



A D V E N T I S T
Review

October 24, 1996

AnchorPoints

**Clifford Goldstein:
The Persecuted?**

**The Jesus Seminar:
How It Measures Up**

**What if there were
Life on Mars?**

LETTERS

Prophecy's Purpose

I agree with Clifford Goldstein's statement that "prophecy isn't so much to enable us to predict events; prophecy rather is given to strengthen our faith after the events have happened" ("The Principle of Prophecy," Aug. 22).

Apparently the Lord knows that our faith will continue to need strengthening even after the Second Coming, for we have many prophecies regarding that climactic event. Further, I would suggest that our faith will continue to grow and strengthen throughout eternity.

—John Bryson

MERIDIAN, IDAHO

A Pat on the Head

I appreciated Laurence Joers's "Student Leaders Seek Greater Church Involvement" (Aug. 22), which told of the Adventist Intercollegiate Association officers' desire to become more involved in our church.

For nearly a decade I have observed AIA's enthusiasm to be a voice for youth in our church. These dedicated student leaders are touching thousands of lives on their campuses and initiating wonderful outreach to their communities.

But more years than not, I have seen these young leaders disappointed at the lack of interest church leaders have shown in tapping them as a resource. Some AIA leaders have confided that at times they feel like they simply get "a pat on the head" and then are sent on their way.

Head-patting is not acceptable. My hope is that our church will not only welcome their "collective" voice with perky ears, but give them ample room to act. I, for one, am ready to follow their lead.

—A. Allan Martin

REDLANDS, CALIFORNIA

Saying Yes Prayerfully

Sandra Doran had some good ideas in "Saying No With Dignity" (Aug. 22). However, having been a member of our church's nominating committee, I would like to say something about "saying yes prayerfully."

Each session was preceded with earnest prayer that the Holy Spirit would help us select the right person for a position. So when a call was made to an individual, I felt it was under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

We found it especially difficult to fill leadership positions for the children's divisions. Lacking personnel, we had to combine the older primary division with juniors. This is an area in which parents, who understand the problems of kids, could make a real contribution—even for an occasional Sabbath.

Before you say no, even with dignity, carefully consider what Doran has so well stated, and earnestly pray about making an investment in the lives of your fellow members, especially the young ones.

—Mort Juberg

VIA E-MAIL

Easy on the Specks

I really enjoyed and appreciated Andy Nash's "Heavenly Hosts" (Aug. 22) and Stephen Chavez's "Go, Team!" (Aug. 15). I emphatically agree with both of them. We are too inclined to judge and criticize others. Both articles had some very good points.

—Velma Neal

MEADVILLE, MISSOURI

Team Sports (cont.)

In Stephen Chavez's "Go, Team!" (Aug. 15), he states that "competition is a fact of life." Even for Christians? I believe that an attitude of competing with oneself to achieve improved personal performance can harmonize with Christian principles (Phil. 3:14). But can an attitude of rivalry, aiming to beat the other fellow, be reconciled with the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5-8; Rom. 12:10)?

Perhaps if active games could be used to encourage exercise and teamwork without the extra detail of keeping score, then that undesirable quality of rivalry would be mitigated.

—Jean Marsa

LAKE ORION, MICHIGAN

Competition began in heaven between Lucifer and Christ. The great controversy is now ending. Christ has already won. Satan is the loser. Do we need to duplicate their conflict?

—Jim McNeil

PASCO, WASHINGTON

Our tendency to preserve our young people from "worldly" athletics has not always had beneficial results. Youth need both "employment and amusement" (*Counsels to Parents and Teachers*, p. 83), and what better environment to offer controlled sport than in our Christian academies and colleges?

The lack of these healthful activities at our schools has sometimes resulted in young people finding an outlet for their energies in drugs and sex.

I am at times amazed that many of our ministers play golf, tennis, etc.—and yet we have this idea that our youth should be confined to study and work.

—Eric C. Webster

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

Priceless

Kenya Hall's "The Painting" (Aug. 22) was an excellent description of how our heavenly Father views us. With insight, understanding, and compassion for all of the "black marks" we have experienced in this world, He values us for the individuals that we are even though we are flawed in the sight of others.

—Roxa Parker

GREENWOOD, INDIANA

I'm Not the One

In her continuing series Golden Rule Days, Miriam Wood has quoted Mildred Priest several times. To date, I have received several letters and calls from my friends.

I learned from Mrs. Wood that I am not the teacher quoted, though my birth name was the same. I enjoyed teaching in church schools during the late 1920s and the early 1930s. Each year I was provided a room with one of the families; I boarded myself. But there was not one Sabbath that I was not included with church families as a guest for dinner. All my experiences

were positive, and I have nothing but wonderful memories.

—Mildred Priest-Sandefur

LOMA LINDA, CALIFORNIA

Touched Soul

Greg Rumsey's "Sanctuary of the Soul" (Aug. 22) brought tears to my eyes and made the sanctuary of my own soul long deeply for more solitude with my God as I search for Him under His "blue sky" cathedral and the sentinel starts that set their watch in God's boundless night sky.

Thank you for touching my innermost soul in such a beautiful and meaningful manner.

—Gladys Duran

SARASOTA, FLORIDA

New Review (cont.)

Grateful praise for the new *Review*. This time you really did it.

What is difficult for me to comprehend is that you haven't changed staff. The same people seem to be reaching us in ways they never have before. It's as if someone has now given them permission to "say it like it is"—clearly, passionately, with conviction.

The best part of this is the welcome change in my attitude about my church. The past few years I have experienced an almost adolescent disenchantment with my church. In my heart churned many questions about why we hold ourselves so aloof from a world that needs us so much.

Thank you for catching up to where we live. With the new *Review* I have new hope for my church and me.

—Name Withheld

ADVENTIST Review

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NEXT WEEK

The Other Woman

Divorce was always something she viewed from a distance. Then it invaded her home and threatened to sever her relationship with God.

ADVENTIST Review

"Behold, I come quickly . . ."

Our mission is to uplift Jesus Christ through stories of His matchless love, news of His present workings, help for knowing Him better, and hope in His soon return.

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— E. Lonnie Melashenko
Speaker, Voice of Prophecy

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— Leo Schreven, Evangelist
Lillooet, British Columbia

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The Justified

WILLIAM G. JOHNSON

Adventists and Lutherans met for a second round of discussions this summer. A week of thorough study of each other's belief systems revealed that while the differences are considerable, on the fundamental teaching of justification by grace alone through faith alone we are agreed.

The first consultation took place in 1994, in Darmstadt, Germany. These talks were exploratory, to see whether the parties had sufficient in common to justify further dialogue. We discovered a shared heritage—we are all children of Martin Luther (see "Children of Luther," *Adventist Review*, Jan. 5, 1995).

As a result of the Darmstadt meeting, the Lutheran World Federation, based in Geneva, Switzerland, and the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, respectively, voted three further rounds of consultation—in 1996, 1997, and 1998. For the latest meeting the Lutherans served as hosts and convened the discussions June 16-21 at a retreat center outside Toronto.

The quiet, simple setting provided an excellent venue for candid, serious deliberations. We gathered for worship each morning, shared all meals together (in deference to Adventist habits, the menu was totally vegetarian), and spent many hours listening to each other.

The Lutheran delegation consisted of: Faith Rohrbough (U.S.A. and Canada), Eugene Brand (Switzerland), Erwin Buck (Canada), Nelson Kilpp (Brazil), Naohiro Kiyoshige (Japan), Joerg Rothermundt (Germany), Risto Saarinen (Finland and Germany), Irmhild Reichen-Young (Switzerland), and Leon C. Gilbertson (Canada).

Representing Seventh-day Adventists were: Bert B. Beach (U.S.A.), Angel M. Rodriguez (U.S.A.), Teofilo Ferreira (Portugal and U.S.A.), Hans LaRondelle (U.S.A.), Pardon Mwanza (Zambia), Aulikki Nahkola (Finland and England), and me.

Rohrbough and Beach alternated in chairing the discussions, which centered on scholarly papers distributed to participants ahead of the meeting.

For 1996 the focus of the consultation was "Justification, Law, and the Sabbath," and the key issue in the dialogue was justification. For Lutherans this doctrine provides the litmus test, the criterion of whether any group is truly part of the body of Christ. History dictates their stand: Martin Luther, after years

of personal religious struggle, broke with the Roman Catholic system of merit to recover the biblical truth that because of Jesus Christ, God declares the believing sinner righteous. *Sola gratia, sola fide*—grace alone, faith alone—became the watchwords of the Protestant Reformation.



A key article of the Augsburg Confession of 1530 defines true Christians as those who preach the gospel with a "pure understanding of it"—that is, *sola gratia, sola fide*. Adventist teaching concerning salvation (see Fundamental Belief No. 10, "The Experience of Salvation") places us under this criterion.

What then of the law and the Sabbath? Do they in some way add to God's grace, which brings salvation? These were issues that involved close scrutiny during our week together.

Adventist representatives argued persuasively from Scripture that while the Ten Commandments continue to be God's requirement and the Sabbath remains His gift and claim, our obedience is the fruit of salvation, not its means.

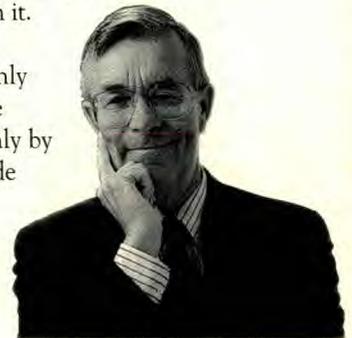
With regard to law, the two bodies have many ideas in common, but also differences, with the Sabbath the widest area of divergence.

Lutherans want to safeguard Christian freedom and to avoid "works of the law"—deeds that may seem to add to grace. Though they teach the Ten Commandments, the Decalogue plays a relatively lesser role in their thinking. We Adventists, however, see ourselves as called to remind people of the perpetuity of the Ten Commandments, with particular reference to the one that we see as neglected or abandoned—the Sabbath command.

Lutherans aren't about to start observing the seventh day (although we welcome them to the blessing), nor are Adventists going to abandon it. Why then these consultations?

The answer must be: because only by listening to one another can we understand and be understood. Only by hearing each other can we put aside false stereotypes and learn where we stand on common ground and where we do not.

Honesty and the name of Christ demand no less.



Driving Lessons

It was his pride and joy. When he and his wife retired, they decided to buy a car that would “last until the Lord comes.” So they paid a little more for a few of the extras they had never been able to afford.

Now he carefully looked after his “baby.” He changed the oil every 3,000 miles, washed it every other week, paid a little extra for midgrade gasoline, kept it in the garage every night, and made sure the cat never had the opportunity to walk on it.

But as time went on, it seemed that although the car might last until Jesus comes, the same might not be said for the man and his wife. With the help of Trust Service officers from the conference, they decided how they wanted their estate to be distributed among their heirs. Part would go to their children and grandchildren, part to the church and other ministries, but what would they do with the car?

Then it was decided: the oldest grandson would get it. He would no doubt find it quite useful when he started college in a few years.

One day as his grandson was helping to wash the car, the man said, “One of these days this car’s going to belong to you.” He couldn’t help noticing that this announcement didn’t generate as much enthusiasm as he thought it would.

What is it with this generation? he thought. *I didn’t have a car till after I was married.* His car was a lot nicer than what most young people drove. Those little things with the strange names looked so flimsy. The car he offered was stable and . . . substantial—yes, that was a good word, substantial.

The “problem”—in a sentence—is that the two males saw cars and driving from practically opposite points of view. For a retired gentleman, driving is about *making a statement*. A car is a symbol, saying that the driver has reached a certain economic level.

To a young man, driving is about *freedom*, about not having to ask for permission to use the family car. He could go *where* he wanted, *when* he wanted. But if he’s going to be free to go as he pleases, the last thing he wants is to be saddled with full-sized fuel, insurance, and maintenance expenses.

A teenager is as dedicated to driving as his grandfather; he just doesn’t care for the idea of doing it in his grandparents’ car when there are more exciting, less expensive ways of getting around (motorcycles, to name one).

Allow me now to shift gears.

For decades dedicated Adventists have been sacrificing their time, money, and energy to build an institution that in many ways is the envy of Christendom. We have schools, churches, hospitals, office complexes, retreat and retirement centers, all worth multiplied millions of dollars.

But any administrator will tell you that building an institution is a minor expense compared to operating and maintaining it long-term. And anecdotal evidence indicates that many of our younger members are not that interested in being viewed merely as a source of financial support necessary to fuel all the church and church-related institutions

that dot the landscape.

This is especially true when younger members are not given the opportunity to get behind the wheel at a local church, school, or conference and help steer a course toward the future.

A few months ago my son got his learner’s permit. Teaching him to drive has been *real*. (I taught my daughter to drive a few years ago, but that was in the wide-open spaces around Reno, Nevada.) Being in the passenger seat in suburban Washington, D.C., has done wonders for my prayer life.

By the time you read this, Lord willing, Andre will have his driver’s license. His mother and I will keep praying for his safety as he navigates the congested streets of our community, but we’ll trust his judgment (even as we press our feet onto the floorboard when he doesn’t respond to a red light as fast as we’d like him to).

We, as a church, have to trust the good judgment of the young people in our congregations. Their commitment to the Lord is at least as high as ours, and they should be given more and more responsibility for the direction our church is going.

After all, we’re the ones who’ve taught them “how to drive.” And we’re still responsible for demonstrating that we’re only truly in control insofar as we all let Jesus sit in the driver’s seat.



GIVE & TAKE

ADVENTIST LIFE



Once when my son, Cleveland, was 5 years old, he prayed, "Thank You for the trees. Thank You for the flowers. Thank You for the grass. Thank You for the rain that makes the grass grow."

Then, pausing for a few seconds, he groaned, "But then we'll have to cut the grass again."

—Julie Boney, Maplewood, Minnesota

139 YEARS AGO . . .

David Hewitt, "the most honest man" in Battle Creek, wrote on October 4, 1857, about women and "silence in church." Reminding Adventists that proper Bible study demanded that the student "find all the important texts that bear on any one subject," Hewitt concluded that Scripture fostered a public ministry for women.



One hundred thirty-three Octobers later, General Conference president Robert Folkenberg led the Seventh-day Adventist Church to implement Hewitt's conclusion globally.

The 1990 Annual Council delegates voted "to authorize the establishment of an Office of Women's Ministries at the General Conference to foster ministry by women and to women in the world church."

Some of the programs already implemented empower women throughout the world to: combat illiteracy, rescue homeless children, minister to terminally ill patients, and conduct small group ministries, evangelistic meetings, health-related seminars, sewing schools, and Bible seminars.

"First and foremost," says Rose Otis, director of the General Conference Department of Women's Ministries, "it nurtures Adventist women. When fully empowered, these women create ways appropriate to their talents to reach out to others."

Within its relatively short life span, the office of Women's Ministries has held meetings resulting in more than 34,900 baptisms and 32,100 members rejoining the church. Some 182 scholarships have helped train women to further God's kingdom on earth.

—compiled by Bert Haloviak, GC Office of Archives and Statistics

A WHALE OF A TEACHER



PRIMARY INFLUENCE: When David Fairchild, of De Soto, Kansas, recently visited his hometown of Erie, Pennsylvania, he introduced his daughter, Rindy, to Betty Bish, the leader of the primary department. Rindy's eyes shone! She had begged to be in the class taught by "Daddy's first Sabbath school teacher—Aunt Betty."

As a new, young Adventist, Mrs. Bish moved right in to the combined cradle roll/kindergarten department, and now—42 years, a lovely new church, and hundreds of children later—her goal remains the same: to introduce boys and girls to Jesus.

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MICROBES ON MARS?

And if so, how should a Christian respond?

BY GEORGE T. JAVOR

IN EARLY AUGUST THE WORLD WAS galvanized by the news that evidence may have been found for the existence of life on Mars. A team of nine scientists from five institutions, under the leadership of David McKay, of the Johnson Space Center, Houston, Texas, came to this conclusion after studying the meteorite ALH84001.¹

The four-pound, softball-size rock found in 1984 on top of wind-scoured ice in the Allan Hills region of Antarctica is one of 12 so-called SNC (pronounced "snick") meteorites believed to have originated from Mars. While the rocks' basalt-like composition resembles certain earth rocks, their oxygen isotope compositions are very different. Radioactive isotope dating suggests that these meteorites are younger than asteroids. The relative amounts of four noble gases trapped within these objects show remarkable similarity to those obtained 20 years earlier from Mars.

How these rocks managed to get off Mars, where the escape velocity is 3 miles per second, is not well understood. Some propose that an asteroid impact could have blasted boulders 10 to 15 yards in diameter off the planet into space.² Whatever conclusions were drawn from the studies will, for now, have to be considered only provisional; it is impossible to prove the Martian identity of the SNC meteorites short of traveling to the

Red Planet itself and bringing back some identical rocks.

Signs of Life?

Still, the findings of McKay and his coworkers are worth examining.

First, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) were detected on the fracture surfaces, inside the meteorites at one part per million concentration. McKay's team interprets the presence of these organic residues as remnants of biomatter. However, PAHs are commonplace in both interplanetary dust and numerous organic-rich meteorites that have fallen from the asteroid belt.

Second, microscopic deposits of carbonate granules were seen in the fracture surfaces, which contained manganese and iron salts. Similar deposits have been seen in freshwater bacteria. Scientists at the University of New Mexico studied the isotope ratios of iron disulfides in these deposits, because biological activity results in characteristic ratios of sulfur isotopes. They did not find those ratios.

The third clue is the most intriguing: ovoid-shaped deposits that resemble microfossils, although considerably smaller in size than most modern-day bacteria. McKay's article ends with this statement: "None of these observations is in itself conclusive for the existence of past life. Although there are alternative explanations for each of these phenomena taken individually, when they are considered collectively . . . we conclude that they are evidence for primitive life on early Mars."



The rock that started it all.

The Search for Proof

The possible existence of "primitive life" on early Mars fits nicely into current popular evolutionary perspectives. In these

circles it is widely believed that living organisms came into existence spontaneously wherever conditions for life were favorable, provided the main elements needed for life

(carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, phosphorus, and sulfur) were abundantly available. This, it is supposed, is how life started here on earth.

Of earth's neighbors in the solar system, Mars is considered to be the most suitable for life as we know it. Its surface temperature is not excessively hot, never higher than 30°C, and the average surface temperature is only 50°C colder than on earth. Martian conditions are less severe than those of the boiling hot springs of Yellowstone National Park and of the water 30,000 feet below the surface of the Pacific Ocean—yet microorganisms thrive in both locations.

Based on these considerations, NASA undertook an ambitious and expensive (\$1 billion) project in the 1970s to search for life on Mars. Two space probes, *Viking I* and *Viking II*, were sent on a one-year journey to land on the planet's surface, photograph the terrain, measure its atmospheric conditions, scoop up and analyze samples of the soil, and perform biological experiments.

Shortly before launch Stanley Miller, a leading scientist in the field of chemical evolution, wrote: "We are confident that the basic process [of chemical evolution] is correct, so

confident that it seems inevitable that a similar process has taken place on many other planets in the solar system. . . . We are sufficiently confident of our ideas about the origin of life that in 1976 a spacecraft will be sent to Mars to land on the surface with the primary purpose of the experiments being a search for living organisms."³

The Viking spacecrafts successfully landed on Mars 4,600 miles apart in July and September of 1976, and shortly thereafter the experiments began. (Detailed accounts of the results may be found in a series of articles in *Science* [194 (1976): 57-105; 1274-1353].) Among the experiments was the analysis of Martian soil for organic chemicals. Several samples of soil were heated, and the gases obtained were analyzed by a gas chromatograph coupled to a mass spectrometer. The results astonished scientists: No organic substance was detected at concentrations as low as 10 parts per billion. In comparison, similar experiments done on terrestrial soil from Antarctica yielded 0.01-10 parts per million of organic matter.⁴

Thus it was reluctantly concluded that there is no evidence for life on Mars, past or present.

The results of the Viking missions have to be considered authoritative, they being the only studies carried out on Mars itself. The conclusions by McKay's team, while apparently contradictory to those of the Viking missions, should not alter the current status of the question of whether life exists on Mars. In the meantime NASA plans to launch a series of space probes toward Mars in the coming years, culminating in bringing back Mars rock samples in 2005.

What If . . . ?

This may be a good time to ask whether evidence exists for extraterrestrial life. And would our view of the universe be upset if incontrovertible evidence for microbial life on Mars were presented?

Regardless of philosophical preference, almost everyone agrees that there must be life elsewhere in space. Bible believers find many references to nonhuman

Ellen White and the "Other Worlds"

"The Lord has given me a view of other worlds. Wings were given me, and an angel attended me from the City to a place that was bright and glorious. The grass of the place was living green, and the birds there warbled a sweet song. The inhabitants of the place were of all sizes, they were noble, majestic and lovely. They bore the express image of Jesus, and their countenances beamed with holy joy, expressive of the freedom and happiness of the place. I asked one of them why they were so much more lovely than those on the earth. The reply was—"we have lived in strict obedience to the commandments of God and have not fallen by disobedience, like those on the earth."

—"Dear Brethren and Sisters," *Present Truth*, Aug. 1, 1849

"It was because of the issues at stake that the inhabitants of the unfallen worlds watched with such intense interest the struggle between the Prince of life and the prince of darkness. Those who had not sinned needed not the application of Christ's blood, but they did need to be made secure from Satan's power. The result of the conflict had a bearing on the future of all the worlds, and

every step that Christ took in the path of humiliation was watched by them with the deepest interest."

—"Lessons From the Christ-Life," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Mar. 12, 1901

"Behold Him, the beginning of the creation of God, who numbers the stars, who created the worlds—among which this earth is but a small speck, and would scarcely be missed from the many worlds more than a tiny leaf from the forest trees. The nations before Him are but 'as a drop of a bucket,' and 'as the small dust of the balance' . . . (Isa. 40:15)."

—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 40

"If men could see for a moment beyond the range of finite vision, if they could catch a glimpse of the Eternal, every mouth would be stopped in its boasting. Men living in this little atom of a world are finite; God has unnumbered worlds that are obedient to His laws, and are conducted with reference to His glory."

—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 61

intelligences. Alternatively, if life arose spontaneously on earth, as evolutionists assert, it should have happened on other planets as well. Astronomers estimate that as many as half of all stars are associated with planets. If one in 100 of these planets has an environment suitable for life, then in our galaxy alone may exist billions of planets with life on them. If these billions are evenly distributed, the nearest civilization could be as near as 30 light-years. Should this be the case, an exchange of messages traveling at the speed of light would take a "mere" 60 years.

The U.S. government also seems to believe in the likelihood of the existence of extraterrestrials, as it has funded various NASA projects, part of whose purpose was to locate extraterrestrial life. Next to the Viking missions, the most deliberate such undertaking was the SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) project. Operating since 1992 in Arecibo, Puerto Rico, at the cost of about \$10 million per year, SETI involves a gigantic radio telescope 1,000 feet in diameter, which continuously listens for microwave signals from outer space. To date, no meaningful signals have been picked up.

We have also tried to communicate with extraterrestrials by placing "cosmic postcards" aboard the space probes *Pioneer 10* and *Pioneer 11* and *Voyager 1* and *Voyager 2*, which are even now traveling through our galaxy at the leisurely rate of 10 miles per second. Needless to say, thus far we have had no replies. In addition, the moons of Jupiter have been examined to see if they were suitable for sustaining life. These results were also negative. It can be said, therefore, that as of now all of the initiatives by governments and/or scientists to locate or communicate with extraterrestrials have been unsuccessful.⁵

Limited Perspective

Do the Bible and the writings of Ellen White offer additional insights into the topic of extraterrestrial life? Definitely yes. As mentioned above, throughout the Bible numerous

references are found to angels, or "messengers."⁶ These remarkable non-humans appear to have capabilities far superior to those we have. Angels seem to reside near the nerve control of the universe and are great travelers. In the New Testament references are also made to "demons," malevolent beings generally considered on par with angels, but with addresses unknown. However, there is no information in the Bible about planet-dwelling extraterrestrials similar to ourselves.

In contrast, Ellen White extensively refers to "other worlds," where unfallen beings live.⁷ In the Seventh-day Adventist view of the cosmos these beings are intently watching the battle between the forces of the Creator and those of Satan. Their means of surveillance are unknown to us.

Adventists and others who accept a literal reading of the Bible believe that throughout history, long before the dawn of the technological age, extraterrestrials have communicated with humans. Records of these communications may be found in the Bible. A common thread running through these accounts is that the decision when, where, and how to communicate has always been decided by the extraterrestrial side.

From the perspective of such a view of the universe, it would at first be extremely unsettling to discover the existence of a planet covered with mere microorganisms, or even worse, with fossils of microorganisms. Such a place would upset our notion of how the Lord creates a living planet. It would also challenge our belief that only on our planet was there a rapid mass extinction of organisms.

From the biblical account we find that the Lord brought into existence earth's entire ecological network essentially all at once. Thus plants, animals, and (most likely) microorganisms appeared together. Here on earth microorganisms are important participants of biocycles of nitrogen and carbon. What, then, would be the point of a planetful of microbes and nothing else?

But we need to be fair. Our perspective on this subject is extremely narrow, as we have only earth's history to generalize from. Moreover, we must admit that we don't have a clue what the other planets of the solar system, Mars included, are doing in our cosmic neighborhood. Our vast ignorance on this topic, in fact, should balance any confidence we have that we understand how the Creator works. Based on these considerations, perhaps we can relax our expectations and not subject our faith to arbitrary tests.

Finally, we may take comfort in the following wise words: "Since the book of nature and the book of revelation bear the impress of the same master mind, they cannot but speak in harmony. . . . Rightly understood, both the revelations of science and the experiences of life are in harmony with the testimony of Scripture to the constant working of God in nature. . . . Only by the aid of that Spirit who in the beginning 'was brooding upon the face of the waters' . . . can the testimony of science be rightly interpreted."⁸ ■

¹ D. S. McKay et al., "Search for Past Life on Mars: Possible Relic Biogenic Activity in Martian Meteorite ALH84001," *Science* 273: 924-930 (1996).

² R. Kerr., in *Science* 237 (1987): 721-723.

³ S. L. Miller, *The Heritage of Copernicus*, ed. Jerzy Neyman (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1974), p. 328.

⁴ K. Biemann., in *Science* 194 (1976): 72.

⁵ Many things have been written about unidentified flying objects and their occupants. This genre is a mix of unverifiable, anecdotal "evidence," fiction, and misrepresentation. As such, it is outside of the scope of this discussion.

⁶ *Strong's Concordance* lists about 300 references to angels.

⁷ There are more than 100 entries under "worlds" (planets) in the *Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White* (vol. 3, p. 3060). (See sidebar for four of these.)

⁸ *Education*, pp. 128-134.

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Portrait of a Pioneer

A missionary who never even left her country



BY MIRIAM WOOD

THERE WAS A TIME—NOT SO LONG ago—when it was fashionable to take a lock of hair along the forehead, cut it to the desired length, moisten it, and plaster it down, where—if you were lucky—it remained all day.

The fact that spit curls originated in the Roaring Twenties made them suspect in the minds of some.

“The chairman of the school board didn’t like the way I did my hair. He made a point of telling me that it was not at all appropriate for me to have that little curl on my forehead,” Lucille Brown remembered. “He said his little daughter was spending time in front of the mirror trying to get a curl on her forehead just like mine.”

Lucille was a spirited lass, just 20 years old. “I thought my hair should belong to me,” she declared.

Lucille was one of the Adventist teachers of yesteryear who wasn’t afraid of a challenge, whether it meant standing up to an individual who presumed to tell her how to comb her hair, or gathering her courage to follow the Spirit’s lead—even if she wasn’t sure *where* she was being led.

A Is for Adventure

After her first year of teaching, Lucille was told of an opening for a teacher at a school in Big Trails, Wyoming. “That was really rough country,” she said, “but the idea of adventure appealed strongly to me. I prayed about it and wrote the school board.”

The response was enthusiastic. Lucille’s salary would be

\$40 a month, plus room and board two miles from the school. Her transportation to and from the school would be by horseback, and she was told to bring two heavy bags with drawstrings—one for outgoing mail and one for incoming mail from the stagecoach that visited the village once a week.

The secretary-treasurer of the conference in Nebraska arranged to pay Lucille’s train fare to the new school. When he handed her the check for the ticket, he declared firmly, “Now, I don’t want to see you back here until spring.”

Wyoming was not even a conference in those days. The “mission” headquarters was in Casper, the largest town in the state, where Lucille changed trains for Big Trails. “The country looked so wild and desolate that I was glad there were trains and that I wasn’t required to go by covered wagon or stagecoach.”

Lucille had arranged to wear a flower in her lapel, so as to distinguish her from the other passengers who would be disembarking at the station. She needn’t have bothered—she was the only one who got off the train.

“I was terribly curious to see the people who would meet me,” she said. “I noticed an older couple, their faces dark and leathery from the wind and sun, but they greeted me with friendly smiles.”

The couple transferred Lucille’s trunk to their Model T Ford truck and then went to the grocery store, where they bought huge sacks of flour and sugar. “We probably won’t get back into town until next spring,” they explained.

The couple introduced Lucille to the people they met on the street, including the town sheriff, a huge man with a gun in a holster that he wore on his hip. "This is our new church school teacher," they told him.

"Pleased to meet you, ma'am," he replied, with a big smile and an even bigger handshake.

F Is for Faith

"I felt a little like Abraham, who journeyed into a land he had never seen," Lucille confessed. "We struggled through 24 miles of the most desolate country I had ever seen. And to make matters worse, a torrential rainstorm drenched us. The truck's canvas top and open sides offered no protection, and soon we were soaked to the skin."

The vehicle could travel only about 20 miles an hour, and it seemed to Lucille that hours went by before they entered a village. "I saw a store, a hotel, and a few houses," she remembered. "Surely we were nearly 'there.' But no, they answered, we still had 20 more miles to go."

"I was feeling so lonely and uneasy that I wondered if there really was a place called Big Trails, if there really was a school, and if these people were even who they claimed to be." But eventually they came to a "house," with a lean-to shed attached.

The shed was the bedroom for the family (two parents and four children). The family that housed and boarded the teacher got free tuition, so this was to be Lucille's "home" for the next nine months. "My only private place was upstairs in a kind of attic, which I shared with traps, hides, and other things," Lucille recalled. "That first night I lay on my bed listening to the sounds of the raindrops beating a tattoo and a wire being blown back and forth across the corrugated metal roof."

Soon the tears came. *Why in the world have I ever come out here to this desolate, forsaken, impossible place?* she thought. "I resolved that I would go home as soon as possible—even if I had to walk back to town. In my

despair I told the Lord that I was answering His call, and the only reason I was here was that I wanted to help children follow Him. But my prayers didn't seem to help much."

Finally an idea came: "Dear Lord," she prayed, "please give me a sign. If the sun is shining in the morning, I'll stay. If it's raining, I'll go back home." Looking back on it, she realized that bargaining with the Lord wasn't the most prudent posture to adopt, but being young and desperate at the time, she believed that God understood the prayer of a pitiful, homesick girl.

P Is for Progress

Providentially, Lucille awoke the next morning to glorious sunshine that highlighted the surrounding mountains and red hills.

After breakfast Lucille's hosts took her to see "her school." It was a little building, standing lonely and forsaken at the bottom of a red rock hill. "We pushed open the old wooden door, and I saw my 'desk'—four tree trunks, with boards nailed across them." There were also homemade benches for the students to sit on, and one water bench (with one pail and one dipper for everyone's use). "I could hardly wait to get started. With books on my desk, curtains at the windows, and an old pump organ in the corner, the schoolroom didn't look too bad."

Lucille's little "pioneer" girls wore long dresses and black-ribbed stockings. Their hair hung in braids down their backs. The boys wore bib overalls and high-top leather shoes.

At the end of the first day, exhausted but exhilarated, Lucille dismissed all the students, as was her custom, while she stayed to review the day's events and make plans for the next day. "Suddenly it dawned on me that I would have to saddle my horse all by myself," she said. The children had helped saddle her horse that morning and had even helped her climb onto the saddle. Saddling her own horse seemed nearly impossible.

"After much struggling I saddled the horse and finally got myself into

the saddle." As the horse ambled along, Lucille wondered how she would dismount, open the gate to the "home place," then get back on the horse to continue her journey. "While I was worrying about it, we neared the gate, and 'old Dan' broke into a run. Hardly breaking stride, he sailed right over the gate like the most accomplished hunting horse."

Lucille had to hang on for dear life, for with that expenditure of energy the saddle—which obviously hadn't been cinched tightly enough—slid under old Dan's belly. "I barely managed to scramble to the proper place on his back," she recalled with a chuckle.

With time Lucille came to appreciate the spartan lifestyle of those with whom she lived and worked, the majesty of the country that surrounded her, and the Creator who brought her to experience life in such a dramatic setting. "Sometimes the very silence of the place would wake me up at night," she said. "At other times I would be awakened by the howling of the coyotes that stalked the sheep and lambs. I knew that shepherds would build big bonfires that would keep the coyotes away and protect the sheep.

"I liked to think of myself in the same way: guarding the spiritual lives of my little flock of children. Sometimes before bedtime I would go outdoors by myself, sit on the sandstone rocks, and look at the stars—so bright that it seemed I could almost reach out and touch them. That's when I felt fortunate to be part of God's work—even in that remote spot.

"And even though I've been retired for many years, my little curl is still there—only it's white now."

Lucille's indomitable spirit helped pioneer the work of Adventist education in far-off Wyoming. She's one of the reasons these are known as Golden Rule Days. ■

Miriam Wood is a retired teacher, author, and columnist.



Who Do Scholars Say I Am?

What we should know about the Jesus Seminar

BY KEITH A. BURTON

IN RECENT YEARS THEY'VE CAPTURED THE attention of some of the top media in the United States: *U.S. News & World Report*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *USA Today* have all carried stories about them. They're a group of New Testament scholars with their noses in the gospel. And they call themselves the "Jesus Seminar."

However, to the despair of many Evangelical Christians (who ordinarily would endorse movements heralding the name of Jesus—"Jews for Jesus," the "Jesus movement," and so forth), the aim of the Jesus Seminar is not to evangelize. Their goal, rather, is to publicize the results of their critical musings about Jesus.

One of their more recent publicity-grabbing events was a vote in which the seminar's 70 "fellows" unanimously decided that the resurrection of Jesus did not take place, a conclusion that blended well with other unorthodox claims on their part in the past. The group, for example, is on record as stating that only 18 percent of the information recorded in the Gospels is trustworthy.

Seminar founder Robert Funk claims, however, that the task of the committee is not to destroy faith, but rather to promote the "truth" about Jesus. Criticizing the larger community of biblical scholars for what he regards as clandestine scholarly discussions about Jesus, Funk sees himself and his group as champions, working in the interest of the masses.¹ Funk and his cohorts have attracted international attention. But they have also raised many eyebrows and awakened the world to the reality of what's really going on among certain circles of biblical scholarship today.

The roots of the skepticism prevalent among modern theologians (such as the members of the Jesus Seminar) can be found in the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century that subjected all religious and theological claims to scientific scrutiny. Intellectuals and academicians had established that the church was wrong in its insistence on placing canon law over scientific law. Science, for example, had proved that the earth was round—and not flat, as prominent voices in the church had claimed. Science had also established that the sun, and not the earth, was the center of our solar system. If the church had been wrong on such elementary facts, then surely—as the thinking went—it could not be trusted to provide information about humanity's origin and destiny.

And since the Bible was the perceived symbol of the church's authority, the intellectuals of the Enlightenment took it upon themselves to subject it to the same scrutiny that was placed on any other historical document. Consequently, the study of the Bible was subjected to the (allegedly) objective method of historical criticism, operating under the assumption that every historical event must have a natural explanation. And given the fact that the Bible is filled with records of supernatural happenings, these scholars came to the conclusion that true biblical history could only be found hidden behind the humanly contrived myths of the supernatural.

Operating, then, under these historical critical assumptions, a certain group of New Testament scholars took upon themselves the task of identifying the

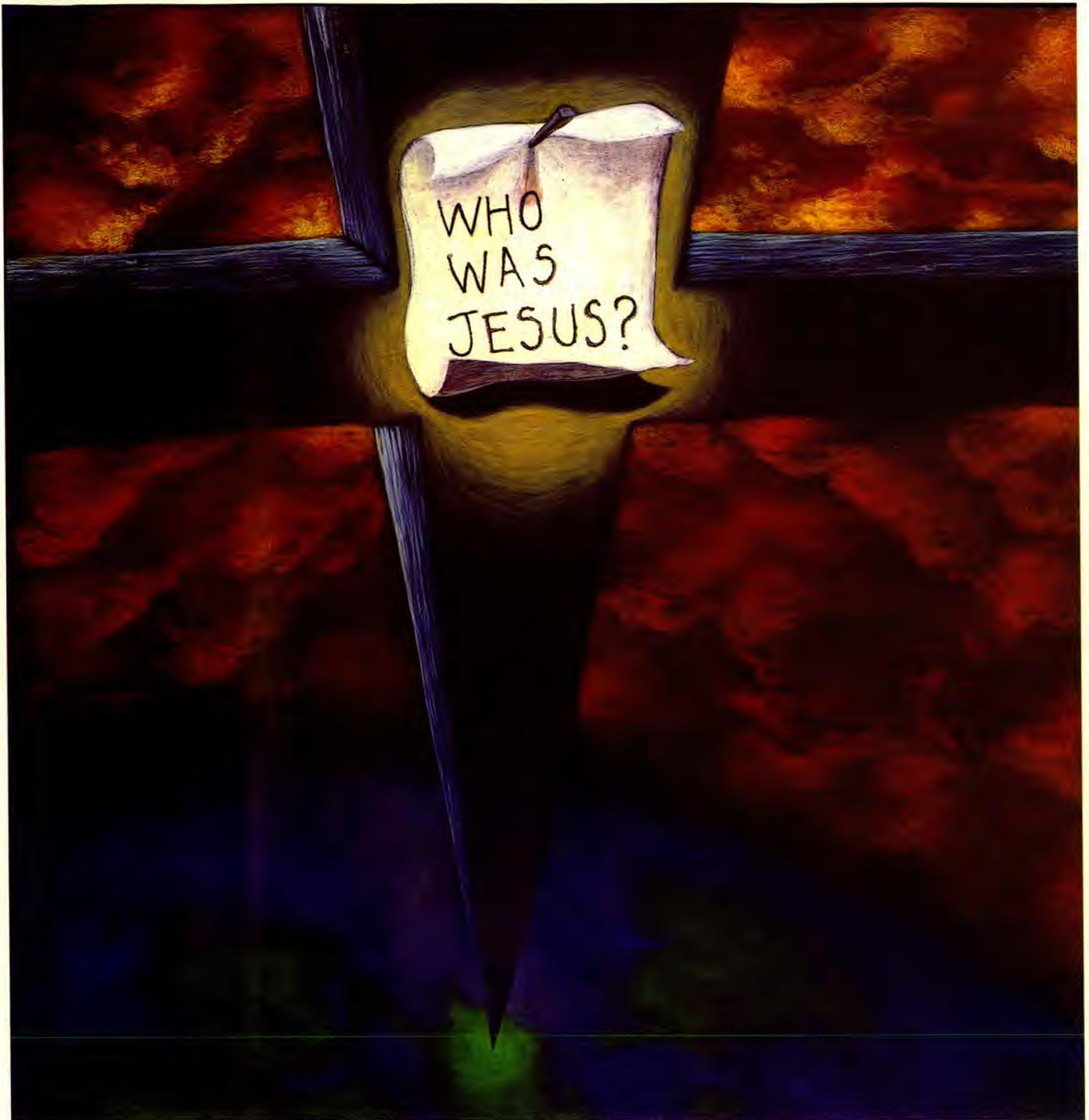


ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN WILLIAMS

“historical Jesus,” the real person (as they saw it) hidden behind the mythically contrived “Christ of faith.”

The historical Jesus was identified as the real Jewish figure who was born to a peasant family in Palestine, and attested to by the Roman historians Tacitus and Seutonius, and by the Jewish historian Josephus. This Jesus, they claimed, was

eventually executed by the Roman state for inciting a rebellion against the empire. The Christ of faith, on the other hand, was defined as a superheroic figure, invented by the disappointed followers of Jesus following His execution.

According to historical critical scholars, Jesus became a mystical cult figure to several religious communities,

who contrived myths about His divine origins, supernatural activities, philosophical teachings, and a miraculous resurrection, using certain passages from the Hebrew Bible to construct a prophetic biography of their hero.

The belief was that such embellishments originated in oral form and were later codified, eventually being

assembled into books—the four major ones belonging to communities that identified themselves with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theologians rejected the conclusions of these intellectuals. But by the beginning of the twentieth century a vast majority of the scholarly works about Jesus had been influenced by these assumptions. This fact was made evident in Albert Schweitzer's magisterial work, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*,² a work that reviewed and summarized the most prevalent historical critical theories about Jesus.

However, the individual who perhaps has had the greatest impact on the modern scholarly opinion about Jesus was the German theologian Rudolf Bultmann. In his brief work, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*,³ Bultmann attempted to demonstrate the necessity of "demythologizing the gospels."

According to him, the process of "demythologization" (getting rid of the myths) was to make the biblical account of Jesus more relevant to the modern mind. For instance, since the modern mind cannot conceive of a physical resurrection, we are to understand the resurrection mentioned in the Gospels as taking place existentially (or experientially) whenever the gospel is preached. For Bultmann, the resurrection is an esoteric awakening that occurs in the intellect.

The process of relativizing the biblical accounts about Jesus to make them conform to contemporary thinking has tended to transform Jesus from a person to a *concept*. Jesus as "concept" is adaptable to the particular interpreter's circumstances and presuppositions. Under this construct it is perfectly OK for the liberationist to image Jesus as a political revolutionary, for the liberal to picture Him as a pacifist, and for the feminist to portray Him as an androgyne. All of these groups operate from a pluralistic

presupposition, by which they seek to maintain (as they see it) the continued validity of Christianity.

This flexible approach to Christianity allows many modern theologians to maintain the tension between their remaining in the church, while disbelieving in the historicity of Scripture. For them the validity of Christianity is utilitarian, in that its stories can be adapted to fit any situation in culture or history.

Of course, for most people who are associated with religion, it is not OK to believe in a myth. As absurd as the claims of some religions may seem, only a believer will lie on beds of nails, walk through fire, sacrifice children, live a life of celibacy, or die from starvation rather than eat the flesh of a cow. Many Christians attend their weekly places of worship, participate in Communion, and entrust a sizable percentage of their earnings to the church precisely because they believe that "the historical Jesus" is also "the Christ of

faith." They see no difference between the two.

While history cannot prove it, they believe that God transformed Himself into an embryo, miraculously transplanted into the womb of Mary. They believe that the prophecies of the Hebrew Bible pointed forward to the life of the "Word made flesh." They believe that the One who walked the dusty streets of Galilee was instrumental in healing the sick and raising the dead. They believe that just as God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, fallen humanity was in Christ being reconciled unto God. They believe that just as surely as the crucified One was resurrected, He will return to this earth and establish an eternal era of peace.

Of course, not all of these beliefs can be historically verified. But isn't this the very nature of faith? Hebrews says it best when it defines faith as "the evidence of things not seen."

The truth is that faith is needed

The Gospels

BY WILLIAM G. JOHNSON

The Gospels are unlike any other literature. They are biography, but more than biography; history, but more than history; they are a unique literary form. They are "faith history," written by believers that others "may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31).

Jesus dominates the Gospels. They detail His life, and especially His death—all four Gospels give disproportionate space to the climactic final week.

The Gospels exerted enormous influence in the Roman world. Alarmed, the pagans tried to counter with a rival "gospel" built around Apollonius of Tyana. But that writing went nowhere—Apollonius wasn't Jesus.

Attempting to study the Gospels without faith robs them of their most vital ingredient. For 200 years scholars have probed and reasoned and come up empty. In their efforts they seem blind to two incontrovertible facts: (1) the earliest Gospels circulated while eyewitnesses to the Jesus story were still alive to refute them if they were false; and (2) the Christian church arose and spread because the Jesus of the Gospels had risen from the dead and was alive in the hearts of His followers.

William G. Johnson, editor of the Adventist Review, was previously professor of New Testament at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University.

in order to accept any historical claim. Jesus Seminar participants Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan⁴ require their disciples to exercise just as much faith in their theories about the "revolutionary Jesus" as the Bible requires with regard to its record of Jesus as Saviour and King. In the end, it is up to each individual to determine the truth about Jesus for themselves. And as Jesus indicated to Peter in Matthew 16, the truth is not derived by human consultation, not by the scholarly thesis of "flesh and blood," but by revelation of the Holy Spirit.

Theologians Eta Linnemann and Thomas Oden are two scholars who once espoused views about Jesus that mirrored those of the Jesus Seminar. But one day, according to their own testimony, they met Jesus. His true identity was revealed to them by the heavenly Father. And now they decry their former intellectual pursuits as futile and demonic.⁵

I have no doubt the devil is behind the work of the Jesus Seminar, attempting to destroy confidence in the Word of God. Now, more than ever, Adventist Christians need to be demonstrating the reality of Christ to the world. We need to show the world that Christ is not simply an ethereal concept, but that He is a reality who can transform individuals and communities. A reality that can transform the world.

No, Christ is not a disintegrated corpse in an unmarked Palestinian grave. He is the resurrected Saviour who now lives in the heavenly courts, and in the hearts of regenerated individuals through the power of His Spirit.

We need to sing, in the words of the old gospel song:

"Yes, Jesus is real to me;
Jesus is real to me,
I never will doubt Him,
Nor journey without Him,
For He is so real to me!"⁶ ■

and Jill Jordan Seider, "In Search of Jesus," *U.S. News & World Report*, Apr. 8, 1996, pp. 47-53.

² A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Prognosis From Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery (New York: MacMillan, 1968).

³ New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958.

⁴ See J. D. Crossman, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1994).

⁵ See Eta Linnemann, *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology? Reflections of a Bultmanian Turned Evangelical*, trans. Robert W. Yarbrough (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), and Thomas Oden, *After Modernity, What? Agenda*

for Theology (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1990).

⁶ *Wells of Salvation Songs*, No. 44.

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¹ Cited in Jeffrey L. Sheler with Mike Tharp

“New York Para Cristo”—A Witness to New York Hispanics

BY BETTY COONEY, GREATER NEW YORK CONFERENCE COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR

When the lights dimmed in Madison Square Garden's theater in New York City, the friendly chitchat of 3,500 Hispanic Adventists and their 1,500 friends, relatives, and Bible study graduates quickly hushed. For the next two hours the audience watched with mounting appreciation for the professionally produced program.

The August 10 meeting culminated in a clear biblical message and call for commitment by evangelist Alejandro Bullon, South American Division ministerial secretary. By the close of the first historic meeting, nearly 200 persons gave their hearts to Christ and acknowledged their desire to study for baptism.

The “New York Para Cristo” meetings marked the first time Hispanic Adventists in the Greater New York Conference had made such a large-scale public evangelistic statement. Miniconcerts featuring well-known Hispanic recording

artists conveyed messages of God's love and saving power with moving sincerity and appeal.

Sabbath attendance for the two sessions totaled nearly 11,000; an additional 4,000 came Sunday evening. Most important, 592 persons signed up for studies and baptism during the two days. An estimated one third of the audience were not members of the Adventist Church.

An advisory team, including seven pastors and an artist, devoted a full year to training and encouraging lay members in conducting Bible studies. As a result, some 1,500 members promoted the rally in their neighborhoods, at work, through small-group evangelism, and in Bible studies.

Conference president Charles Griffin began promoting the meeting at last year's Hispanic camp meeting. “I have a dream,” he said, “that one day soon Pastor Bullon will speak to thousands of Hispanic members and guests at Madison Square Garden.” Griffin is thankful

workers and members responded quickly with the planning and grassroots action necessary to make it happen. “It has been invigorating to witness the overwhelming response of unity in this project. Our members are completely consecrated to finishing the Lord's work,” he says.

The advisory had three objectives: foremost was to draw people to Christ and the Adventist message. The second goal was to make a wider impact in New York City. “With the advertising that



COME ONE, COME ALL: Approximately 15,000 people attended the weekend meetings.

began several weeks before the meetings in *El Diario* [high-circulation daily paper] and on Spanish radio stations, we reached a significant part of the Hispanic community here,” GNY Hispanic ministries coordinator Hector Torres says.

The third goal was to involve church members in a major evangelistic effort, a goal achieved far beyond expectations. With a comprehensive plan prepared by Bullon's evangelistic team, conference personnel mobilized the conference's 40 Spanish-speaking churches, which prepared the community and supported the meetings with sacrificial giving. In addition to nearly \$20,000 in offerings received during the meetings, donations and pledges approached \$90,000.

Area pastors and 1,000 laypersons will be involved in follow-up work. Both pastors and members express appreciation for the opportunity to work together on such a major project. “It was like a school,” one pastor commented.

Enthusiasm for the long-term project



FINAL CALL: Evangelist Alejandro Bullon invites visitors to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour.



MUSIC IN THE AIR: Several musicians gave musical testimonies at the weekend series.

was highly contagious in the churches. A Long Island congregation rented two 49-passenger school buses, planning to use one to transport visitors and the other for members. By August 10 both buses were reserved for visitors, so church members took the hour-long trip by train, at a cost of \$13 apiece round trip.

Maria, a member of the downtown

Manhattan Spanish Delancey church, continued witnessing even when a chronic ailment necessitated calling an ambulance! While being rushed to the hospital for treatment, she seized the opportunity to preach in the ambulance, reportedly giving three Bible studies as they threaded their way through busy traffic!

Another member decided to reach her extended family. She brought 19 relatives to the

meeting and saw her efforts rewarded with seven from her family requesting baptism.

For English-speaking guests, small transistor radios were provided, and security guards who expressed interest in what was being said were promptly handed headsets. At the end of the meetings the guards went to the front for



Alejandro Bullon

the prayer of commitment.

A Brooklyn pastor's congregation brought 25 persons from the church's neighborhood; 14 members of one family responded to

the altar call. A Queens pastor conducted a baptism one week after the meetings. Among the candidates: a former Adventist who, with his wife and daughter, had made his decision at the August 10 gathering. For the Hispanic coordinator the countless hours of work and many sacrifices required to host the event were amply repaid in a very personal way at that particular baptism: the man in the baptismal tank was his brother.

N E W S B R E A K

Atlantic Union College Board Elects New President

The board of trustees for Atlantic Union College in South Lancaster, Massachusetts, elected Sylvan Lashley college president on September 29.

Lashley is the first Black president at the 114-year-old school, says Donald King, Atlantic Union Conference communication director and administrative assistant to the union president.

Currently serving as president of Caribbean Union College (CaUC) in Trinidad, West Indies, Lashley replaces Clifford Sorensen, who has served as AUC's interim president during the past six months. Sorensen will retire when Lashley assumes office.

Before going to CaUC in 1990, Lashley served as president of West Indies College (WIC) in Jamaica. He also has worked as a consultant with Price-Waterhouse and other major corporations. Holding an M.B.A. degree and an Ed.D. degree in higher educational administration, Lashley is credited with raising student enrollment at CaUC and WIC.

Lashley comes to AUC's presidency as the school faces serious financial challenges. Student enrollment

has declined for four straight years, and the faculty and staff have been significantly reduced.

The 1996 enrollment stands at 500 (450 full-time equivalents), not including the adult evening, continuing education, and summer programs.

Southwestern Adventist College Takes University Status

Constituents of Southwestern Adventist College in Keene, Texas, voted to rename the institution Southwestern Adventist University on September 25.

The vote comes seven years after the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accredited SAC as a Level III institution, which grants master's degrees.

The university currently offers a master's degree in education and will begin a master's in business administration in the fall of 1997.

"We can be proud of our history and the dedication of administrators and faculty to quality," says Marvin Anderson, president. "This decision means that we must rededicate ourselves to academic and institutional excellence. For we now have an obligation to respect and uphold the tradition embodied in the word 'university.'"

Enrollment at the university has increased each of the past eight years, reaching 1,030 students this fall.



Sylvan Lashley

A New Day for Family Ministries in North America

BY WILLIE OLIVER, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION FAMILY MINISTRIES DIRECTOR

According to a recent survey of North American Adventist families, one of every four Adventists, 25 percent, has been divorced. These church statistics come all too close to the national divorce average of 26 percent. They also show how vulnerable Adventist families are.

In light of this and other shocking trends, the North American Division (NAD) has taken a major step to strengthen families. In October 1995 the NAD executive committee strengthened its support of Adventist families by

establishing a full-fledged Department of Family Ministries.

Already several initiatives have been implemented to enhance family ministries in North America:

1. Every local congregation has been encouraged to choose a family ministries coordinator and committee.
2. Newsletters, curriculum materials, and videos are being developed for family life coordinators in local churches, as well as conferences and unions.
3. Plans are being made to establish a master's degree in family studies for pastors, to prepare them to handle domestic issues in their congregations.

4. A division-wide men's ministries advisory group will be organized to bring more support in this area.

5. Greater emphasis on singles ministries is being made, because a large percentage of Adventists are single.

6. New resources like *ParentTalk*, a magazine for Adventist parents published by Pacific Press Publishing Association, are being encouraged.

7. A directory of Christian family therapists and counselors across North America will soon be published to help those who need these services.

The North American Division Department of Family Ministries is committed to supporting family life professionals, developing resources, and encouraging family life programs in local churches. Your prayers, commitment, and support are greatly needed. As we strengthen the Adventist family, we strengthen the Adventist Church.

NEWSBREAK

Adventist Evangelist Arrested in Solomon Islands

A Seventh-day Adventist evangelist was arrested while preaching in an evangelistic meeting in Gizo, the provincial capital of the Western Solomon Islands, on August 23. He was held in police custody until 1:30 a.m.

The arrest of pastor Francis Feratelia, who was charged with holding a public meeting without proper authorization, came as a result of community reaction to the public series he conducted at the Adventist church in Gizo.

In the meetings Feratelia challenged the beliefs and teachings of other denominations, says Ray Coombe, South Pacific Division communication director. A local ministerial association lodged a complaint against the evangelist. This is the first time that legal action has been taken against an Adventist minister on the island, Coombe says.

There are more than 11,000 Adventists in the Solomon Islands' Western Province.

VOP Pioneer Dies in Brazil

Roberto M. Rabello, 78, the pioneer speaker of the Portuguese *Voice of Prophecy* broadcast in Brazil, died in Curitiba on August 16.

Born in 1909 in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, Rabello graduated from Brazil College in 1930. After working for eight years in the ministry, Rabello went to Pacific Union College, where he graduated in 1943.

While at PUC Rabello was invited to be speaker of the VOP in Brazil. The program started with 19 stations. In a few years there were 300 stations broadcasting the program. Today VOP is part of the new Adventist System of Media Communication in Brazil, with headquarters in Nova Friburgo, Rio de Janeiro, along with *It Is Written*.



Roberto Rabello

It is estimated that 33 percent of the church membership in Brazil first became acquainted with the Adventist message through the VOP ministry.

ACS Extends Aid to Hurricane Fran Victims

As survivors of Hurricane Fran continue to suffer the effects of the massive storm, Adventist Community Services volunteers are extending their assistance to ravaged areas of North Carolina.

While maintaining clothing and food distribution sites in Adventist churches in Raleigh and Wilmington, ACS volunteers established new sites in

Like Father, Like Son

BY ALEX BRYAN, PASTOR IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA

It's a sad story with a new chapter. Israelis and Palestinians are killing each other—again.

On September 24 Israeli construction crews opened an ancient tunnel under Jerusalem's Old City to pedestrians. The Palestinians argued that opening the tunnel allowed tourists to come too close to the holiest Muslim shrine in Israel—the Al Aqsa Mosque.

Bitterness over the tunnel opening triggered Palestinian uprising and Israeli retaliation. Less than a week later gunfire between the two sides had claimed 70 lives. Finally Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu agreed to meet in Washington, D.C., with U.S. president Bill Clinton to seek a resolution. The international diplomatic community is frustrated. And so am I.

What can we do about this?

My answer came with Monday morning's newspaper (*USA Today*, Sept. 30): a photo of 5-year-old Taysir Shaaer, bright-

eyed and hopeful, sitting cross-legged on the ground, playing in the sand, wearing miniature sandals and a made-to-fit military uniform, holding his father's rifle on his lap at a border crossing in Gaza. "Like Father, Like Son," read the caption.

My answer is the picture's hidden question: What am I putting in the laps of children?

Fathers, mothers, aunts, uncles, elders, deacons, church members-at-large, what are we putting in the laps of children?

Do kids in your part of the world witness anger or tenderness, war or peace, prejudice or tolerance, us-against-them or all-for-one-and-one-for-all? Do kids learn to hate or to love the people of other nations, races, religions, political parties, and sexual persuasions? What are they taught about the adults who voted against Daddy on the church board last Monday?

Little Taysir should have a toy in his hand—not a gun. He probably hasn't even learned to hate the other side yet. But soon he will.

NEWS COMMENTARY

NEWS BREAK

Goldsboro, Jacksonville, Kinston, and elsewhere in Wilmington.

"Small towns still require assistance, so Adventist mobile units actively distribute needed supplies," says Beth Schaefer, information officer for ACS's parent organization, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency. "In the town of Wallace, some 800 persons were served in one weekend."

Volunteers in Virginia are also distributing supplies, and community groups in Nashville, Miami, and Atlanta are still collecting donated goods for North Carolina.

New Congregation Forms in Burkina Faso

A new Adventist congregation started by Michael Daniel Asdodji, is meeting in Koudougou, Burkina Faso, in West Africa.

Asdodji, from Togo, another country in West Africa, is a Global Mission volunteer who began working this past January in the unentered area of Koudougou and has already held two outreach meetings, says General Conference president Robert S. Folkenberg.

Ten persons worship with Asdodji, including a girl with a disability who walks two hours each way on crutches to attend church meetings.

Romanian Churches to Recycle NET '96

During the current NET '96 evangelistic meetings on satellite, Adventist churches in Romania are downlinking the meetings to 419 locations within the country, reports General Conference president Robert S. Folkenberg.

However, after the meetings have ended, the churches plan to use videotaped programs to conduct nearly 400 additional meetings in January 1997. A third series is expected in March, which will bring the total meetings to more than 1,000, Folkenberg says.

News Notes

✓ The Lindgren Foundation recently awarded the Loma Linda University School of Dentistry a \$250,000 grant to establish a scholarship endowment.

What's Coming!

Oct.	26	Pathfinder Sabbath
Nov.	2-9	Week of Prayer
Nov.	3-7	North American Division Year-end Meetings
Nov.	16	Ingathering begins
Dec.	7	Stewardship Day

The Persecuted?

If you're a Christian in America, you're subjected to vicious persecution, government hostility, and (in case you haven't noticed) a systematic oppression aimed at eradicating you and your religion.

If you haven't noticed, that's because you haven't accepted the Christian Right's line that the American church is the victim of persecution.

Jerry Falwell warns that "Bible-believing Christianity" has been "outlawed" in America. Pat Buchanan bemoans the "Christian-bashing" so prevalent in America today. Tim LaHaye warns about "the government-inspired persecution that is going on in America today in the name of the First Amendment."

The Rutherford Institute writes about "religious apartheid" against Christians. Chuck Colson says that Christians have become a "persecuted minority." Even James Dobson has warned: "I believe that Christian oppression is just around the corner. I really believe that the level of anger rising out of the homosexual community primarily, but the whole humanistic movement that's out there . . . as they gain political power—and they got it now—they're going to continue to oppress us."

New Right lawyer Keith Fournier explains: "Day after day the news media brings us horrific reports from the Balkans, Africa, and other foreign countries of ethnic-based attacks all too reminiscent of the infamous Holocaust. . . . And yet a similar insanity is being perpetrated before our eyes in our own country. But ethnic origin isn't the target. It's religion and those who embrace it."

And finally, from multimillionaire business executive, media mogul, television personality, Republican Party power broker, and former presidential candidate Pat Robertson: "Just like what Nazi Germany did to the Jews, so liberal America is now doing to evangelical Christians."

Now, maybe I'm missing something here, but are we, as Christians in the United States, persecuted? Even as Adventists, with beliefs that separate us from the "mainstream," are we being systematically oppressed by gays, persecuted by the government, or subjected to a Nazilike genocide, all on account of our faith?

Maybe you are, but I'm not (and no one else in my local church is either).

Of course, some bias against Christianity does exist, even in

America, and some might even face religious harassment from family or employers, but bias isn't persecution any more than a Jewish joke is the Holocaust. And for these Christians—most of them wealthy, powerful, and influential—to portray themselves as victims of persecution makes a mockery of those Christians in other lands who really are.

In my work I daily read heart-wrenching accounts of Christians in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East who—facing torture, jail, exile, even death for their faith—don't whine as much as Robertson, Colson, or Falwell do about "persecution."

Why this shameful propaganda? The answer's simple: what better way to

shake Christians out of their political complacency than to convince them that they're victims? If the faithful can be persuaded that the wall of separation of church and state is persecuting them, that laws forbidding government-sponsored prayer in school are persecuting them, that the arrest of abortion protestors is persecuting them, and that such movies as *The Last Temptation of Christ* are persecuting them, they will respond. They already do.

Years ago a girl involved in the Religious Right told me that although at one time she was skeptical about getting into politics, she changed her mind after being warned by her church that "the American government is planning to take our Bibles from us!"

Take our Bibles from us?

I don't blame the girl; I blame the church leaders who, using their massive media outlets, disseminate bogus stories about oppression and harassment in order to involve their followers in politics, while the hostile, anti-Christian government not only protects their right to spread these stories—but lets them do it tax-free!

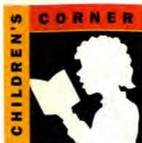
Some persecution.

Some
anti-Christian
bias does exist.

Clifford Goldstein is editor of *Liberty*, a magazine of religious freedom.



Caves



ROSY TETZ

Have you ever been inside a cave? It's a very interesting adventure, and you should do it if you ever get the chance.

Some caves are easy to visit. People have built pathways and put in electric lights. Tour guides show you all the cool things and tell you lots of interesting stuff.

Other caves are a bit more of an adventure. They don't have nice smooth paths with railings. They are pitch-dark. There might even be bats.

One interesting thing about caves is how they are made. There is a certain kind of rock called limestone. It dissolves in rainwater. This erosion doesn't happen quickly. Year after year the rain soaks into the ground. The rain makes cracks in the limestone, dissolving it little by little. These cracks turn into hollows, which become larger and larger, and after years and years they become caves.

Other interesting things happen with water and limestone inside the caves. As water slowly drops from the roof of the cave, it leaves behind a tiny deposit of limestone. Over years these deposits add up and start to form a spike hanging down from the top of the cave. These spikes are called stalactites, and they look sort of like icicles made of stone.

The same thing happens upside down when water drips onto the floor of the cave. The deposits that build up and poke up in spikes from the floor are called stalagmites. Stalactites and stalagmites grow only a fraction of an inch each year. Sometimes, after hundreds of years, they get so long that they meet in the middle and form a pillar.

Some people think that "small" and "unimportant" mean the same thing. But they don't really. The caves prove

it—these wonders are made by tiny drops of water. The drops are small, but they are important. Each drop makes a difference.

Some people may think that because you are small you can't make a difference. But you know that's not true. You do make a difference in your family and your school and your church and your world.

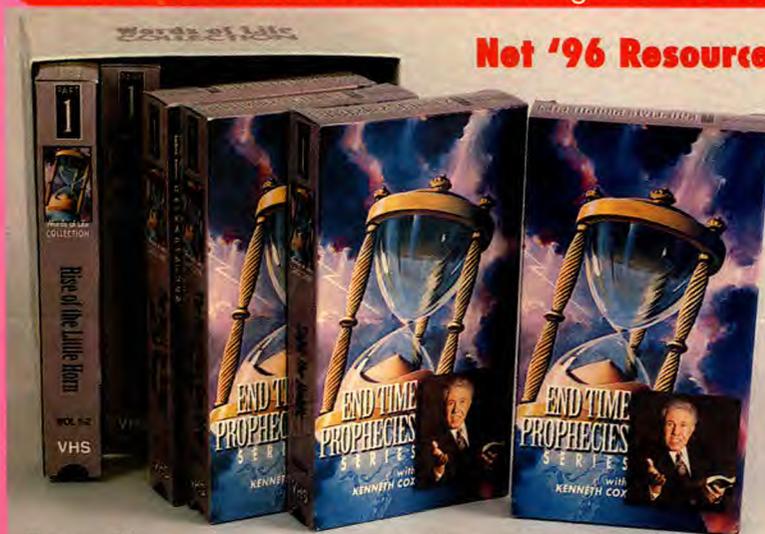
It certainly doesn't make any difference to God whether someone is small or big. The Bible says that "the Lord will bless those who fear him, from the smallest to the greatest" (Psalm 115:13, ICB).

God loves you, and He has big plans for you. Right now. You don't have to wait until you're big to make a difference.

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Jesus: Lord of All

In humility and sacrifice, He provided an eternal model of genuine authority.

BY ELLEN G. WHITE

- “ Satan exulted when Jesus laid aside His power and glory and left heaven. He thought that the Son of God was then placed in his power. . . . If he could tempt Jesus to depart from the will of His Father, his object would be gained. ”¹
- “ [Jesus] knew that the time was to come when He would by His own life redeem the kingdom from Satan, and that, after a season, all in heaven and earth would submit to Him. He chose His life of suffering and His dreadful death, as the way appointed by His Father that He might become a lawful heir to the kingdoms of earth and have them given into His hands as an everlasting possession. ”²
- “ Jesus commenced His work by breaking the power which Satan held over the suffering. He healed those who had suffered by his evil power. He restored the sick to health, healed the lame, and caused them to leap in the gladness of their hearts, and glorify God. He gave sight to the blind, and restored to health by His power those who had been infirm and bound by Satan’s cruel power many years. The weak, the trembling, and the desponding, He comforted with gracious words. He raised the dead to life, and they glorified God for the mighty display of His power. He wrought mightily for all who believed on Him. And the feeble, suffering ones whom Satan held in triumph, Jesus wrenched from his grasp, and brought to them by His divine power, soundness of body, and great joy and happiness. ”³
- “ [The people at Capernaum] were astonished at His doctrine; for His lessons of instruction were given with power. . . . Demons were unable to resist the power of Christ. They surrendered to Him, and in the presence of the astonished multitude, acknowledged Him to be the all-powerful son of God. ”⁴

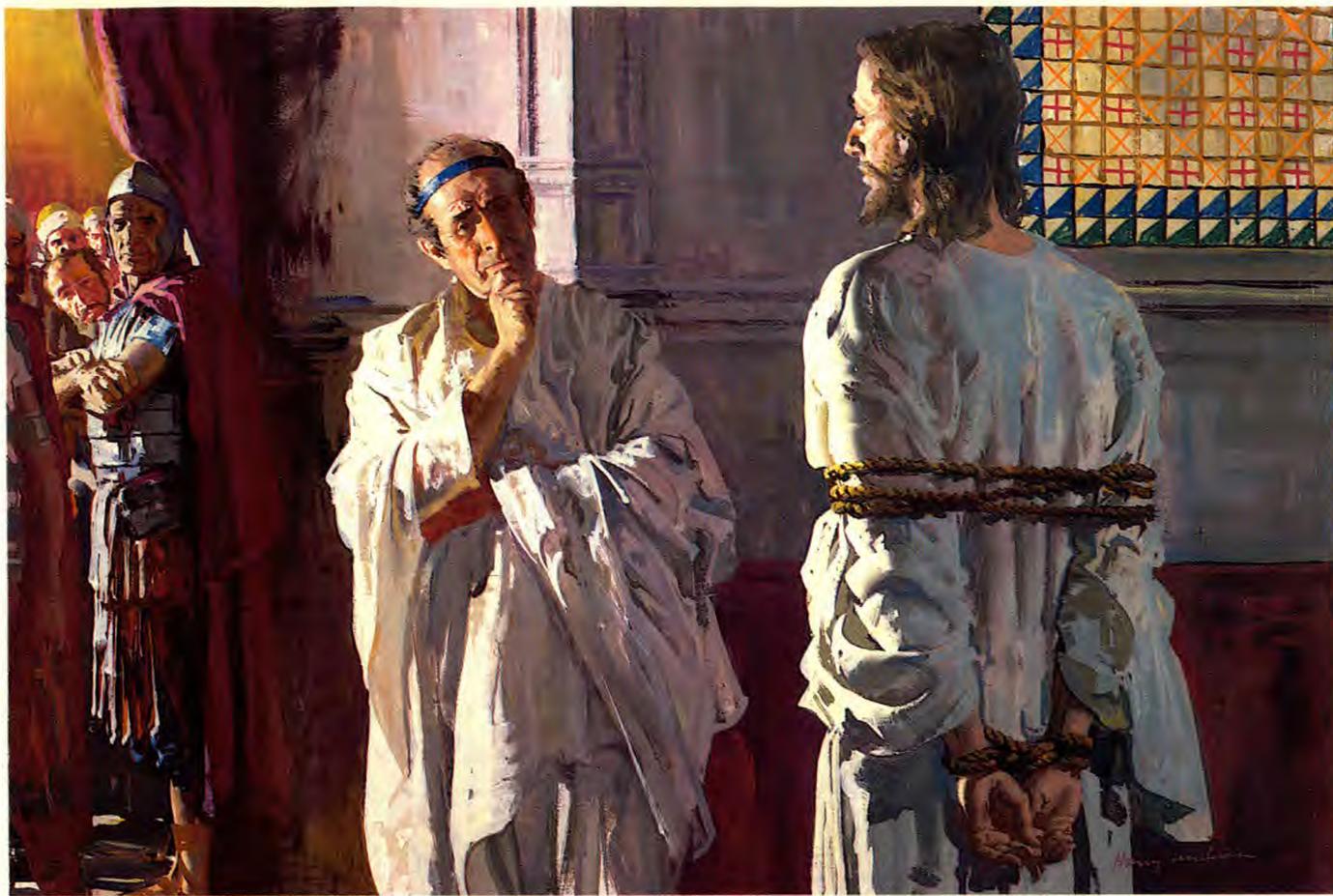


ILLUSTRATION BY HARRY ANDERSON © R&H

“ As the piercing look of Jesus swept the desecrated court of the temple, all eyes were instinctively turned toward Him. The voices of the people and the noise of the cattle were hushed. Priest, ruler, Pharisee and Gentile all looked with mute astonishment and indefinable awe upon the Son of God, who stood before them with the majesty of Heaven’s King, divinity flashing through humanity and investing Him with a dignity and glory He had never before displayed.”⁵

“ The world hated Christ because His perfect purity was in such contrast to their own vileness. They rejected and crucified the Lord of life. God raised Him from the dead, and hid Him from mortal view; but He is still the Saviour of mankind. . . . Though the Vine itself is unseen, its branches are visible. While Christ is removed from human sight, His life and power are manifested in His followers.”⁶

¹ Early Writings, p. 157.

² Ibid., p. 158.

³ Redemption, p. 61, 62.

⁴ Ibid., p. 69.

⁵ The Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 3, p. 23.

⁶ Review and Herald, Sept. 11, 1893.

These profiles from the life of Christ are compiled by the Ellen G. White Estate. Much more than a one-dimensional individual, Jesus personified a unique blend of the human and the divine.



Where Is the Holy Place?

The answer does make a difference.

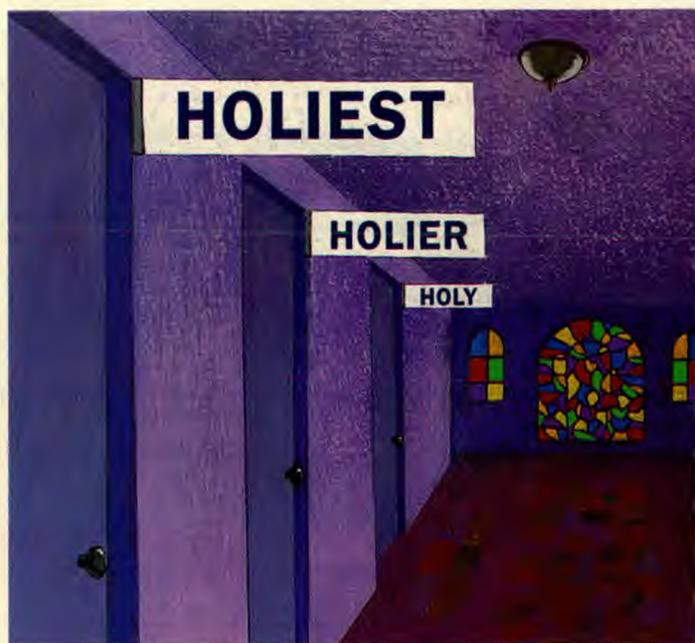
BY STEVE CASE

PERHAPS IT'S JUST ONE OF MY LIFE commandments—those beliefs that I've grown up with and that form the core of what I know to be true. I'm really not sure where it came from, but I've always known that the church sanctuary was holier than the youth chapel. Of course, the youth chapel was more sacred than the fellowship hall, which was more venerable than the parking lot.

I couldn't find a text of Scripture that said it quite that way, but I hadn't needed to . . . until . . . a church member suggested that one of our programs be held in the youth chapel rather than the sanctuary. He felt the program seemed inappropriate for the sanctuary—which was holy. As the youth pastor of the church, I wondered, *Does this mean the place where the youth meet is unholy? And what makes the place where the adults and others meet holy?* These questions drove me to the Bible. What I found surprised me.

In the Old Testament God told His people to make a sanctuary so He could dwell with them.¹ I remembered the passages that spelled out that only priests could enter the sanctuary, with the high priest entering the Most Holy Place only once a year. It was in the Most Holy Place that God made Himself present in the Shekinah glory over the ark.² Uzzah experienced the seriousness of even touching the ark.³ When Solomon dedicated the permanent Temple, God demonstrated His glory with a cloud that left the priests unable to perform their service.⁴

The majesty and grandeur of God's presence, whether it was the Shekinah glory associated with the ark or even the building that contained it, reminded humans of their



creaturely position relative to the Almighty.

But God's presence in the Old Testament wasn't limited to buildings. God told Moses to take off his sandals, because the ground near the burning bush was holy.⁵ It wasn't the bush or the ground that was inherently holy. It was God's presence that made them holy. God promised to place His tabernacle among His people and to walk among them provided His people obeyed Him.⁶ God's people had no reason to fear, because He promised even to take His people by the hand.⁷ Although the awesomeness of God was real to the Israelites, God also desired to be with His people.

The Old Testament promise of the Messiah included the sign that a virgin would give birth to a boy called Immanuel—God with us.⁸ Lowly shepherds found themselves terrified by the glory of one angel, who brought news of the Messiah's birth.⁹ Yet excitement rather than fear or glory marked their encounter with the baby Jesus.¹⁰ The Wise Men bowed down and worshiped the baby Jesus, in addition to giving Him expensive gifts.¹¹ At 8 days of age, during the customary Temple presentation of the firstborn male, only Simeon and Anna recognized the glory of God in Jesus.¹²

The Old Testament predicted that God's glory and majesty would be veiled.¹³ At best, the response to Jesus was fickle or mixed.¹⁴ At worst, He was considered deluded, demon-possessed, and worthy of torture and death.¹⁵ Without the revealed glory and majesty, people failed to treat God, in the form of Jesus, as holy. However, they continued to worship and revere historical events in which God had revealed Himself. Such sacred times were commemorated at a geographical location called the Temple.¹⁶ These festivals

had their roots in the command of God.¹⁷ How ironic and tragic that the worshipers failed to identify the object of the feasts and even killed Him during one of the festivals that anticipated His arrival.

When Jesus conversed with the woman at Jacob's well, she asked if the proper place of worship was Mount Gerazim or Jerusalem. In other words, where is the holy place? Jesus responded that the *place* wasn't the issue. True worshipers worship in spirit and in truth.¹⁸ But a location provides a tangible and predictable arena for a place to be holy. Perhaps this mind-set motivated Peter to suggest a holy place memorial at the spot where Jesus was transfigured.¹⁹

For Jesus such externals as location seemed insignificant compared to the realities of the inner soul. With the promise of the Holy Spirit to be in His believers, God could not be contained in one location. The Father and Jesus would make Their home with the ones who love and obey Him.²⁰ The holy place would now be every believer, whatever the location. Such a promise brings to mind the promise of Jesus that wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, He is with them.²¹ Such a place, wherever the location, is holy *because of God's presence*.

It should not surprise us that Jesus warned the religious people of His day that the Temple was empty of God's presence.²² That became painfully obvious when the curtain separating the Most Holy Place from the holy place was torn by unseen hands at the time of the death of Jesus, exposing the Most Holy Place as an empty room void of the presence of God.²³ The holy place at that moment was on Golgotha, because that is where God was present.

While religious leaders mocked Christ and the disciples saw their hopes die, a pagan perceived that God was present in Jesus.²⁴ How fitting that God's initiative to all people, not just the religious ones, was typified by the gift of God (Jesus and His death) being given and perceived "outside the gate"

(NKJV) to the world at large.²⁵

In the early church the presence of God manifested itself when and where the body of Christ met.²⁶ That is why Paul could call the Corinthian believers God's temple, because of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believers. He reminds them that God's temple is sacred, and they are that temple.²⁷ And Paul is in agreement with Peter on this.²⁸

The ramifications for us are extensive. Rather than treating one location, a sanctuary or church, as a holy place because God is present there, our call is to treat the believers with sacredness, because the Holy Spirit lives within them. Such treatment is not reserved for the church hour on Sabbath morning, but throughout the week as well.

Then how will we deal with the location of "sacred" events? Perhaps it would be useful to think of two types of holiness: essential holiness and functional holiness.²⁹ Essential holiness belongs to God, for He is holy. Wherever God is, that place is holy. Functional holiness can denote places we set aside as a location for God to be. Recognizing that we can't control the presence of God, we dedicate buildings as places where we are reminded of our holy God.

But let us not confuse functional holiness with essential holiness. Let us not treat people with respect in a church building, but act differently outside of the wood and stones. According to both Paul and Peter, God's people are His temple, His spiritual house.³⁰ Nor can we limit our own attitude of holiness to the worship service on Sabbath at the building termed *the church*. Because God dwells with His believers, wherever a believer is, God is, which makes that location a holy place.

Was the program slated for the sanctuary inappropriate? A group of the believers, the elders, discussed it and determined that if the program was appropriate for the youth, it was "holy" for the entire church. Those who attended experienced joy and

recommitment to service for God. Yes, the place was holy—with God's presence. At the sanctuary we call a holy place, God chose to be present because His people met there in His name. And He continues to be present wherever those people go, thereby making many places holy places. For God cannot be bound by one location that humans determine. God is God, and wherever He is is holy. ■

¹ Ex. 25:8.

² Lev. 16:2.

³ 2 Sam. 6:6, 7.

⁴ 1 Kings 8:10, 11.

⁵ Ex. 3:5.

⁶ Lev. 26:1-12.

⁷ Isa. 41:10-13.

⁸ Isa. 7:14; cf. Matt. 1:22, 23.

⁹ Luke 2:8-11.

¹⁰ Verses 16-20.

¹¹ Matt. 2:11.

¹² Luke 2:21-39.

¹³ Isa. 53:2-5.

¹⁴ See John 6:14, 15, 60, 66; John 7:40-43; Luke 19:37, 38; Luke 23:18, 21, 23.

¹⁵ In the book of John alone, see John 5:17, 18; 8:48; 10:24, 33; 18:22.

¹⁶ Luke 2:42; John 7:14, 15; John 10:22; Matt. 26:17.

¹⁷ Lev. 23.

¹⁸ John 4:23, 24.

¹⁹ Mark 9:2-7.

²⁰ John 16:17, 23.

²¹ Matt. 18:20.

²² Matt. 23:38.

²³ Matt. 27:51.

²⁴ Mark 15:39; cf. Matt. 27:54.

²⁵ Heb. 13:12.

²⁶ Acts 2:1-4; Acts 4:31, 32; 1 Cor. 12:27.

²⁷ 1 Cor. 3:16. This passage occasionally has been misused as a temperance text for an individual's body being the temple of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor. 6:19). The context of 1 Corinthians 3 is the entire church, not the individuals, and the grammar of the text provided a plural "you." All of you believers, together, in Corinth, comprise God's sacred temple. That's why there cannot/should not be division among you.

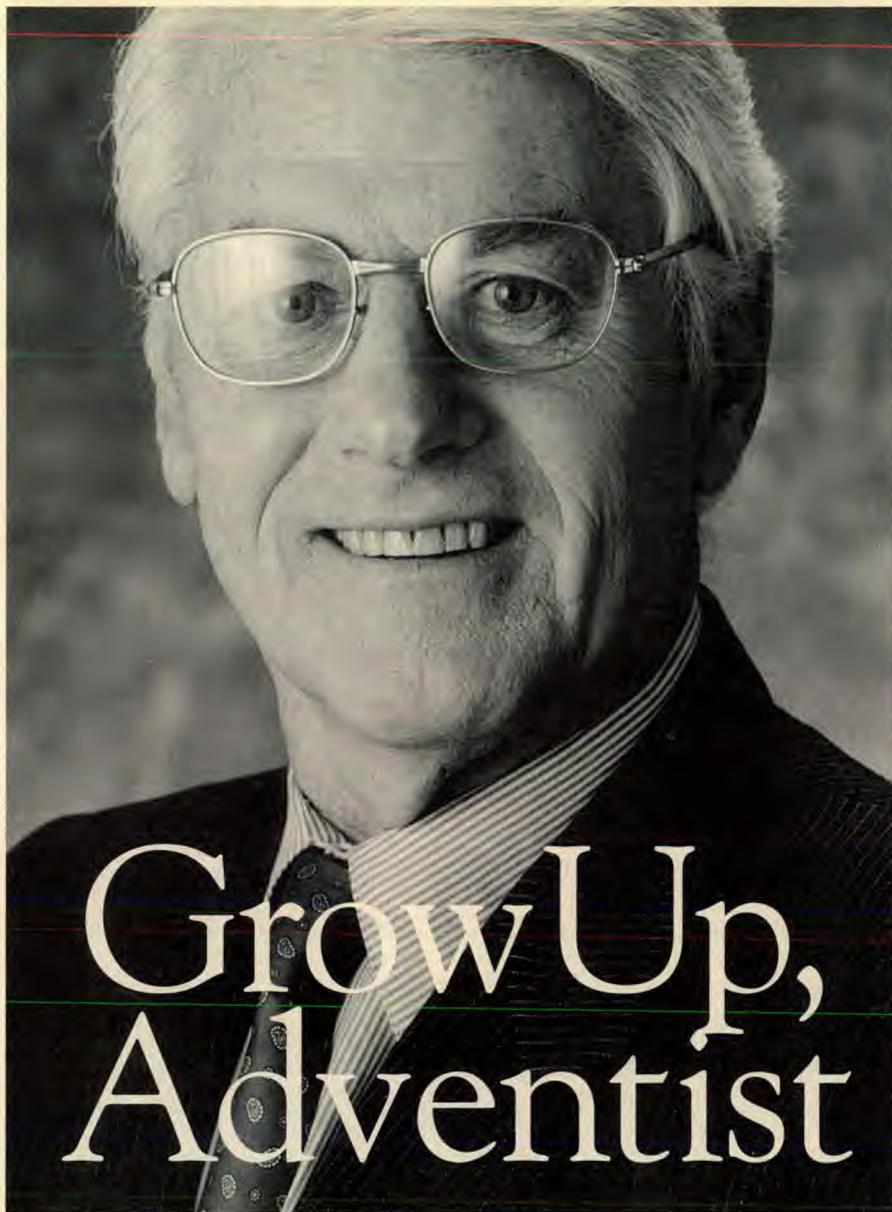
²⁸ 1 Peter 2:5.

²⁹ I'm indebted to Pastor Bill Knott for these terms, which give me "verbal handles" for my mind to grasp.

³⁰ 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 1 Peter 2:5.

Steve Case, Ph.D., has been involved in Adventist youth ministry for more than a dozen years. Currently he is president of Piece of the Pie Ministries, a company that seeks to draw young people into the life of the church.





Grow Up, Adventist

I can't remember when I haven't taught a weekly Sabbath School lesson. Even back when there were only about four of us in the class. But now my church is larger and its membership more diverse. The group has changed, and I guess I've changed, too. But one thing hasn't changed: We still come together each week. We still open our Bibles. We still seek the guidance of the Spirit. And we are always blessed.

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Gems and Jewels

My husband and I have no children, and we would love to adopt an African-American child, even though we are not Black. Most of our friends discourage us. They think there will be identity problems for us and the child—especially the child. What are the odds of success in adoptions like this?

Many sociologists maintain that carefully planned and conducted transracial adoptions can work well for parents and children. One group, Simon and Associates, conducted a definitive study in this regard. After 20 years of observation they concluded that when White parents aggressively pursue ways to expose the child to Black culture (such as taking him or her often to a Black church, and educating the child regarding Black history) these children usually grow up well-adjusted and extremely grateful for persons who rescued them from institutional care.

But it is true that since much of culture is transmitted subconsciously, there is always the danger that children of such adoption will, even with the best of care, become adults with social expectations that do not fit the perceptions and treatment society provides persons of their color.

Nevertheless, I believe that in this matter, in these times, the possible good outweighs the risks. While the best scenario may be that in which the child is reared in the home of ethnic sameness, transracial adoptions are worth considering. That is especially so since there are so many Black babies in need, and evidently not enough Black families requesting.

I am a longtime church elder and highly supportive of the denomination. But in my opinion the General Conference erred when it ruled favorably on wedding rings. Now not only do we have sparkling rings of all kinds in our church, but also, we have other jewelry, most notably earrings. Are earrings now acceptable? If not, what can be done?

At its 1972 Annual Council the General Conference delegates gave initial clarification to the jewelry question, stating, in part, "that in the area of personal adornment

necklaces, earrings, bracelets, rings (including engagement rings), should not be worn. Articles such as watches, brooches, cuff links, tie clasps, etc., should be chosen in harmony with the Christian principles of simplicity, modesty, and economy."

North American Division delegates at their 1986 year-end meeting voted to honor the posture of members who, like Seventh-day Adventists in other parts of the world, feel that the wearing of "a simple marriage band is a symbol of faithfulness to the marriage vow." The action also states that "such persons should be fully

accepted in the fellowship and service of the church."

Both actions recognize plain wedding rings ("band" in the North American action) as nonjewelry and as such a matter for individual decision. However, neither action "rules favorably" on wedding rings. In fact, the NAD action questions the need for their use in its territory, since they are not, as in many parts of the world, deemed obligatory.

Further caution is provided in the NAD statement that ministers are counseled not to perform ring ceremonies, since the wearing of the wedding band still "is not regarded as . . . an imperative custom in North America."

What is unfortunate is that some individuals have abused the option these rulings provide by wearing extravagant wedding rings and other jewelry, including earrings. These individuals go to extremes (some, no doubt, unknowingly) and are in clear violation of both the General Conference and North American Division position.

What can be done about the situation? You, your pastor, and the church board should obtain and study the full text of the two statements referenced above and carefully and prayerfully educate the membership as to their principles. I think you will find them and their *Church Manual* complement biblical, reasonable, and, with proper attention, fully applicable as requisites for membership.

*Much of culture
is transmitted
subconsciously.*

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



Tale of the Quilts

BY MELODY SNOW

From my great-grandmother I inherited two quilts: a four-patch pattern and a Double Wedding Ring. She made the four-patch. Turquoise and pink solid squares are mixed with assorted prints. The pattern is misaligned in the center, so that the solids meet along one strip.

The backing wore off several years ago, and my grandmother replaced it before passing the quilt on to me. Now the front is getting holes. I repair them as I find them, putting patches over patches. Such a technique would probably shock skilled quilters, but this is an old quilt, a used quilt, and as I repair it, it is evolving into something else.

The Double Wedding Ring quilt is an exquisite piece of work made by a friend of my great-grandmother's. It was never finished. Only the top was pieced. I've decided to complete it. A quilter friend has suggested I make it into a wall hanging.

I know that making art out of a lovely quilt that's going on 50 years old is the accepted thing to do. Maybe it is the only way it can survive. But the idea also disturbs me. Such a fate would underscore all the years this quilt was never used.

With the four-patch and its numerous threadbare places, I can curl up without guilt of ruining it and think back over my grandmother's and great-grandmother's lives. I can wonder what part this quilt played. With the Wedding Ring quilt I can't. It doesn't have the wealth of life entwined within.

What If?

As people of the twentieth century, I think we forget that value comes from usefulness, not collectability. Christ seems to speak of this in the parable of the talents (Matt. 25). Let me rework the tale slightly.

A well-to-do man decided to go on a long trip. He called three servants in for final instructions and gave each of them the custodianship of part of his wealth. To the first, he gave five quilts; to the second, three; and to the last, one. Many months later he returned and asked for an accounting.

The first servant returned with the five quilts, but they were no longer new. They had been used by the beggar in the street, the dying, the poor. When the man saw this and learned the reasons, he praised the servant. "Take five more quilts and go out among my people again," he said.

The second servant had been given three quilts. They were worn, too, for he had taken them to a local prison, bringing comfort to the convicted. When the man of the house saw this, he praised this servant also. "Criminals are my people too. Take three more quilts and go again."

The servant with one quilt brought his forward. It was new and untouched. "I knew you would want this back," he said, "so I kept it carefully, wrapping it

up in tissue paper and putting it on a shelf. Here it is in perfect condition."

But the man was not pleased with this servant. Instead of using the quilt to help others, he had hidden it away until the day of reckoning. "Throw this servant out," said the man, "for he does not understand that gifts are given to be used, not cherished as sources of pride."

I think this says that God gives us each talents and abilities not to save but to use. In the process we will acquire scars. We'll get tired. We may feel as though we are accomplishing nothing, since we live in a world that values the pristine and the unworn. But if we let God use us, our lives will intertwine with the lives of others. Like the ragged, well-used four-patch, we will bring comfort to those who need it. And, I think, One who Himself bears scars will look at ours and say, "Well done. Enter in to eternal life with Me." ■



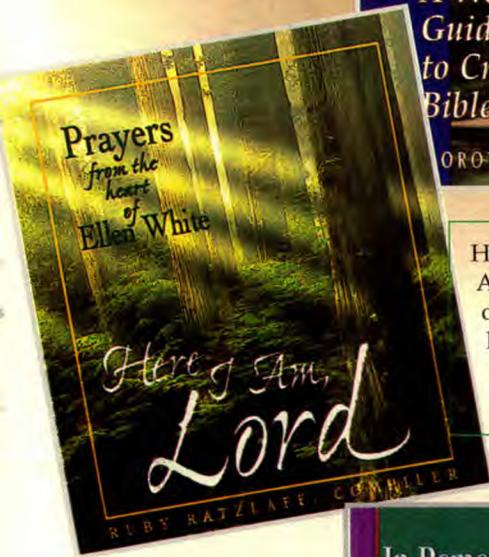
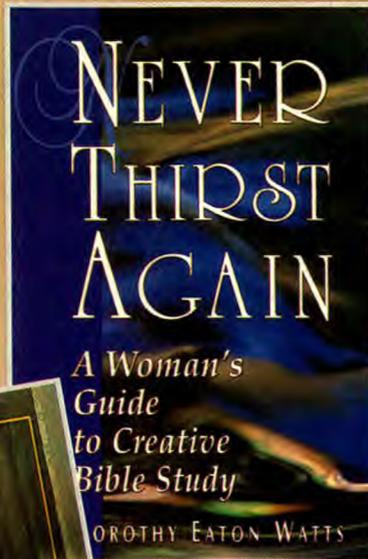
Melody Snow writes from Lillian, Texas.



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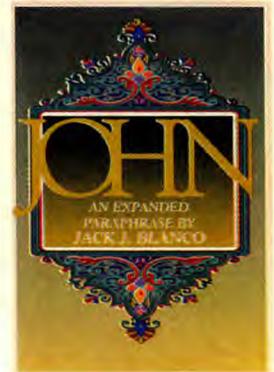
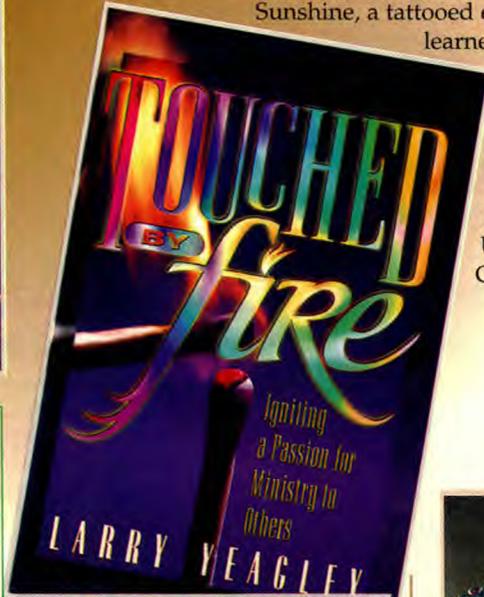
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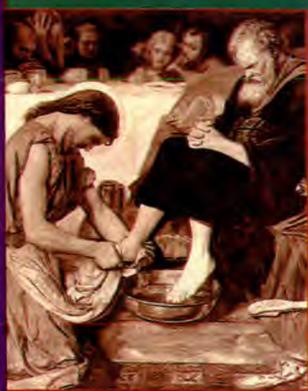


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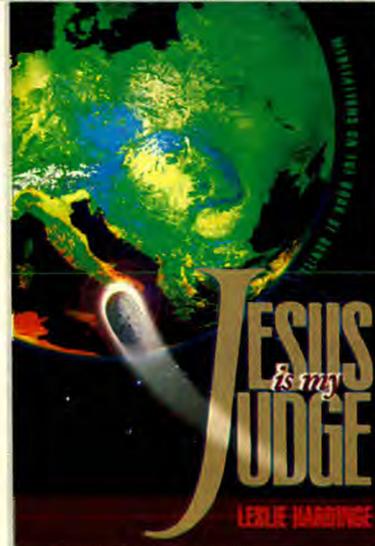
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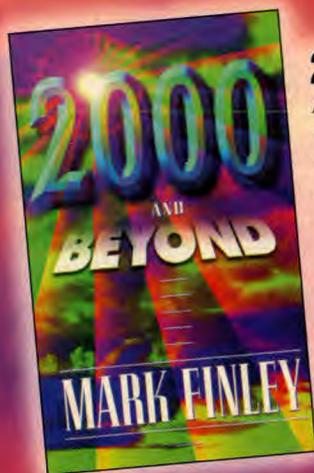


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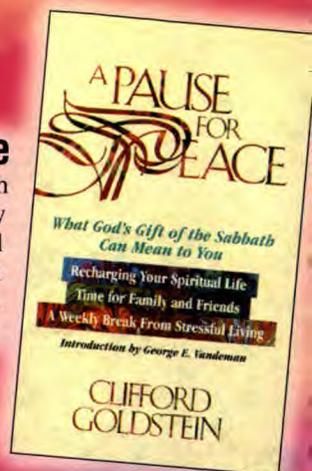
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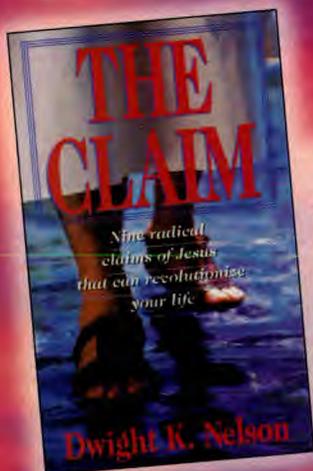
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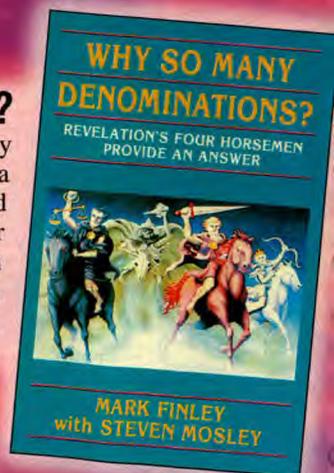
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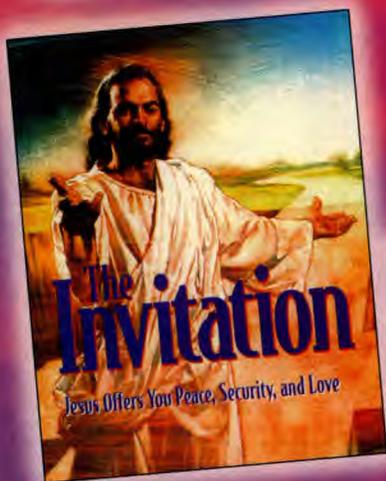
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