ing its bearings for historical analysis from the period of "Adventist fundamentalism" while minimizing the earlier era of "Adventist radicalism," however, *Seeking a Sanctuary* fails to convey the richness and range of historical resources upon which the Church can draw as it faces the future. ■

## Notes and References

1. The text published here has been developed from an outline and partial manuscript used for my response to the authors' Saturday morning presentations at the AF conference and contains material omitted from the oral presentation due to time limitations. Though Keith and Malcolm graciously provided an advance listing of the topics for their presentations, my response necessarily draws primarily on the book itself.

2. Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion, Volume 1: The Irony of It All* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 255-57.

3. *The Great Controversy*, 677.

4. John N. Andrews, "Seventh-day Adventists Recognized as Non-combatants," *Review and Herald* (Sept. 13, 1864): 124-25. See also Peter Brock, *Freedom from Violence: Sectarian Nonresistance from the Middle Ages to the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 230-58; and Douglas Morgan, "The Beginnings of a Peace Church: Eschatology, Ethics, and Expedience in Seventh-day Adventist Responses to the Civil War," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 45, no. 1 (spring 2007): 35-44.

5. Ronald D. Graybill documents shootings, armed intimidation, and threats of violence, as well as vitriolic denunciation in the press in *E. G. White and Church Race Relations* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1970); and *Mission to Black America: The True Story of James Edson White and the Riverboat Morning Star* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1971).

6. In addition to Ellen White's 1891 mani-

festos against discrimination and indifference, "Our Duty to the Colored People," published in *The Southern Work*, examples would include the work of John Harvey Kellogg and collaborators, and the holiness revivals led by Albion F. Ballenger, which led to testimonies of victory over "race prejudice." On Kellogg, see Richard Schwarz, *John Harvey Kellogg, M.D.* (Nashville: Southern Publishing, 1970). On Ballenger, see Calvin W. Edwards and Gary Land, *Seeker After Light: A. F. Ballenger, Adventism, and American Christianity* (Berrien Springs, Mich: Andrews University Press, 2000).

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## Thoughts on the Future of Adventism: A Response to Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart

BY JULIUS NAM

Malcolm and Keith, thank you very much for being here, for being engaged in conversation with us, and, of course, for your book. Your new edition is as compelling and captivating as your first edition was when I encountered it as a senior religion major at Andrews University. Adventism, to me, was very much an either/or proposition at that point. For example, either you read the prophecies as Uriah Smith did, or you really had no business being Adventist, much less an Adventist pastor. Either you take Ellen White seriously as a prophet and obey all her counsels literally as God's continuing mandate for your life, or you live the rest of your life fighting her and feeling guilty for it. Either... I don't think I need to go on.

There weren't very many appealing options within Adventism. I could not accept what was presented to me as normative Adventism. I did not want to live the rest of my life bitter and angry, yet faking it. I'd rather leave Adventism than live the rest of my life worrying about others finding out what doubts I had in my closet and what theological aberrations I hid beneath my rug. Was there some other way of being Adventist and being true to who I was and who I was becoming?

In August 1992, as I was walking out of Pioneer Memorial Church on the Andrews University campus with a master's degree in religion, I did walk out that revolving door for what ended up being a rumspringa in Paris. But for some reason, your book was among a handful of Adventist-related books I brought along. And when I was ready to re-engage with God, faith, and Adventism, it was instrumental in showing me that there can be other ways of understanding Adventism, and that Adventism as a culture and a historical phenomenon was worth taking seriously.

In the process, I walked down a new path of discovering what I could become within Adventism and what Adventism could become in the world. Amid my struggle between finding my sanctuary within Adventism and needing to seek a sanctuary from Adventism, your book helped me find new reasons for remaining Adventist and creating new possibilities within Adventism by demonstrating a third way of engaging with Adventism.

It is that third way that I'd like to dwell on in my following comments.

I must say that my reaction to the new edition of your book wasn't quite the same. I'm now at a different place in life with a different set of issues and struggles. My questions no longer revolve around whether to accept Adventism or abandon it, but around how to relate with the complexity of Adventism and the variety of Adventisms and how to involve my community, especially the younger generations, with the larger world.

As delicious and delightful as your book was this time around, I found the undercurrent of sociological determinism (perhaps even fatalism?) frustrating. I appreciated the sympathetic treatment of Adventism that continues in this edition. But was I correct in detecting traces of measured cynicism about the future of Adventism? That Adventism is caught between the entering first generation and exiting third generations? That the "Golden Age" of Adventism was the first half of the last century and that Adventism's greatest promises reside in its "sectiness"?

Frankly, I didn't like it. So I began to think about why I chose to stay (in part, helped by your book, I might add), and why many of us in this room are choosing to stay. I also wondered why I'm reacting viscerally and defensively. And I think I understand why.

Eighteen years ago, you caught me gazing at the rhythmic swishing of the revolving door and pondering what direction to take. As you astutely argue, it is a real door. No question about that. But now, I'm no longer at the door but somewhere inside, working on the house. (I can only use this analogy away from home, because my family would roll their eyes if they



heard it.)

There's more to Adventism than the revolving door, the theological turf wars, the institutional malaise, and the massive mission machine. You've documented many, many features of Adventism and provided us with brilliant insights that will no doubt get us talking for decades to come. But I can't shake the sense that you've discounted true believers and devoted members of the household who, according to your thesis, should be in the pre-exit phase of their Adventist experience but are up there in the attic, down in the basement, underneath the kitchen sink—working.

It's not that we don't know what's going on in the world; it's not that we can't make it out in the world; it's not that we don't understand the socio-anthropological dynamics and dys-functionalities that continue to shape and inform our community. Yet we've stayed and chosen to reaffirm our commitment to this church for reasons that reach far beyond the need for a biweekly paycheck, reputation, social advancement, and psychosocial balance.

I don't deny that these are all important factors. But we do what do and we are who we are because we believe in Adventism and its future. We're here right now listening to you and interacting with you—most of us second, third, fourth, and fifth generation Adventists—because we believe in Adventism and its mission.

I wish that you had given us more credit for joining and remaining in Adventism because we, as you note in one place, love the "beauty of the truth" that is in Adventism (though we may differ widely on what is truly beautiful

about the truth as conceived by Adventism).

While we're on the subject of giving credit, I wish that you had given more credit to what today's Adventists are doing to redefine, expand, and enrich their identity and beliefs and less credit to the supposed adroitness with which Adventism's pioneers reappropriated Americanism. "Our pioneers couldn't have been that clever and cunning," I thought as I read your book this time around. I felt that you may have missed the opportunity to step back a little from your original thesis, let up a little on the relentless demonstration of that thesis, and show greater appreciation for the changing face and heart of Adventism and the emerging complexity within Adventism.

What's exciting for me about being an Adventist today, and even more about Adventism's future, is its commitment to the "present truth" and its capacity for reappropriation. All the problems you've identified and warnings that you've placed in our hearts concerning the future are real. At the same time, I'm encouraged that Adventism itself is being further reappropriated as a movement that seeks to create a sanctuary in the world. Actually, I mean, for the world—through the expansion of our Sabbath ethic throughout society; through our witness of peace both during and between wars; through our preaching of the everlasting gospel to every nation, tribe, language and people, thereby bringing righteousness/justice to all races, ethnic groups, classes, and genders.

For sure, the problems are there. But I don't think our problems can

either define us or detract us from what we believe in, hope for, and have been called to do. The very real issues that you've so brilliantly identified for us can be the foundation and resource of our strength in the twenty-first century. So thank you for helping set the agenda for the future!

Frankly, I'm not too concerned about the revolving door and the self-interest that is part of the drive into and within Adventism. It's not that I don't care; I'm just not too concerned. What would be the acceptable rate of apostasy or attrition? Is 100 percent retention rate ideal? Ninety percent? Eighty percent? What would be the healthy thing? In a backhanded sort of a way, perhaps the 40–50 percent retention rate of North American Adventism may be the very sign that Adventism has come of age—that it is no longer a sect that finds validation in how many join its ranks, but a mature community whose identity isn't threatened by those who choose to leave.

At the same time, I would consider redefining retention and apostasy—and what it means to be Adventist. For me, one of the moving moments in last night's performance of the play *Red Books* was the part when Tim, the Badventist, says: "I've been to a thousand camp meetings, but you'll never find me colporteur... Intelligent design is a joke, and once in a while I'd like to get down..." He wonders out loud whether he, though a fifth-generation Adventist, can still claim the label "SDA" as a non-churchgoer. To you, he may be on the other side of the revolving door, but I, for one, would claim him as an Adventist whether or not his name is in the church books.

As a pastor and a teacher, I hope that even if my students are not in physical attendance at an Adventist church, their Adventist education and the values inculcated in them through their Adventist experience will have had sufficient meaning for them that those basic values would always be part of their self-understanding. They may no longer be regular members at an Adventist Church, but they will still be part of the Adventist world because they practice and personally appropriate Adventist perspectives and philosophy in their lives.

The Church will always be there for them. Part of our task is to keep up with our honest engagement with our own heritage and the world, to keep growing along with those students, and to help them find a room of their own if and when they return through that revolving door. We've got to widen our conception of Adventism to include those who have been significantly touched and shaped by it—and those who are engaged with us in meaningful ways. Just because Tim is out of the door does not mean he has left the Adventist world.

In that sense, Malcolm and Keith, I'd like to consider you still as Adventists. Obviously, you care about Adventism so much. You may be formally outside the veil, but you're part of our encampment. So I still claim you as our own—as fellow sojourners, better yet, brothers, in our journey to the Promised Land.

I can't fully understand how it looks from where you're standing, but I believe Adventism is entering into a beautiful and exciting time when our community—helped by individuals

such as you and your book—is growing into a movement of sanctuary providers, not only for ourselves, but also for the world. ■

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## After Twenty-five Years, AAW Celebrates a Legacy of Service

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BY LOREN SEIBOLD

Among the original goals of the Association of Adventist Women was the desire to secure ordination for women in ministry. But for those of us who attended AAW's twenty-fifth anniversary conference, October 24–28 in Silver Spring, Maryland, ordination seemed less interesting than the achievements of some amazingly talented and energetic Adventist women. Six were 2007's Adventist Women of the Year:

New Zealander Joy Ford Butler was a pioneering minister to women in the South Pacific Division. She's particularly passionate about combating human trafficking, sex slavery, and domestic abuse, which has led her to open a refuge for exploited girls in Thailand.

Karen Hanson Kotoske formed Amistad International Foundation in 1980 to respond to the needs of the Huichol people of Mexico. Now Karen raises half a million dollars annually for projects in ten countries.

In 1985 ADRA chose Rigmor

Mari-Anne Nyberg to open its first Swedish office. Over more than twenty years of service, she took the budget from two hundred thousand dollars to two million dollars.

An elderly Adventist minister loaned Qin Zheng Yi a copy of the *Desire of Ages*. In the face of opposition from China's communist government, as well as from other Christian faiths, she grew a church of five hundred members. By 2003, through her influence, there were four thousand Adventists scattered over Sichuan Province. To validate her pastoral leadership, Adventist pastors from East China ordained her and three other women ministers. Today there are six thousand Adventists worshipping in this province.

(Qin Zheng Yi is the only honoree who wasn't able to attend; the award was accepted for her by her daughter Rebekah, a biblical scholar and Ph.D. student at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, who is preparing herself to open an Adventist seminary in China.)

Nancy Weber Vyhmeister is one of the Church's most accomplished scholars in biblical studies, missiology, and biblical languages. She has been a professor at the Seminary, chair of the ad-hoc Seminary Committee on Hermeneutics and Ordination, and editor of *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*.

As a pastor's wife and missionary, Dorothy Eaton Watts has taken the initiative in ministry to children by starting schools and orphanages in India, and in an expanding program for women's literacy. Under the

leadership of and her husband Ron, the church in India has more than doubled in size.

The Association of Adventist Women shows itself to best advantage by bestowing these awards, and for that reason alone the organization



Qin Zheng Yi

as hard to make it as a woman; these recipients have worked several multiples harder than that. Why isn't the whole church recognizing these women, rather than just AAW?

Yet as AAW begins its next twenty-five years, its continuing existence is uncertain. It isn't hard to see that its base membership is nearing or past retirement. Leadership in recent years has fallen mostly on the devoted, indefatigable Verla Kwiram (who this year asked the board to search for a new president.) The Adventist News Network's story of the conference has General Conference associate secretary Rosa Banks suggesting that AAW has become irrelevant. (I

know about AAW, or are so accustomed to equality in the workplace that they don't know their church is half a century behind the curve. There are some, too, whom we've lost through these decades of foot-dragging. Or maybe AAW still carries the reputation of



Nancy Vyhmeister



Karen Kotoske

merely pounding on the gate of ordination, while the institutional walls that kept women out of ministry have effectively fallen—though practical barriers, such as the reluctance of churches to accept a female pastor, still challenge us.

Although the continuing refusal to ordain women is a disappointment, what comes through clearly at events like the AAW conference is that it is not a barrier to serving God, as Calimesa Adventist Church senior pastor Chris Oberg, who need not take a back seat to any male preacher, proved in the AAW Sabbath sermon at Sligo Church.

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**Loren Seibold** pastors the Worthington, Ohio, Seventh-day Adventist Church.



Joy Butler

deserves to live long and prosper. The accomplishments of these women are astonishing.

If a man in a suit had done what they have (and I speak authoritatively, being myself a man in a suit), he would be displayed on a pedestal—which makes it all the more disappointing that so few of my fellow suited-brethren were there to see what these women are accomplishing for God, generally without the full benefit of the titles and positions that under gird us men.

Perhaps it is not so surprising. Perhaps we men in suits don't like to be reminded how much our success is made by our titles and positions. As female friends often remind me, you have to work twice



Rigmor Nyberg

thought this was somewhat ungracious on her part, especially since the continuing need for successful women to support aspiring women was talked about more than once at the conference.)

I prefer to think that young women either don't



Dorothy Watts