

ADVENTIST REVIEW

WEEKLY NEWS AND INSPIRATION FOR SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

NOVEMBER 30, 1995

The People of God

"I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people'; and they will say, 'You are my God'"

God

(Hosea 2:23, NIV).

Color-blind?

I feel compelled to convey my feelings toward the notice on page 2 of the October NAD issue asking for certain ages and ethnic origins for "The Cutting Edge."

In Acts 10 Peter was given the vision of all the animals, etc. "God does not show favoritism . . ." This racial thing is going to get totally out of hand. People are qualified or they are not, regardless of their sex or race.

I have had personal friends of several races, and each brought to the friendship unique qualities. This is what each member of our church brings—their own uniqueness. Why do we feel compelled to keep emphasizing our differences? I feel the editors of our papers should be color-blind to those contributing. The material is either relevant, uplifting, etc., or it is not!

The thought has come to me that if you must recognize race, sex, etc., perhaps using percentages would help. The number of writers from each category would be represented in proportion to the church membership. Doesn't color blindness and disregard for gender sound a lot easier?

May God give you and your staff wisdom in all things.

*Jean Glassford
Roseburg, Oregon*

*The SDA Church is a marvelous mix of members from "every nation, kindred, tongue, and people." We want the Adventist Review to reflect this mix, not in a mechanical way, but because we all benefit from the richness that each ethnic or age group brings to the mix. Currently the Review mix is deficient in some areas; that is why we singled out certain groups in our October 2 issue.—
Editors.*

Adventists and Tobacco

I don't know if Mr. Panasuk (Letters, Aug. 31) has dug deeply enough or has chosen to ignore how our government works to help American industries prosper in foreign countries, but I have a vivid experience of exactly what he says supposedly does not occur.

I was deployed to a small South American country to work as a translator

for a large-level exercise. While there, I met and worked with another officer working for the Defense Attache Office to develop drug awareness propaganda for the young people of the country along the lines of our DARE program. He was tasked with developing posters, pamphlets, bumper stickers, and radio spots to aid in stopping the influx of illegal drugs into the country. One of the significant projects was a poster aimed at elementary school children based on a red light/green light design (i.e., red light = drugs, alcohol, etc.; green light = sports, school, family, etc.).

When the final decision was submitted to the U.S. ambassador of this country, it was kicked back as unacceptable. When we asked the ambassador why, his answer was that we needed to remove cigarettes as one of the "red light" drugs. When we again asked why, he looked slightly incredulous and said, "Don't you know we sell more than \$1 million worth of tobacco products here a year?" We were astounded, but helpless to make any changes.

What frustrates me the most is that while our politicians have jumped on the bandwagon to stop juvenile smoking, they promote it to the same age group in other countries, all in the name of profits. My recommendation "in the honor of God and country," as Mr. Panasuk stated, is to evaluate our convictions and see if we can stand by and ignore the obvious, or stand up and make a difference.

Name Withheld

Why They Quit

Thank you—thank you so much for printing the article by John R. Martin, "The Real Reason People Quit the Church" (Sept. 14). How refreshing!

*Jan S. Doward
Ferndale, California*

On Being Different

Thank you for "Creative Counter-culture" (Oct. NAD issue). I have been waiting for just such an appeal for a long time.

To be different for the sake of being different is without merit, but there has always been a difference between the

followers of Christ and the world. Speaking of His disciples, Jesus said, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:16).

Perhaps some of the things that made us distinctive in the past are no longer relevant, but I think most of us are disturbed by how much of the world is being embraced by too many of our brothers and sisters.

The tremendous strides being made in communication and the media, which can provide such blessing, are being used by Satan to corrupt and degrade society to the extent that one wonders how we can ever withstand the overwhelming tide.

*Steve Vitrano
Berrien Springs, Michigan*

Outrage (cont.)

"Where Is Our Outrage?" (Sept. NAD issue) brought to mind the verses found in Isaiah 61: "to preach good tidings unto the meek; . . . to proclaim liberty to the captives; . . . to comfort all that mourn." This happens only when a church preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is good news to all humanity. It saddens me that our church is involved mostly in internal matters that if given to the Holy Spirit to direct would be nonexistent.

Now is the time to step out of our comfort zone and help others in their needs, whether they be spiritual or material. Let's get involved by our vote and letter writing, and let our national leaders know how wrong it is to let political expediency dictate at the expense of human lives. I am waiting for the day our churches will provide information by which members at the local level can get involved in many of these issues. This is not being political; it is the right thing to do!

*Vilma Douglas
Glendale, California*

Daring

What a marvelous editorial I found in "Sweet Jesus, Daring Jesus" (Sept. 14). To sweet, quiet, meek, and mild Kit Watts: Thanks for being so daring.

*Chris Blake
Lincoln, Nebraska*

ADVENTIST REVIEW

NOVEMBER 30, 1995

DEPARTMENTS

- 2 Letters
- 6 Newsbreak
- 18 Faith Alive!
- 22 Children's Corner
- 23 Reflections

EDITORIALS

- 4 Time to Cool It
- 5 Calling All Martyrs—Someday

NEXT WEEK

"Can We Make Time for Mysteries?" Do we have to know how the Holy Spirit works *before* we can experience the power?

ARTICLES

LIFESTYLE

8 Chosen or Rejected?

Imagine that you didn't know your biological parents. Would the desire to find out about them be greater than the fear of what you'd find? *by Myrna Storie as told to Betty Kossick*

AR SEMINAR

11 The People of God

The procession of God's followers goes back a long way. But through the ages, certain characteristics remain the same.

by Bertil Wiklander

READER RESPONSE

16 How Should We Support Our Musicians?

"A worker is worthy of his hire." But should the talented be paid for sharing those talents? *by Roy Adams*

WORLD REPORT

19 College Students Set South Pacific Ablaze for Christ

Adventist youth in Fiji are working hard and seeing marvelous results.



8 Emotions in conflict



20 Proclaiming liberty

General paper of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

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Time to Cool It

It's time to cool it. It's time that we manifest the spirit of Christ instead of the spirit of accusation. It's time for Seventh-day Adventists in North America to put aside anger and seek understanding of each other's views on women in ministry.

In recent weeks the mail coming to my desk shows an alarming escalation of emotion over the role of women pastors and the issue of their ordination to the gospel ministry. Some writers are angry because the *Review* hasn't supported, by our participation in, or by editorial policy, the "ordination" service held at Sligo church on September 23. They accuse us of taking the easy way out, of ducking a moral issue.

The larger number of letters, however, come from the other side. They attack the leadership of the North American Division for continuing to encourage women in ministry. They attack the *Review* for publishing the photograph of Pastor Cindy Tutsch baptizing (October NAD issue). They attack North American administration for not taking disciplinary action against those who took part in the Sligo service.

Here are a couple excerpts from my mail:

"I am writing you because I am greatly concerned with your continual coverage you are giving Mr. McClure [NAD president A. C. McClure] in his effort to push for women to assume a position of authority in our church. . . . I am very concerned that you, as the editor of our official church publication, will not accept the decision of the world church, but persist in advocating women's leadership by giving prime editorial space to Mr. McClure, who is preparing to implement his principles through varied and devious means."

"Why do you constantly defy God? We just had a General Conference session in Utrecht, and ordination of women was not

accepted. On page 25 of your October *Review* you have a photo of a woman being baptized by a woman. Aren't you defying God?"

As is so often the case when people are angry, these writers haven't got their facts straight. In this whole matter the facts have become mixed with myth.

So let me lay out the myths—and the facts.

Myth 1—Women are not permitted to baptize in the SDA Church.

The Utrecht action dealt only with ordination; it said nothing about the practices permitted women pastors. And since 1989, by an action of the Annual Council, women have been granted all the essential functions of ministry. Here is the 1989 action:

"Those who have, without regard to gender, been recognized as commissioned ministers or licensed ministers may perform essentially the ministerial functions of an ordained minister of the gospel in the churches to which they are assigned, subject to division authorization of this provision, if the following conditions apply:

"1. The individual has completed approved ministerial training.

"2. The individual has been called by a conference to serve in a full-time pastoral-evangelistic-ministerial role.

"3. The individual has been elected and ordained as a local church elder."

For the past six years women have been baptizing and officiating at marriages in North America. In doing so, they have been within the policies of the *Church Manual*. Pastor Cindy Tutsch's baptizing was altogether appropriate, as was the *Review's* publication of the photograph of the baptism.

Myth 2—By encouraging women in ministry and leadership, the NAD is in defiance of the world church.

The truth is exactly the opposite: North

America is following the directive of the world church. Here is part of an action from the 1985 General Conference session:

"Voted, 1. To urge that 'affirmative action' for the involvement of women in the work of the church be a priority plan with church leadership, and to request leaders to use their executive influence to open to women all aspects of ministry in the church that do not require ordination."

Unfortunately, some people have drawn wrong conclusions from the negative votes regarding ordination in 1990 and 1995. They have assumed that the church as a body thereby voted against women in ministry and leadership; the opposite is the truth.

Myth 3—North American leadership condoned the service at Sligo church.

Both before and after that service Elder McClure issued categorical statements affirming his and the division's loyalty to the actions of the General Conference session. He made crystal clear that, whatever some people have wanted to claim for the Sligo service, the division does not regard it as an ordination to the gospel ministry.

The service obviously had different meanings to different people. According to the pastor's open letter, it was merely a service of affirmation of women pastors; others have seen it as indeed a ministerial ordination.

Where do we all go from here? First, let's seek the spirit of Christ. Second, let's keep our facts straight.

As for the *Review*, we intend to drop all coverage of the topic for a few months—no more letters and certainly no articles, although we continue to receive manuscripts advocating various positions.

We want to be part of the cooling process.

WILLIAM G. JOHNSON



Calling All Martyrs— Someday

On the way to Utrecht this summer I went by way of Switzerland. About 50 miles from Zurich, among green hills and valleys, sits the village of Oberholz. I remember the cool larch forest surrounding a small river nearby. I try to imagine an incident that happened there 300 years ago.

Marti Oberholtzer knew the meaning of persecution. He sacrificed safety and comfort to become an Anabaptist preacher, defying the Catholic and Zwinglian faiths by teaching adult baptism. This upset the Zwinglians, and one day a group of them assaulted him along the river and drowned him. His family escaped to Germany and then Pennsylvania. I am a direct descendant of Marti Oberholtzer.

Two months later I join about 100 American Oberholtzers for their annual reunion in the Terre Hill, Pennsylvania, fire hall. We sing "Faith of Our Fathers." Tears come to our eyes. Someone asks me to give a report of my visit to Oberholz. The dream of most Oberholtzers is to make a pilgrimage to this Alpine village where the family originated. Many of those present trace their ancestry to Marti or someone like him. We are proud of our roots, but do we understand a faith like Marti's?

I look around. We are well-dressed—even the Mennonite ladies in their long dresses and prayer caps. Outside we have cars that take us to comfortable churches of different Christian denominations. The greatest religious conflict most will encounter is debating whether the church's new carpet will be mauve or teal. If he could have seen into the future, what would our grandfather many times removed have thought of our Laodicean faith?

I think of my own Seventh-day

Adventist Church. We're a feisty bunch at times. We can debate for hours online about everything from justification to jewelry. In our own way we persecute those who look at theology different from what we learned in Bible Doctrines 101 in academy. Most of our persecution, if you can call it that, comes from within rather than from without.

Unless you are a Christian convert in countries that discourage conversion, you won't have much chance of being persecuted for your beliefs. Having an ethnic or religious label can get you murdered in some places, but this is rarely because of a zealotness for God. Yet the Bible describes people who have been persecuted for Him and says it's going to happen again. "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake" (Matt. 24:9). Church writings from *The Desire of Ages* and *The Great Controversy* tell a similar story.

Those passages about suffering and being killed sound strange to us. When was the last time you heard someone preach a sermon on them? They smack of paranoia and cults, and we don't want to be involved with those sorts of things. Better to be comfortable kneeling on our teal carpets.

I remember a Bible teacher years ago who said, "We would be suffering persecution if we were telling the truth about God." Maybe he was right, since he lost his position. Maybe that's modern persecution. Or maybe it's when you're trying to make a difference and the latest polls still show most people have never heard of your denomination or confuse it with another group.

Modern insults don't equal being killed or imprisoned. Atrocities like

that happen only to the passionate, like Isaiah and Jeremiah. Martyrs are a special kind. They don't want to be martyrs, but they can't help hating evil and loving truth. Like Marti, they tend to be pacifists when confronted and won't return evil for evil. Not all who die as zealots are God's martyrs. The biggest difference is that real martyrs are concerned for others (1 Cor. 13:3).

Martyrs challenge the status quo. Jewish leaders felt Stephen would destroy their Temple and "change the customs Moses handed down to us" (Acts 6:14, NIV). The persecuted cause hostility when they remind us that God has no favorites. The crowd listened to Paul in Jerusalem until he included Gentiles in salvation (Acts 22:21). Another mob drove Jesus from the synagogue for suggesting God was not exclusive (Luke 4:24-29).

We live in a society that measures worth by popularity, good looks, group identity, wealth, and power. People may tolerate and even admire the non-conformist, but rebel at being told they are not "OK" (especially if they are religious) and need salvation through Someone greater than themselves. It's risky business saying that, and most of us aren't ready—we don't want to be persecuted.

We're not there yet, but someday a significant group of Christians will be passionate enough to make sacrifices like the one made by Marti Oberholtzer. Maybe they will give up their benefits, sell their property, and cash in their IRAs to preach and live the everlasting gospel. And the world won't understand.

ELLA OBERHOLTZER RYDZEWSKI

Inter-America Aims for 2 Million Members

At their annual year-end meeting, held October 24-26 in Miami, Florida, Adventist leaders of the Inter-American Division set a goal to increase division membership to 2 million by the year A.D. 2000.

To achieve this goal, the IAD, the largest of the Adventist Church's 11 world divisions, will implement an outreach plan called Operation Caleb that encourages laypersons in every district to be involved in evangelistic projects, said Leslie V. McMillan, division communication director.

In 1996 Operation Caleb is expected to bring as many as 100,000 new believers into the Adventist Church. In order to make this happen the lay evangelistic projects will receive financial assistance from the local fields, unions, and division.

The plan also calls for each Adventist member in the division to be trained in witnessing techniques. With Operation Caleb and the traditional outreach projects conducted by pastors and professional evangelists, church leaders believe that 600,000 new baptisms will occur within the next five years.

"I think this is an excellent plan to involve all our church members in evangelism," McMillan said in a telephone interview. "We believe the plan will give our soul-winning efforts a real boost in 1996 and in the coming years. This will allow every district, no matter how small, to participate in evangelism."

Along with the church's membership goal, Inter-American leaders set a goal to have 15,000 Sabbath schools and 2.5 million Sabbath school members by the year A.D. 2000. Church leaders also hope to have one elementary school for every 1,500 members, one secondary school (academy) for every 5,000 members, and one college-level school for every union with 100,000 members.

The IAD executive committee also approved the preliminary steps for the opening of a theological seminary by the end of 1996.

As of June 30, there were nearly 1.6 million Adventists in Inter-America. As of October 29, 1995, baptisms in IAD totaled nearly 102,000 for the year.

NORTH AMERICA

LSU Students Experience Homeless Night. For 24 hours 200 La Sierra University students got a firsthand glimpse of the plight of the homeless when they slept outside on the school's Riverside, California, campus without the comfort of pillows or sleeping bags on November 3-4.

The students could bring only one blanket for the night. They rummaged around campus and through dumpsters to find scraps of cardboard, string, or whatever they could to construct makeshift shelters for the night, says Heather Miller, university public relations director.

The sleepout, known as Serve '95, was coordinated by the university's Stahl Center for World Service.

The weekend concluded the university's fall Week of Spiritual Emphasis.

AU Theologian Wins Templeton Award. John Baldwin, a professor of theology at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological



John Baldwin

Seminary at Andrews University, has been named one of the thirty-five 1994 John Templeton Foundation winners.

Baldwin received the \$2,000 cash award for his research on creation, published in the *Harvard Theological Review*. Out of 100 papers submitted, his was among the 35 winners. Baldwin is also the first AU faculty member to be published in the prestigious jour-

nal, says Jack Stenger, AU public information officer.

More Than 45,000 Visit ADRA's Global Village.

When the Adventist Development and Relief Agency constructed their fourth Global Village display in Denver, Colorado, organizers expected about 20,000 visitors. However, when the 15-day exhibit ended on October 27, more than 45,000 students and adults had visited the unique village.

Built by Hollywood set designers, the full-size recreation of 10 habitats is used to teach children what it's like to live in poverty in other cultures, says Tamara Pleitez, ADRA public affairs director.

The unique hands-on teaching village also attracted national media coverage from CBS, CNN, and

NBC, as well as local television stations.

AAW Honors Outstanding Adventist Women. The Association of Adventist Women presented their annual Adventist Women of the Year awards to six women who have made extraordinary contributions to their church, family, and society.



Linda Ammons



Ellen Bresee



Anita Requeenez-Moses



Janet Fordjour



Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse



Hyveth Williams

Award recipients at AAW's thirteenth annual conference, in Collegedale, Tennessee, on October 22, were Linda L. Ammons, Professional Life Award; Ellen Bresee, Church Life Award; Janet Fordjour, Family Life Award; Anita Requeenz-Moses, Community Life Award; Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse, Outstanding Achievement; and Hyveth Williams, Church Life Award.

WORLD CHURCH

Stop-Smoking Clinic Breathes New Life Into Brazilian Church. When the 10-member Figueira Adventist Church in the South Parana Conference (Brazil) conducted a stop-smoking clinic, about 500 persons attended the meetings.

Of those attending, 250 people gave up the habit. The clinics were followed up with a Revelation Seminar, and 62 persons were baptized. Now the nearly empty church building has no vacant seats, said *Revista Adventista*.

To New Positions. Philip Samaan, associate professor of Christian ministry at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, was recently elected editor of the adult Sabbath school lesson

Branson Hospital Officials Fight Closure Proposal

Officials at North York Branson Hospital in Toronto, Ontario, the only Adventist hospital in Canada, have mounted a public campaign opposing a recommendation to close the hospital and merge it with a government-administered health-care facility.

Branson president Jack Gallop said the recommendation to close the hospital came from a report submitted to the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council by a blue-ribbon panel.

If the recommendation is implemented, Branson's 260-bed facility would be converted to an ambulatory-care unit with no emergency services or inpatient beds.

"There would be a community with nearly 180,000 persons left without emergency services," Gallop said in a telephone interview. "Our studies show that cost savings mentioned in the report are not really there. It will cost less to operate two facilities than one combined hospital."

The recommendations for and against the move will be submitted to Ontario authorities on November 30 and a decision is expected early next year.



Philip Samaan

quarterly. Samaan replaces Erwin R. Gane, who is retiring.

Julio Palacio,

West Central Venezuela Conference president, was elected secretary of the Venezuela-Antilles Union. Palacio replaces Hector Sanchez.

FOR YOUR INTEREST

New Look for Children's Journals. The *Primary Treasure* and *Our Little Friend* will be produced in full color, starting with the December 30 issue, says Teresa Pline, spokesperson for the Pacific Press Publishing Association.

The added color illustrations will hold children's attention as they participate in their home devotionals. In addition to the weekly Sabbath school lessons, the *Primary Treasure* also features activities, projects, and stories.

Our Little Friend features the devotional lessons for



beginners and kindergarten children. The two magazines can be ordered through

CHURCH CALENDAR

Dec.	1	World AIDS Day
Dec.	16	World Stewardship Day
Dec.	23	Thirteenth Sabbath Offering for the North American Division
Jan.	6	Soul-winning Commitment emphasis

your local Adventist Book Center by calling (800) 765-6955.

Correction: Mike Stickland is the correct name for the subject of the article "Buoyed Up on an Ocean of Prayer," appearing in the November 23 issue.

ALSO IN THE NEWS

Castro Commends Church Leaders. In a two-hour meeting on October 25



Fidel Castro

Cuban president Fidel Castro told United States church leaders and activists, "You are teaching us

to be Christian," reports Religion News Service.

The Cuban leader added, "We see in you and your actions the expression of the best values and intentions of the American people. We always welcome you to our country."

Castro's meeting with representatives from 20 Protestant, Catholic, and ecumenical groups was organized by the Interreligious Foundation on Community Development, which has urged an end to U.S. economic sanctions against Cuba.

my birth mother's voice.

By Myrna Storie as told to Betty Kossick

sort of happiness when I heard her voice,

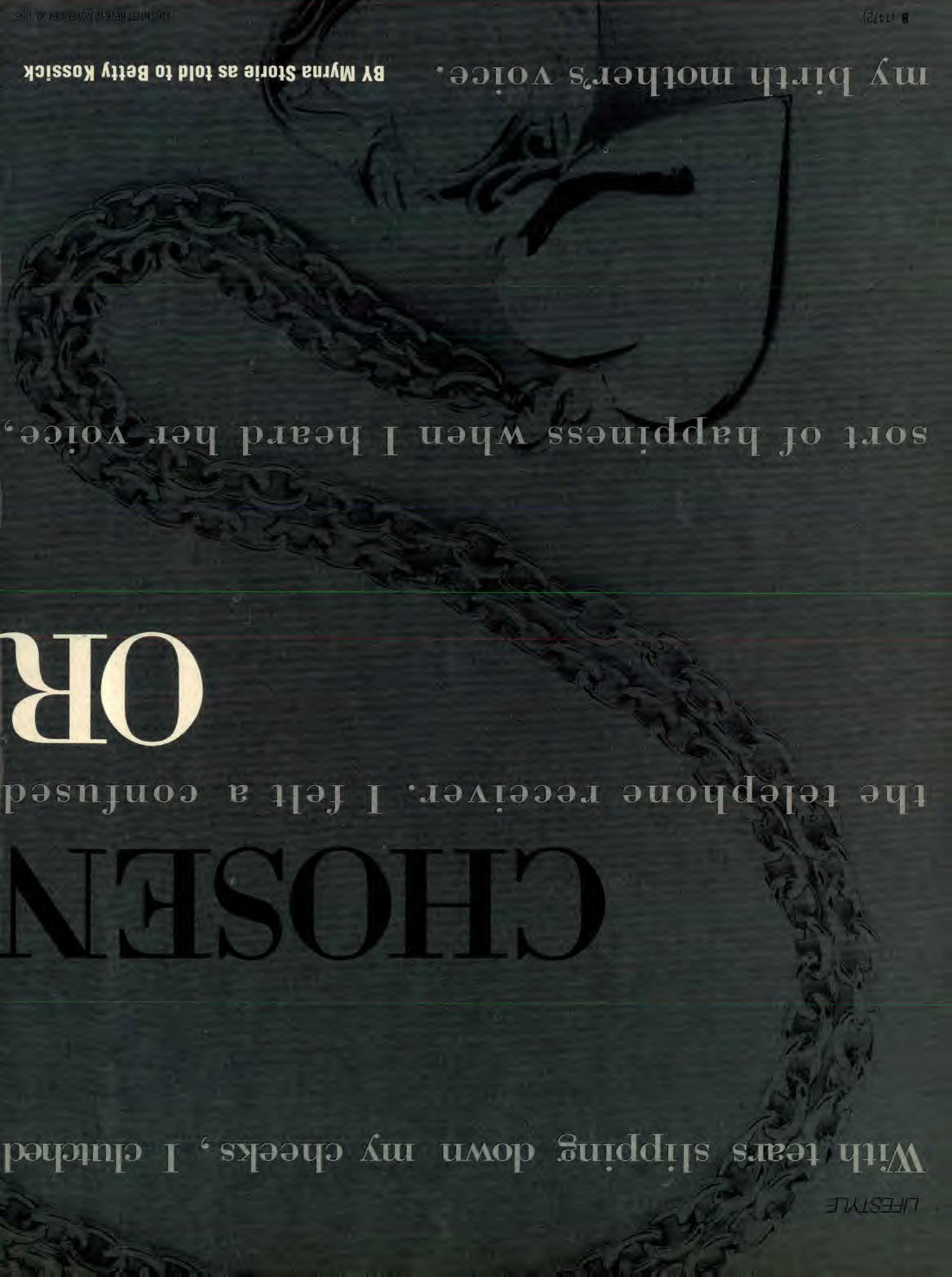
OR

the telephone receiver. I felt a confused

CHOSEN

With tears slipping down my cheeks, I clutched

LIFESTYLE



Thoughts somersaulted through my mind. Foremost among them, I remember, was always wanting to go to heaven—and hoping to find her there.

Would God let me see her now—and not have to wait until heaven?

“How about tomorrow?” she offered.

Tomorrow morning! I could hardly believe it.

Why the Adoption?

I always knew I was a “chosen child.”

Why would an Adventist woman with children of her own go looking for her biological mother?

I begged, “Let’s go find our street!” Smiling, she nodded in agreement.

We discovered a firehouse where our home once stood. But Mom chatted about the neighborhood, pointing here and there. Suddenly pensive, she added, “Myrna, your first family used to live next door—over there.”

She spoke of a large, indigent family. Her detailed memory photos included frail Sylvia, who became pregnant at 14 with me.

“Sylvia moved away soon after we adopted you. Later we moved away too,

REJECTED?

My God-loving parents seemed proud of me, never hiding my adoption. But I didn’t understand what adoption meant until I was 8 years old, when a teacher talked about adoption in class. “Adopted children are special,” she reassured.

I felt like a princess—until recess. Then a schoolmate hissed, “Your real mother gave you away! She didn’t want you!”

My anxiety mounted. I concluded my parents didn’t really love me; they just pitied a motherless baby. Suddenly I began to wonder about my birth mother. What did she look like? What kind of person was she? Did she remember I was born on Christmas Eve? Why did she give me away?

Over the years my curiosity expanded. Though I was reassured that my adoptive parents loved me dearly, their evasion of my prodding bothered me. The older I grew, the more detailed my questions. I didn’t comprehend their avoidance as their way of protecting me and their fear that I might be hurt.

One day Mother became exasperated with my provocative teenage interrogation. “OK, Myrna, I’ll tell you. Yes, you were born illegitimate. At 15 your birth mother was hardly more than a child her-

self. She gave you away because she loved you and wanted you to have a decent life.”

I left it alone. Years later, when I had children of my own, Mother and I were shopping. She remarked, “This is the town where we lived when you were a baby.”

but not before your aunt Clara and your grandmother accepted Jesus. We enjoyed happy times studying the Bible together.”

“Aunt Clara?” I questioned. “The lady who wore those big hats to camp meeting?” Clara Goldsprice.* I had never forgotten the name, because it was so unusual. “She’s my aunt?”

IF YOU ARE SEARCHING

- If you’re searching for a birth relative, you’re in the company of 300,000 other Americans, according to the American Adoption Congress. You can register free through this organization if you tell them the state you live in and send a stamped, self-addressed envelope. They will send a list of search support groups, consultants, and psychotherapists who specialize in adoption in your state:

American Adoption Congress
1000 Connecticut Ave., NW., Suite 9
Washington, D.C. 20036

- For a tax-deductible \$60 fee, the Adoptees Liberty Movement Association provides a reunion registry of 800,000 names and offers search assistance, support groups, and a handbook:

ALMA
P.O. Box 727
Radio City Station, New York, NY 10101-0727
(212) 581-1568

You can participate in a free, worldwide registry by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to obtain the form (more than 3,000 finds as of 1994):

International Soundex Reunion Registry
P.O. Box 2312
Carson City, NV 89702

- Other avenues that can be useful in searching in the United States: the Social Security Administration, motor vehicle departments, county boards of elections, and libraries (they carry various state telephone books). For a \$3 fee, you can fill out a freedom of information form with the post office for the latest address, if you know the old one. Information is filed for one year only.

BEFORE YOU MAKE CONTACT

Consider the following as you undertake your search:

- Am I prepared for unpleasant outcomes, such as rejection or shocking circumstances?
- Will I be as giving of myself as I hope my birth relative(s) will be to me?
- Are my adoptive parents willing to help in the search for a birth relative? If so, enlist their aid.
- When you talk with your adoptive parent(s) you may

need to emphasize that you aren't rejecting them or searching for a new family, but are searching for your full identity. If you are adoptive parents who are *not* consulted by your adopted children as they begin to search, it usually means they are trying to spare you hurt. If the search proves unhappy, they will need your loving support.

- Disappointing reunions are rare; most adoptees feel the search was worth the risk.
- For some the issue is not a reunion, but the need to obtain medical or family history.

The Search Begins

Mulling over what Mom told me, I decided that if I could find Clara Goldsprice, I could probably find my birth mother, Sylvia.

Because I'm a traveling vocalist, I began searching local church directories for the Goldsprice name. Next I tried calling our local conference office.

I was thrilled to hear, "Yes, we had a Clara Goldsprice—but she moved to another conference." Next I tried there. Trembling, I heard, "Yes, Clara Goldsprice is on our records." They gave me a church number.

I dialed again and said, "I'm trying to locate a friend, Clara Goldsprice. Is she a member of your congregation?"

"Yes, a fine person. Her mother was a member too, but she passed away. Do you know Clara's sister, Sylvia?"

"Yes, yes, I do."

The secretary told me about Sylvia's life of hardship, rearing four children after two unsuccessful marriages. "She's now a lovely Christian, quite active in the church." Then she stammered, "I don't know what came over me. I shouldn't be telling you these things."

She gave me both Clara's and Sylvia's telephone numbers—and I

quickly dialed Sylvia's. I thought, *My birth mother is a Christian too—and an Adventist. Unbelievable!*

No one answered my call. I felt relief! What would I have said? My throat tightened as I dialed again, this time for Aunt Clara. Within minutes I told her about my search for Sylvia.

"Will she want to see me?"

"Myrna, she'll be the happiest woman alive. I'll contact her and call you later."

I remember
a classmate
hissing, "Your
real mother
gave you away.

She didn't
want you."

Was
that true?

In the morning I waited for the sound of a car and hurried to the door when I heard it. Two women walked toward me. One wore a large hat.

"You're Aunt Clara. I remember those pretty hats you wore to camp meeting. And you're Sylvia—my mother!"

We held each other close; it had been a long time.

She told me she had never forgotten the day she signed the adoption papers. She thought my adoptive parents were loving, compassionate, and understanding. "But your new father told me that I should never try to see you again. I know he felt he was asking the right thing. They promised to raise you as a Christian, to give you the best."

She added, "I remember the last time I saw you. It was the night I left home. Rain fell as I stood outside looking in your new parents' window. Your new mother was bathing you. I cried and cried. I never expected to see you again.


"Of course, I knew you were being raised a Christian, so when I found Jesus and was baptized I always held the hope of seeing you in heaven someday."

I shouted, "That's the same hope I've had all these years!"

We made plans for my husband, my children, and me to meet them at church the following week. Sylvia told her other children about me.

Before I shared my discovery with Mom and Dad, I prayed, "Dear Lord, please don't let me lose them because of what I've done. I love them so much."

When we talked, I said, "I found a special new friend this morning. Her name is Sylvia." Mom began to weep softly. I promised them, "You'll always be my mother and father. No one can take your place. I'm thankful to God that you *chose* me."

Psalm 30:5 says, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Sylvia and I both wondered all these years if we would see each other in heaven. God is so good. He gave us a foretaste of heaven now. 

* All names in this article have been changed.



Myrna Storie is a pseudonym. Betty Kossick is a freelance writer living in Cadillac, Michigan.

The Nature and Mission of the Church

The growth of Seventh-day Adventism into a global movement and the many factors tending to fragment the body make the study of the church especially important today.

What is our identity as a people?

What is the function of church authority?

What is the essence of unity?

In the Bible two descriptions of the church stand out—the “people of God” and the “body of Christ.” The first directs attention to the church’s place in history; the second emphasizes the church’s intimate relation to Christ. In terms of the biblical portrayal, the former is the older. After a rich development in the Old Testament, it passes over to

the New and comes down to Seventh-day Adventists laden with meaning as we think of ourselves as “the remnant.”

Here Dr. Bertil Wiklander, Old Testament scholar and recently elected president of the Trans-European Division, elaborates the Old Testament roots and meaning for Adventists of the “people of God.” The article is shortened and adapted from his keynote address to the Trans-European Division session of the World Ministerial Council held in Budapest, Hungary, August 28-September 3, 1995.



The People of God

BY BERTIL WIKLANDER

**Our emptiness
corresponds to
God's fullness.
That is the
secret bond
of unity
within the
people of God.**

In times of great change and confusion, we need a firm foundation for our understanding of the essence of the church. As we go down to the roots, we should not only go to the Bible, but to the roots within the Bible. And that means exploring the key idea of the "people of God."

A. The "People of God" in the Bible

The common Hebrew expression for the "people of God" is *'am yhwh*. Its content and usage provide insights that will help us understand the nature of the Christian church:

1. "People of God" is an expression of relationship and closeness, of contact and communication. It hardly ever occurs when one is speaking objectively about the people of Israel. Thus we read: "I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people'; and they will say, 'You are my God'" (Hosea 2:23).*

2. The basic sense of the people of God is the "kin of God," or the "family of God." God and His people are one. Thus the uniqueness of Israel consists in the degree of closeness between the people and God: "What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him?" (Deut. 4:7). "The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth" (Ps. 145:18).

3. Humility is the secret bond of unity in the people of God. The people of God often tend to be the poor and needy, the humble worshippers. "You hear, O Lord, the desire of the afflicted" (Ps. 10:17). "The Lord sustains the humble" (Ps. 147:6).

When a group or an individual is in need of help, God recognizes them in a particular way as His. Notice the special closeness between God and His humble people: "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those

who are crushed in spirit" (Ps. 34:18).

The implication is, no doubt, that our state of poverty, neediness, affliction, and humility allows God to come close to us. Our emptiness corresponds to God's fullness. That is the secret bond of unity within the people of God. Therefore, "pride" is a threat to being the people of God (see, for example, Prov. 3:34 and 1 Peter 5:5). It is the great sin in the Old Testament (see, for example, Isa. 2-4).

4. The people of God have a share in the divine essence through the love of God. The notion of "belonging together" as a family or as a unity is very prominent in the expression "people of God." Usually the basis for this closer relationship is not explained; it is just taken for granted.

God saved Israel from Egypt because they were His people, and He made a covenant with Israel because He considered them already to be His people. They did not become His people through the covenant, but rather they were confirmed as His people because He wished to come closer to them. God's actions in biblical salvation history suggest that it is His will always to deepen His relationship with His people.

But why is Israel in particular God's people and no other people? The answer is that God elected Israel because of His "grace," His *chesed*. As we probe deeper we discover the love of God as the ultimate reason for Israel being God's people; beyond the concept of God's love, no words or concepts are sufficient.

Being the people of God is to be created by God—that is, to materialize that which is in the mind of God. The people of God are a constant testimony to the fact that God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven and

that His kingdom is near: "Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:5, 6).

5. God is the Lord of His people in every aspect of life. God is their common origin, who has made them into a people: "It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people" (Ps. 100:3). He is their sustainer and basis for existence. He is the content of their language in hymns and prayers. His will governs their culture and way of life. He has stayed close to His people through a history of salvation. In every dimension of life He is near.

6. The people of God are a family and are referred to as "sons," "daughters," and "children of God," with God being their "Father." The Hebrew expression for the people of God serves as a constant reminder of God as one who deals with His children in fatherly love and care: "As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him" (Ps. 103:13).

The people return their father's love in terms of respect and obedience: "Yet you are near, O Lord, and all your commands are true" (Ps. 119:151). "I will show myself holy among those who are near me, and before all the people I will be glorified" (Lev. 10:3, RSV).

7. The Hebrew expression for "God's people" emphasizes intimate relationship and closeness rather than physical descent. "Their community will be established before me. . . . Their leader will be one of their own; their ruler will arise from among them. I will bring him near and he will come close to me, for who is he who will devote himself to be close to me?" declares the Lord. "So you will be my people, and I will be your God" (Jer. 30:20-22).

From this brief survey it is clear that the New Testament concepts of God as "Father" and the church as the "children of God" have their roots in the Old Testament. It also seems proper to use the kinship term of "the people of God" as a basis for understanding "the unity of the church," which is a separate fundamental belief in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The unity of the people of God is rooted in the concept of God's people as an assembly that is close to God in every possible aspect of life. The secret bond of unity is the humility of the people and God's love, which provides the people with a share of the divine essence.

As we study the wider biblical context of the expression "people of God," we are reminded that God has been working for human salvation ever since the Fall. He will not cease until that work is completed. It is to the completion of that work that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is committed.

Therefore, we see ourselves as partners with God in the end-time, servants asked to bring God's work of salvation to a close. This is a temporary work connected with this age. But the eternal work, continuing in the heavenly world, is that of growing closer to God. Ellen White was a great expounder of this truth, for example, in her book *Education*.

The foundation of biblical ecclesiology is the gathering of a people that come close to each other because they are coming close to God, and God to them. This unity is so close that the best words found by the Old Testament writers were intimate kinship terms.

The concept of "God's people" in the course of time produces the Advent hope—the longing for the closeness of God *in time*. In the Old Testament, the understanding gradually grows clearer and clearer that Israel is a failure as God's people. They do not stay near God, although He is always near them. Thus a concern emerges for God's nearness to His people in time or in history. There comes an expectation for the future "day of the Lord," when, because of God's righteousness and faithfulness, His promises will be fulfilled. "He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd" (Jer. 31:10).

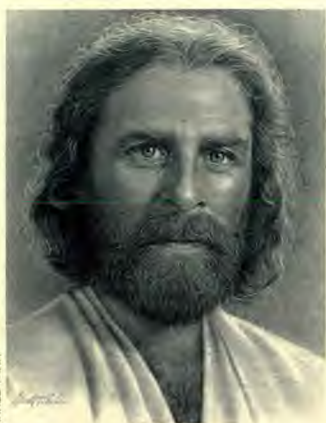
The New Testament sees the Christian church as "the people of God." "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God. . . . Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (1 Peter 2:9, 10). This is Old Testament language: the dispersed are gathered as a people close to God.

All vital Old Testament aspects of the "people of God" continue in the New. The church is God's family or children. It is a unity based totally on God's will and constantly being God-related in receiving His love and care. It is a community of the humble and needy. It is His kingdom that grows into the world. It is a



JES SCHLAIKER

The preeminent leader of the Old Testament was Moses. As he led the people of God from Egypt to Canaan, so God's people in every age have been pilgrims on their way to a heavenly home.



DARRIEL TANK

Moses was a type and forerunner of Jesus, the supreme leader of the people of God. Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ongoing lordship guarantees the outcome of the church.

light by which God's salvation reaches to the end of the world. It is a people being close to God and committed to the mission of drawing the world closer to God.

The New Testament gospel is summed up in terms of the nearness of God in Ephesians 2:11-22. Notice the unity of God's people in coming near to God in the blood of Jesus Christ (verses 11-13). Notice Christ's breaking down every dividing wall of hostility between the people and His reconciliation of all people to God through the cross (verses 14-18). Notice this basic motivation for all the work of Christ and the fellowship in the church: "For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit" (verse 18). The basic purpose of it all is to come close to God! And notice how the unity and fellowship between the members of the people of God are intimately dependent on their closeness to God.

B. The Identity of the SDA Church as "People of God"

As a people of God, the Seventh-day Adventist Church needs to come into line with the "people of God" that is revealed in the Bible. That means a number of things.

First, we are not God's "favorites." We have not been set apart from other people as an exclusive object of His love. We are His servants, His light, through which He wants to bring salvation to the world.

Every person in the world is the object of God's love. He wants to enlarge the people of God into a world community. He wants to gather the dispersed. And we must have an understanding of our identity that is open to that. We must abolish every inch of proud exclusivity. We must be open to the world to regard the world as the object of God's love. We must open our fellowship to reveal God's glory and offer His salvation in such a way that the world wants to become part of God's people. As God's kingdom on earth, the church must open up, extend herself, and bring the world into the new covenant with God. Why? Because God is near! The church must be an Advent people! The coming of God is the focal point of our special calling!

The Old Testament covenants became outdated. Some failed because of human weakness. They were replaced because of God's persistent will to come close to humanity, and

finally, only one everlasting covenant stands until the end of the world: the new covenant in the cross of Jesus Christ. The Seventh-day Adventist Church does not imply that we are God's people based on a different covenant. The prophetic calling of our church does not replace the covenant in Christ, but has its only foundation there! Our message is the everlasting gospel based on the everlasting covenant in Him who is "God with us," Immanuel.

Where, then, does our uniqueness as a people of God come into the picture? Where is our specific identity?

As all people of God, we have been called to be close to God. We have been called to live close to God—together in fellowship, prayer, and worship, eating the Word of God, witnessing and making disciples. We have been called to proclaim this message to the world: Come close to God! We have been called to pursue one essential mission by every means at our disposal: namely, to bring the world close to God! Our only uniqueness would then be this: being closer to God. In other words, that of a growing spiritual quality based on God's eternal character of love.

Christ invited His disciples to do more than others (see Matt. 5:47, 48) because He wanted them to be perfect (in love), as their Father is perfect (in love). That can take place only in a people living closer to God. And the closer we are to Him, the closer we will be to each other.

Why is this of crucial importance to us? Because we may become so occupied with our own exclusivity that we forget that which is most essential—coming closer to God in our hearts in view of the evident fact that the God of history is coming closer to us in time. "Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door" (Matt. 24:33).

Let me encourage you from the depths of my heart to make Global Mission a matter of being close to God! A matter of spiritual growth—in ourselves just as much as in those we reach. A matter of calling people to God and not only to a set of doctrines, not only into a social fellowship, not only into ways of getting away from poverty and disease. For God is near. And the mark of

God's people is God's presence in us through His love. If God in Christ is close to us through our mutual love, all people will know that we are God's people (see John 13:35).

The church will then grow because we are close to God and because the world wants to be close to God. Let us, therefore, in every congregation and in every place where we pursue our mission by faith and prayer, establish the presence of God in Christ. Ellen White said: "Christ crucified—talk it, pray it, sing it, and it will break and win hearts. This is the power and wisdom of God to gather souls for Christ" (*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 67).

Apart from being the people of God, the uniqueness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has to do with the specific time in which we are living. The universal church of God in Christ contains many members. In the course of history, new tasks have always been set before God's people.

Through the experiences and Bible study of the Advent pioneers, through the ministry of Ellen White, and in our ministry today, God has repeated to us the same promises that He has given His people in Jesus Christ. On the basis of those promises of grace, God has called us to do His work.

The task God asks us to accomplish for Him is a difficult one that requires a total commitment of our lives as evil forces increase their activities to resist God's coming closer in time. In this setting we have been given only one promise: namely, that God will be closer to us and give us more power.

Paul received the same promise from the Lord: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). Since God has a special relationship of closeness to the needy, the afflicted, the humble ones, then our uniqueness must consist in Christ's humility, in our endurance in coming closer to God through a humble heart.

Therefore, it is proper to find the word "endurance" in Revelation 14:12, the crucial Bible text where we as God's prophetic people in the end of time find our identity and calling most clearly expressed. This is no talk of endurance as a mere human effort, because then we are lost. No, our calling is to an endurance empowered by God, because we are His humble people, and because we are fellow workers with God in His field, where

He makes things grow through the gifts He has given us (see 1 Cor. 3:1-9).

Our covenant with God is in Jesus Christ, like all other Christians. But our calling is specific and has to do with the times in which we live. God's call to us was received by our pioneers in the following words: "Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12, RSV).

Do you hear the call today? Have you noticed its prophetic dimensions? Have you noticed its essence of being close to God?


1. The introductory "here" refers to the end-time events of the great controversy. It implies a longing to come closer to God here and now, but even in the process of time through the soon coming of God.

2. The crucial word "endurance" implies a prophetic conviction of the certainty of the Advent hope. It calls attention to a process of time in which God's people endure by being close to God and to each other in Christ. By their endurance they are confirmed in the course of time as being God's people.

3. The expression "the saints" refers to the prophetic-spiritual fellowship of God's end-time church. It presupposes that God's holy presence is with His people.

4. "Keeping the commandments of God," which are summarized in the commandment of love, implies the faithfulness and love of God's prophetic people. It involves a life of righteousness and love, because God is close to us, God is in us (1 John 4:7-21).

5. "Keeping the faith of Jesus" is the basis of salvation and assures us of having peace with God. It implies faith in the love of God, the truth as it is in Jesus, which is the foundation of the prophetic people of God. Keeping faith in Jesus is being close to God in Jesus.

All God's people, all sincere Christians, have peace with God through faith. As Adventists we are invited by the prophetic calling of Revelation 14:12 to receive "more than that." God calls us to rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that they produce the fruitful kind of endurance that produces character and a hope that can never be disappointed, because the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts with the love of God. 

* Unless otherwise marked, all texts in this article are from the New International Version.



ROBERT BERRAN

Seventh-day Adventists see themselves as the remnant. This rich biblical term ties them to the ongoing people of God in all ages. Being the remnant does not make Adventists better than others or imply that they are the exclusive object of God's love; rather, it suggests a call to a divine mission in these last days.

How Should We Support Our Musicians?

Readers react to a question of vital interest

BY ROY ADAMS

In the early eighties I was freshly divorced from an 'Adventist' physician [after 11 years of marriage]. . . . My health was very poor. Unable to support myself adequately during this time, I was without heat in my home . . . for 33 consecutive months—two winters. The local Adventist church asked that I be their organist. I agreed, but stated that I could not afford to provide these services for nothing. I requested \$25 a week. They knew my circumstances. They said that I 'shouldn't be paid for working on the Sabbath.' "

The writer of these lines, who would probably prefer to remain anonymous, was writing in response to my editorial "Charging at the Door," back in April of this year.* The editorial asked two questions: (1) Is it ever proper to charge admission to a dedicated place of worship? and (2) How can the Adventist Church support its musicians with more than freewill offerings, amens, and applause?

The responses, regardless of the point of view of their respective authors, were the most thoughtful set of letters I've ever received on a single topic. In what follows, I share some of them with you,

with a few comments of my own, where necessary, to put things in context.

1. Is it ever proper to charge admission to a dedicated place of worship?

"I have never attended (nor attempted to attend) any function in an Adventist church for which admission was charged. I'd find this revolting."—*Name Withheld.*

"I would not be comfortable or allow . . . a concert in the sanctuary for which an admission is charged. Such a tactic flies in the face of the purpose of the sanctuary. All, regardless of affluence or poverty, should have equal access."—*Vialo Weis, pastor, Shattuck SDA Church, Oklahoma.*

"If it is any other time [but Sabbath], I have no qualms about charging a fixed admission and [letting] the market decide who has the ability to draw an audience and the concomitant loot. Maybe it is misusing the sanctuary for money grubbing—but as you note, our standards aren't what they used to be. And the music isn't either!"—*Bob Patchin, mayor, Villa Park, California.*

"Thank you for raising the issue of using a dedicated sanctuary as a concert hall. . . . We must not do this if we wish to continue using the space as a sanctuary. We will lose it if we commercialize it. Neil Postman has a whole chapter on this in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. I recommend it highly.—*Earl M. Aagaard, Angwin, California.*

"There should always be free access to our churches, with no ticket taker holding out his or her hand to bar the way."—*Pearl L. Pflugrad, Portland, Oregon.*

"We should never blur the line between a sanctuary and a common auditorium. Never. A donation can be requested, and even in a suggested amount, but it should remain entirely voluntary."—*Pamela Adams, Cincinnati, Ohio.*

2. How should the Adventist Church support its musicians?

While there was virtual unanimity on the response to the first question, this one gave rise to a noticeable conflict between the musicians who responded

and just about all the others. The first comments are from musicians.

"The Lord did not leave music leadership in the hands of amateurs. He gave it to those in the priesthood. . . . Because God was aware that in carrying out their priestly duties, including music, the Levites would have no time to earn a livelihood by other means, He made provision for their needs.

"Music is not a frill; it is an integral part of both the religious and secular life of God's people. The great Reformer Martin Luther . . . encouraged his congregation to sing. So effective was his use of music as a means of religious proganda and inspiration that later the poet Coleridge observed that Luther did as much for the Reformation by his hymns as . . . by his translation of the Bible. Never underestimate the power of music. We need to train our music leaders as thoroughly and carefully as we do our ministers! It should be a paid ministry.

"As far as I am aware, we are the only major denomination that takes such an unprofessional attitude toward its church musicians."—*Shirley Beary, professor of music history (retired), Oakwood College.*

"[As] a professional music educator and former performer in our educational system for nearly 30 years, I find that many denominational administrators and laypersons lack appreciation for professional musicians' need to make a living, with the security of retirement and health-care benefits, as do our trained and professional ministers. . . . I've seen many of my own former students, trained as professionals, go into secular education in order to find treatment as professionals. . . . And the quality of music in the church continues to deteriorate, leaving laypeople strongly influencing church music choices with rock idioms and other entertaining music.

"Yes, our administrators expect professional results from professional and dedicated educators, but often without giving them the security of commensurate employment benefits. From my perspective, this prohibits us as music

educators from doing the work God calls us to do. It doesn't allow us to most effectively help keep the church music standards high."—*Name withheld.*

"[A] simple solution (at least as far as church organists and music directors are concerned) is getting the local church to get it in their budget. We pay our custodians, treasurers, church secretaries, and probably some other good people, but in general the local musicians are taken for granted."—*Robert H. Bullis, Elmont, New York.*

"How do you compensate musicians without commercializing sacred precincts? There is an answer. . . . Churches are privileged to hire a minister of music to handle the organ, choir [etc.]. This person and his/her groups interact in community affairs, forming liaisons that bring others into our midst.

"Let us stop paying musicians to travel. Let's put our musical resources into worship, with its many facets, not into paid concerts. Let's hire skilled people to serve as organists, choir directors, ministers of music. Pay them out of the church budget. They are affordable. Use them or lose them.

"Let's channel the wandering minstrel syndrome into leadership roles at the local level. No admission charge. No commercialism. Big dividends for the kingdom."—*Gladys R. Benfield, Miamisburg, Ohio, former president, SDA Church Musicians Guild.*

"Deep down, what I believe is happening is nothing more than the greed of the carnal nature taking charge. When Christian concerts became popular a number of years ago, the musicians relied on freewill offerings. But as time went on, they began charging just like secular performers. Granted, their training cost them much time and money. I understand that personally both as a trained musician and as pastor now of 18 years' experience, with a graduate degree.

But God does not call us into ministry to make us wealthy. He calls us to present ourselves as living sacrifices (see Rom. 12:1) and serve even as Jesus served (see Matt. 20:28). . . . If we serve


Jesus faithfully, He will supply *all* our needs (see Phil. 4:19; Matt. 6:33). I have proved that. I have seen that God cannot lie (see Titus 1:2). He keeps His promises!"—*Vialo Weis, pastor, Shattuck SDA Church, Oklahoma.*

"Worship for hire should never be a consideration, and that's how I see it."—*Karen Ingersoll, Urbana, Illinois.*

"No, I do not agree with you that professional musicians should be paid by the church as are ministers. . . . Only a minister of the gospel is qualified to conduct child dedications, weddings, and funerals. Only an ordained pastor is authorized to start churches and lead in their dedication. The rest of us, even though active and supportive in our fellowship, simply are not licensed to do those things."—*Pearl L. Pflugrad, Portland, Oregon.*

"[A certain] renowned speaker was invited to give a lecture at our church during the Sabbath. Just as the sun was setting, [the lecturer's] husband went to the front of the church to set up tables. Then [the lecturer] proclaimed that everything she spoke of that day was available on books and cassettes at the front of the church. To summarize, she'd spent the whole day giving us a *sales seminar*, for which she was paid a large sum of money, and then proceeded to sell her wares within the sanctuary.

"What did Christ do when He found money changers in the church? What kind of admonition would cause the Son of God to vent His holy anger? Apparently, this is one. There is no excuse for sales lectures, or concerts that charge admission in the church."—*Brian Kleinhammer, Lemoore, California.*

Now, where do you stand? 

* *Adventist Review*, Apr. 27, 1995, p. 4.



Roy Adams is an associate editor of the Adventist Review.

Unity in Diversity



CALVIN B. ROCK

I appreciate your column very much, but was frankly confused by your answer in "Vive la Différence!" (Aug. 17, 1995). You seem to imply that all differences in our Adventist doctrinal application are acceptable—even playing soccer and basketball on the Sabbath in some places. I do not agree. If your position is right, where do we draw the line between right and wrong?

Your criticism is valid. Unfortunately, my comments did not distinguish between such acts as playing soccer and basketball on the Sabbath and "taking off one's shoes" before preaching.

Further, as several have reminded me, the leaders of these institutions are derelict in their responsibility by allowing such. Clearly Isaiah 58:13, 14, among many other scriptures, forbids sports activities on God's holy day. I agree with your position.

Having said that, however, I wish to reiterate that we Seventh-day Adventists are highly divergent in culture and do have varying approaches to worship, policy, and even some doctrines. This diversity is forged by language, climate, politics, law, economics, tradition, etc.

But should the fact that the first wife of a polygamous marriage in Africa is baptized into the church disturb us American Seventh-day Adventists? Or should the fact that Kool-Aid is served at Communion services in Mongolia shake our confidence in church unity? I do not think so. You and I cannot Americanize the world church or judge the rest of the world negatively because their perceptions and circumstances sometimes eventuate in patterns of worship and obedience different from ours.

And it should work both ways—believers in the rest of the world should not condemn American Adventists because we believe or act in ways contrary to their

understandings. Unity, as I understand it, is not sameness. We are, after all, a "flower garden," not a melting pot. Closing our eyes to our diversity does not change the reality.

Our need to respect the twin principles of "unity in diversity" and "mutual toleration" is expressed potently by Ellen White:

"From the endless variety of plants and flowers, we may learn an important lesson. All blossoms are not the same in form or color. Some possess healing virtues. Some are always fragrant. There are professing Christians who think it their duty to make every other Christian like themselves. This is man's plan, not the plan of God. In the church of God there is room for characters as varied as are the flowers in a garden. In His spiritual garden there are many varieties of flowers" (*Our High Calling*, p. 254).

Fundamental belief 17 of the SDA Church, as written in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, states that Ellen White's writings are for "comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction." However, the Statement of Confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy, passed in Utrecht, says that Mrs. White's "writings carry divine authority . . . for doctrine" (*Adventist Review*, July 3, 1995, p. 30). I treasure Mrs. White's works, but if we use her "for doctrine," then we are, by common Christian definition, a cult. How is it that the delegates were asked to vote something that contrasts our long-held church belief? Does this represent a new church position, a marginal view, or a mistake?

If the statement from Utrecht that you quote means that we regard Ellen White's writings as a source of doctrine, we are indeed expressing a cultish charac-

teristic. However, I do not believe that is what is intended. While all true Seventh-day Adventists have special regard for our prophet, we do not venerate her as an originator of doctrine.

The entire paragraph from our *Fundamental Beliefs* that you reference reads as follows: "One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested."

Could the Utrecht statement have been clearer? I believe so. Further, since a statement of reaffirmation in the Spirit of Prophecy is voted at each General Conference session, we will—should time last—have ample opportunity for a better wording in the year 2000.

Meanwhile, there are logical ways to defend against criticism of the Utrecht language. First, we can emphasize our historic position as worded in fundamental belief 17, reminding enquirers that this, not the reaffirmation statement of Utrecht, is our definitive position.

Second, we can point out that a prior line in the paragraph of the Utrecht Statement of Confidence reads: "We consider the biblical canon closed." Anything that follows this declaration must be understood in the light of the position it establishes.

Calvin B. Rock is a general vice president of the General Conference. He holds doctoral degrees in ministry and religious ethics.

■ FIJI

College Students Set South Pacific Ablaze for Christ

More than 400 people have been baptized through the efforts of students and staff of Fulton College, Fiji, in the past two and a half years.

"We want our college to help set the South Pacific ablaze for Christ, and we want to train our students for soul-winning work," says Pastor Gary Webster, coordinator of college outreach programs.

In 1993 they worked on a Global Mission project in the Lau group of islands, a Voice of Youth evangelistic program on the college property, an evangelistic campaign in Lautoka, and Bible studies by staff, students, and the two church pastors. More than 120 people were baptized.

In 1994 the college theme was "Share the Fulton Spirit." All 300 theology students and staff participated in one of three evangelistic campaigns held during June and July. These campaigns, held in Tonga, Kadavu, and Nadi, saw 154 people follow Christ in baptism.

One of the most exciting projects has been working for the people in the college's neighborhood, reports

Pastor Webster. This involves all the college family. Students and staff conduct programs to meet the needs of people.

Spiritual needs are met by musical message concerts in the surrounding Indian and Fijian villages and schools. Health-assessment clinics, a stop-smoking plan, and family enrichment seminars have helped break down many barriers. Branch Sabbath schools, street preaching, and house-to-house and hospital visitation are also carried out during the college's weekly Sabbath afternoon outreach time.

The Harvey church in Western Australia has raised \$A2,000 this year toward a minibus for Fulton, to help students travel to their outreach programs. In August 1994 the college combined with district churches to conduct an evangelistic campaign. Every night 300-500 people attended. The meetings, by Pastor Webster, were translated into Hindi by Pastor Narayan Gounder, and into Fijian by the college minister, Pastor Etonia Temo. Forty people were baptized.

Small house groups are now being conducted by theology students to nurture these new members and to help others wanting to be baptized.

In July of this year, the Fulton College Theology Department combined with the Suva youth to conduct an evangelistic campaign in Suva City. As a result, 100 people were baptized.

Pastor Webster says the success Fulton is seeing is a result of:

- The presence and power of the Holy Spirit.
- The prayer and fasting that have accompanied the hard work.
- The emphasis given to preaching Christ and Him crucified in every sermon.
- The gospel presentation in the personal work.
- The strong, house-to-house personal labor.

This item appeared originally in the Record, the division paper for the South Pacific Division.

■ OREGON

Volunteer Chaplain Honored for His Work Behind Bars

Bryce Newell, a retired Seventh-day Adventist minister, was slightly suspicious when the Oregon Criminal Justice Association called and insisted that he attend their fall training conference in Eugene.

Pastor Newell had been a volun-

teer prison chaplain at the Eastern Oregon Correctional Institute (EOCI) in Pendleton for several years, and he was fairly certain that he had been sufficiently trained to serve the inmates with whom he worshiped and studied from week to week. Still,

a spokesperson from the association was adamant: he had to be there!

Newell's suspicions about the reason his presence was necessary were confirmed when association president Larry Barker announced Newell's nomination to receive the Ruby Isom Award for outstanding volunteer service in the field of criminal justice. The announcement came at an awards banquet with 250 people present.

Newell was cited for leading out



Bryce Newell, retired pastor, recognized for "excellence in volunteer work" by the Oregon Criminal Justice Association.

in worship services, conducting stop-smoking classes, teaching Bible study classes, and participating in spiritual counseling with inmates regardless of their denominational background. Lorina Schwarz, EOCI chaplain, wrote about Newell, "Bryce has faithfully provided Saturday Sabbath services for . . . over six years. Except for an occasional vacation, Bryce attends and leads Sabbath services for between 25 and 40 inmates every Saturday.

"Recently Bryce started supervising an inmate artist crew to finish a chapel mural painting project. This involved committing one afternoon a week . . . to supervise this crew. With this included, Bryce volunteers two and a half days a week. . . . He is above reproach in all the ways that he deals with inmates."

After accepting the award, Newell commented, "Actually, I've been there only three years, not six. I guess they see so much of me, it seems like I've been there twice as long!"

In October Newell baptized six inmates who had viewed videotapes of the NET '95 evangelistic series with Mark Finley. "My ministry inside the prison is similar in many ways to the mission service I was involved in right out of college," he said. "Something is always happening."

By Todd Gessele, assistant communication director for the North Pacific Union Conference.

■ MARYLAND

Serving Ministry's "Silent Partners"

Shepherdess International provides inspiration for spouses of pastors and administrators.

Their spouses are the ones we know. We know their names and faces. They're present at the councils and convocations sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide. But often the wives of pastors and administrators are all but unrecognizable to the Adventist member-at-large.

At the recent Annual Council held at the Seventh-day Adventist World Headquarters in Maryland, Shepherdess International sponsored three days of seminars and activities aimed directly to the women who serve most often behind the scenes. Directed by Sharon Cress, Shep-



Dorothy Watts

herdess International is an entity of the General Conference Ministerial Association that nurtures and supports pastoral and administrative wives around the world.

About 35 women heard Anita Folkenberg welcome them to this year's meetings. (The group was smaller than usual because many women had used vacation time to attend the General Conference session in Utrecht.)

This year's principal speaker was author and public speaker Dorothy Watts. She is the wife of Ron Watts, president of the British Columbia Conference. She and her husband

spent many years in India, where she founded the Bangalore Orphanage.

Watts's presentation, humorously entitled "Sleeping With the President" addressed the serious issues and challenges faced by the spouse of an administrator, such as time spent apart, running a household alone, coping with people who criticize a spouse, etc. For all these challenges, Watts emphasized the vital importance of maintaining a connection with Jesus.

Those present spent time discussing actual case studies of situations faced by administrative spouses. Interaction was lively as stories were reviewed and discussed.

Rose Otis, director of the General Conference Office of Women's Ministries, reported on the evangelistic work of laywomen around the world. She also introduced the new women's devotional book for 1996, entitled *A Moment of Peace*.

A summary report of the Year of the Adventist Woman was given by Ardis Stenbakken, newly elected associate director of the Office of Women's Ministries. Stenbakken also related events of her recent trip to Beijing, where she and others attended the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women.

Special gift packets with small remembrances were given to each woman as a token of appreciation for her valuable contribution to the work of the church. Wives of pastors and administrators spend countless hours serving the church in ways that cannot be measured and are often taken for granted. These few days refreshed and nurtured these valuable women.

By Sharon Cress, coordinator of Shepherdess International.

Home School Student Scores Highest in Standardized Test



Katy Roberts, a ninth grader who studied through Home Study International, recorded the highest score of any student in the state of North Carolina in the California Achievement Test (CAT). Her test score, taken when she had completed HSI's coursework for seventh grade, indicated that her learning level was comparable to that of a twelfth grader.

Roberts' performance as a consistent 4.0 student reflects the findings published in the *Time* magazine article "Home Sweet School" (Oct. 31, 1994, p. 62), in that "while the national average [of standardized tests] is the 50th percentile, the average home-schooled students register between the 65th and 80th percentiles."

By Catia Carvalho Mills, assistant director of Institutional Advancement for Home Study International.

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Voice of Prophecy team members like John McLarty are committed to communicating doctrine with a human touch.

Prodigal Son, Southern Style

Inviting former members to come home was the goal of Voice of Prophecy radio broadcasts on November 12 and 19.

During the first program, Lonnie Melashenko retold the classic story of the prodigal in the setting of a wealthy, Southern farm family. Following up the division-wide Welcome Home celebration on November 18, the second program made an explicit, tender appeal to "come home" on Thanksgiving Sabbath.

"We wanted to give a home-coming invitation to our friends and children who share our Adventist roots but not our Sabbath fellowship," says John McLarty, writer/producer of the broadcasts.

AU Gymnics Goal: Enrolling Thousands in VOP Bible Lessons

The Andrews University Gymnics will spend Christmas vacation performing in the Philippines and inviting thousands to enroll in VOP Bible courses.

Persons who complete the lessons will form the core group of interests to be followed up first with small cottage groups, then with harvest meetings, and finally mass baptism rallies in April.

The event celebrates 50 years of VOP ministry in the Philippines. The "Target: 50,000" name for the project refers to the 50,000 baptisms expected.



Box 55 • Los Angeles, CA 90053

Keep On Flying!

BY DICK RENTFRO

Imagine a bird so tiny that you can mail three of them for only 29 U.S. cents. But this bird doesn't travel by mail; it flies 10,000 miles in a year from Alaska's tree line to the rain forests of South America, skirting skyscrapers and crossing vast stretches of open ocean water.

These unusual birds are called blackpoll warblers. Summer finds them raising families in the mountains of New Hampshire and throughout Canada and Alaska. Nudged by autumn frosts, they feel the urge to head south. The little feathered creatures then start eating like crazy, building up gobs of yellow fat to nourish them through the long flight to South America. The blackpolls get so heavy, they can barely take off. Once under way, they leave the North American continent at any-

where from Nova Scotia to Maryland to fly some 2,000 miles over the Atlantic to the northern coast of South America.

Unless bad weather forces them down in the West Indies, they fly nonstop. They rest and feed during the day and fly at night. And what energy they have! The blackpoll's metabolic rate is equal to a human being sprinting four-minute miles for 80 hours!

These birds are also pretty good meteorologists because they generally avoid storms. In fact, they can climb to 16,000 feet and get a boost from the safer winds up there. Even that far up they can grab what available oxygen exists in the thin, frigid air.

Who tells these amazing birds how to navigate, when human beings take so long to learn such skills? Well, I believe God tells them. The same God who guides the birds can guide you every day.



Aren't you glad He looks after such tiny creatures and sees them through? He'll do the same for you. Even if you're "forced down" by a storm, He will watch over you until the weather clears. Or sometimes, if you are willing, He will enable you to fly above the storm.

Of course, a small percentage of the birds become weak and do fall and perish. But a God who knows when sparrows fall (Matt. 10:29-31) is with them as well.

So thank God for caring when you say your prayers tonight. He is always happy to hear from you. And keep on flying!

Clash Between Colleagues

Paul, the mighty thinker, the transcendent theologian, occasionally utters a thought in his Epistles so ordinary and nonintellectual that it seems insignificant. But Paul's *incidental* thoughts usually present the practical relevance of all his lofty ideas.

Such a thought is contained in Philippians 4:2: "I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord" (NKJV). No startling theology, no challenge to the analytic powers, is found here, but a quietly momentous application of much of the counsel presented in his whole Epistle.

Who were Euodia and Syntyche? The facts presented are sketchy, but give us hints. They were women who labored with Paul in the gospel, as verse 3 reveals.

Most likely they were among the spiritually minded women of Philippi who resorted each Sabbath to the riverside for prayer and worship. It was in this setting that Paul probably first met them.¹ Under his ministry, with Lydia, they became believers and, not long afterward, leaders whose ministry in advancing the gospel was highly effective.

Hints of Disharmony

Euodia means successful; Syntyche means fortunate. They had both been fruitful proclaimers of the good news with Paul and his associates. Now the news between them was bad. Euodia and Syntyche apparently were at odds, and the church was feeling the strain.

As is often the case in conflicts between believers, they may have had legitimate grievances. They may have keenly perceived where the other was at fault. But Paul, instead of taking sides and arbitrating in their complex differences, simply said, "Euodia and Syntyche, I beg you by name to make up your differences as Christians should!"²

Ah, but Paul, shouldn't the matters of dispute between people be put to careful scrutiny and every issue be settled in harmony with inscribed law? Perhaps. But there is a more excellent way. "Be of the same mind in the Lord," Paul urges. This calls for a change of heart, a new spirit.³

Only with a new spirit can we who disagree begin to see justice in the other's point of view.




*Two women who
had worked
shoulder to
shoulder with
Paul were
now in
conflict.*

Only then shall we see the injustice of our *own* views and attitudes. No merely legal settlement could bring about such a deep level of reconciliation, just as no merely legal settlement can pay our sin debt. Nothing but the love and grace of Jesus can change our hearts.

To Euodia and Syntyche, to all in Philippi, Paul made a lively, fervent appeal: "Now if you have known anything of Christ's encouragement and of his reassuring love; if you have known something of the fellowship of his Spirit, and of compassion and deep sympathy, do make my joy complete—live together in harmony, live together in love, as though you had only one mind and one spirit between you. Never act from motives of rivalry or personal vanity, but in humility think more of each other than you do of yourselves. None of you should think only of his own affairs, but consider other people's interests also."⁴

This is not a pep talk or propaganda. It is the Word of God. It is a profound theology of interpersonal relations that comes to us from heavenly places. Indeed, it is the echo of Christ's poignant declaration: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."⁵

Which of us, men and women alike, hasn't had Euodia-Syntyche clashes with fellow believers, clashes and conflicts that have caused an icy chasm between us? There is hope for each of us. Such a chasm can be bridged by the cross of Calvary, and all the power of reconciling love that springs from the heart of Jesus. 

¹ Acts 16:13.

² Phil. 4:2, Phillips.

³ Eze. 36:26, 27.

⁴ Phil. 2:1-4, Phillips.

⁵ John 13:34, 35, NKJV.



Brian Jones, a pastor, writes from Clintonville, West Virginia.

BY BRIAN JONES

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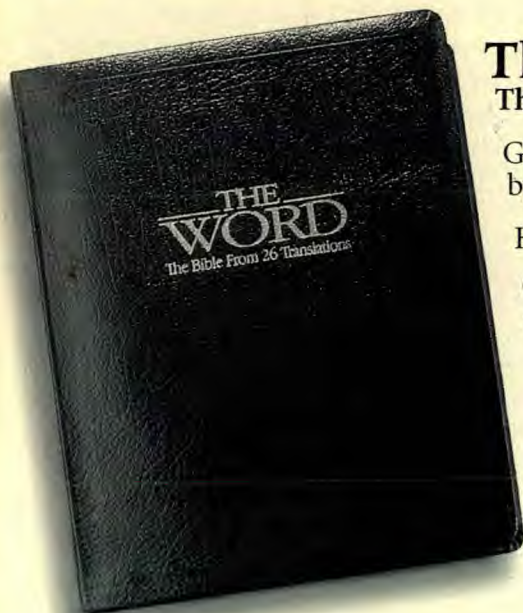
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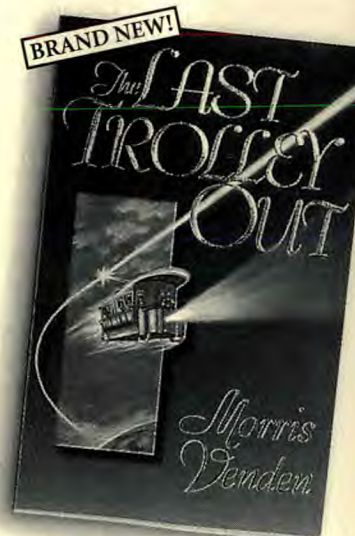
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