



ADVENTIST

Review

January 13, 1998

Cutting Edge

God's Great Big Kingdom

*The author of Present Truth in the Real World
argues for flexibility in mission—as never before.*

**New Feature:
Cutting Edge Conversations**

LETTERS

Mission to the Golden Triangle

William Johnsson's report on David and Jennifer Dill (see "Far and Away," Nov. 20) was great! I help support this family, know them personally, and know of their sincere desire to spread the gospel. I so admire the young families who will go out and live among the people they are trying to convert—as Jesus did. They need our prayers, letters, and encouragement.

—Lynn Rose

SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND

Note: Most of the inside photos accompanying this piece were supplied by Jeremy Duerksen, who was not credited for his excellent work. Our apologies.—Editors.

A Gathering Growl

Bill Knott's succinct evaluation of the Promise Keepers' rally (see "A Gathering Growl," Nov. 20) was most impressive. Emotional unity on such basic issues could easily become a coercive power that destroys individual freedoms.

—Walter Tate

AVON PARK, FLORIDA

This editorial was most perceptive. It would only take a spark, a misconstrued event parlayed by a fanatical leader, to turn such a "sacred assembly" into a deadly mob. Only a courageous politician would dare to

take on such a force—and sadly there aren't too many around.

—Harold H. Mulder

ESCONDIDO, CALIFORNIA

I don't really understand why Knott finds it necessary to look for a sinister purpose to the Promise Keepers. "Why come to the nation's Mall . . . ?" he asks, assuming that if Washington, D.C., is involved, it must be political. But that's not always the case. Gathering on the Mall is a great way to get attention. And they got attention—some good, some bad. I see no political threat in an effort focused on getting closer to God and serving others. Service is what Christianity is all about.

—Douglas Kingsfield

BAVARIA, GERMANY

Divorce and Remarriage Commission

In "Adventists Study Divorce and Remarriage" (Nov. 20) Jonathan Gallagher reports that world leaders met in September to discuss the various issues raised by divorce and remarriage in a Christian context. Have any members of this commission suffered the pain of divorce?

—J. Blake Hall

VIA E-MAIL

Two of the commission's 20 members have experienced divorce.—Editors.

Book Mark

Thanks for the monthly Book Mark feature and for the insights of your reviewers. Recent reviews—such as Ella Rydzewski's November 20 thoughts on *Life After Death*—give a wider viewpoint on many topics in popular discussion in the secular media.

—Bert Cooper

GRASS VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

Representative?

On page 20 of the November 13 World Edition is a picture of some of the policy makers for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Of the 55 people pictured, five appear to be women. I could identify no young people. Is this a reasonable representation of our church's policy makers?

—W. R. Olson, M.D., F.A.C.S.

MUNISING, MICHIGAN

When the Family Splits (cont.)

I am very grateful for William Johnsson's "When the Family Splits" (November NAD Edition). Timely. Insightful. Excellent. It is sad that we must consider the growing number (though a very small percentage) of our churches and pastors who fall into the congregational quicksand. The issue here is not just a church governance matter, but an attitude, a mindset that overlooks who we really are and why we are here.

—Phil Dunham

CANYONVILLE, OREGON

This article was very disturbing to me. Johnsson says that we are more than a local church; we are a worldwide church. I agree, but could that be why so many of our churches in North America are dead, why only half of the people on our books go to church? If the pastors can't even pay for the electricity, how can they afford programs for reaching the lost in their local areas? It seems that a little more could be kicked back to the local churches, which are just as important as churches overseas.

—Doug Geraci

GERMANTOWN, MARYLAND

Though no reliable attendance figures exist for the entire North American Division, calculations based on reports from various unions show that 56 percent (483,414) of members attend church on Sabbath, says the NAD Secretariat.—Editors.

I knew nothing of either of these congregations and appreciate Johnsson's courage in speaking to the topic. Too often I hide my eyes and ears from areas that I wish didn't exist. They rarely go away. Because of this article I have begun to crystallize my own response to that situation, should I ever need one, and I am grateful that I have Johnsson's balanced words with which to start. I appreciated his sharing his knowledge accumulated over time as to the eventual outcome of such decisions.

—Mary Bishop

VIA E-MAIL

I found the rhetorical question regarding Willow Creek Community Church's influence on Adventists to be very troubling. Twice I've been to Willow Creek's leadership conference. I didn't go to find theology or to wander down some congregational pathway. As Johnsson pointed out, senior pastor Bill Hybels emphasizes over and over not to go back to your home

church and try to turn it into a miniature Willow Creek. Because some congregations wander away from the denomination, why paint all Willow Creek alumni with the same congregational brush?

A group of us in a suburb of Portland, for instance, are planting a new Adventist Church. Though many in the core group have been to Willow Creek and one of us still carries "baggage" about the way an employment situation was handled, we remain very committed to being part of the sisterhood of churches. I believe careful research will prove that the vast majority of those who have been to Willow Creek remain firmly committed to the Adventist structure, even with its sometimes frustrating ways.

—Jay E. Prall

OREGON CITY, OREGON

Those who split from the Adventist Church do so from a variety of positions. Those who follow them show a willingness to follow an individual rather than their own studied theological position. True Adventists have a loyalty to God and a sense of fellowship within the organization. I ache as I see good members enamored by cute phrases rather than listening to the Word of God. I see the willingness to follow "what is emotionally pleasing" as tempting and deadly as was original sin.

The seeds of the theology/spirituality controversy are in many churches. As we near the end-time, loyalties will become evidenced and we shall see a falling away. In no way should we encourage it, but in no way should we become discouraged by it.

—William R. Johnson, M.D.

CHICO, CALIFORNIA

ADVENTIST Review

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NEXT WEEK

My Dad and His \$100 Bill

He kept it in case of emergencies—someone else's.

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.

The Adventist Review (ISSN 0161-1119), published since 1949, is the general paper of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is published by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and is printed 40 times a year each Thursday except the first Thursday of each month by the Review and Herald® Publishing Association. Periodicals postage paid at Hagerstown, MD 21740. Copyright © 1998, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Publishing Board: Robert S. Folkenberg, chair; Phil Follett, vice-chair; Lowell Cooper; William G. Johnson; A. C. McClure; Dorothy Watts; Ted N. C. Wilson; Martin Ytreberg; Robert Nixon, legal advisor

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E-mail: Internet: reviewmag@adventist.org
CompuServe network: 74617,15

Subscriptions: US\$38.97 for 40 issues, US\$50.97 for 52 issues. Add \$10.20 postage for addresses outside North America. To order, send your name, address, and payment to your local Adventist Book Center or *Adventist Review* Subscription Desk, Box 1119, Hagerstown, MD 21741. Single copy, US\$2.50. Prices subject to change without notice.

Subscription queries and changes of address: Call 1-800-456-3991, 301-791-7000, ext. 2439, or E-mail shanson@rhpa.org.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *Adventist Review*, 55 West Oak Ridge Drive, Hagerstown, MD 21740.

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PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.
Vol. 175, No. 3

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For All Generations

BILL KNOTT

On the rolling hills of Cornwall in southwestern England lies the smallest scrap of a village. There aren't many good ways to get to Harrowbarrow, nor many good reasons for going there.

No mighty sailors left from there to tame the seven seas. No plaques in the schoolyard proclaim that some prime minister called this hamlet home. No, in fact, the only thing of note I know about Harrowbarrow is that my grandfather came from there, that the man whose name I carry loved the rolling green hills along the river and the stone and plaster houses of the town. The grandfather I never met makes this town famous for me.

I spent two days in Harrowbarrow when I was in college, walking the lanes fringed with primrose and broom, listening to a kindly Anglican priest tell stories of the parish, meeting a few long-distance relatives who smiled at this eager boy from America out looking for his roots. I searched the slag heaps of the mines that surround Harrowbarrow, finally deciding on two slices of granite that decorate my bookcase today—not worth a thing to anyone who knows his rocks, but worth a vast amount to me. Those rocks are pieces of my roots.

Even more important to me was the small frame building that once housed the Methodist church. Today it's only a general store, heavy with the smell of cheese and pipe smoke. Locals still remember it by its original name—Knott Chapel—the only building to which the family left its name. It's comforting for an Adventist preacher to discover that his ancestors were faithful churchgoers—even if they were Methodists! The God of my family tree was the God who called men and women to holiness, who inspired men like John and Charles Wesley to do great deeds for Him.

But the God of my family tree was also the God worshiped in a small Catholic church in the Apennines of southern Italy. Often I pause to think of the thousands of prayers that my Italian ancestors must have said before the candles in the church—prayers for protection, for peace, for prosperity in the vineyards and the fields. And today, as I rejoice in a peaceful land and savor the fruit from my garden, I believe that their prayers are being answered. The God of my family tree heard the prayers of devout Catholics in the mountains.

*God tended that
family tree
of yours.*

The God of my ancestors must have also smiled approvingly at the sight of dripping Yankee Baptists climbing out of farm ponds at Sunday baptismal services. In the farm country along the New York-Quebec border and in the wooded hills of the Berkshires, several generations of rock-ribbed Baptists took shape. These Vreelands have been in America for 350 years or so, with a few years in Canada when they ended up on the wrong side of the Revolutionary War. When I stand in a lake on a summer afternoon to baptize someone who has taken a stand for Jesus, I thank God for

the Baptists in my background. And I smile when I remember the story of the Friday afternoon that my English grandfather told his future in-laws he couldn't work for them on Saturday—and thus provoked an entire evening of controversy. The God of my ancestors must have looked down on more than one rip-roaring theological fight over the decades.

I could go on, for there is more—more about Finnish Lutherans and French Catholics and Yankee Congregationalists in the family I married into. But by now, the point is clear enough. My story is neither special nor unique. Each of us has a story at least as interesting—a story of a God who patiently watched the growth of our family tree with love and tenderness. Our ancestors may have been French Huguenots or Peruvian Incas or Russian Orthodox or Lebanese Muslims, but when they knelt down on the ground and poured out their hearts to God, He read the secret faith of their hearts, and He honored it. And slowly, inexorably, through the decades and the centuries, God tended that family tree. Each of us stands at the endpoint of a process in which God was always at work, building up truth, building up His church, answering prayer, honoring faith.

I'm grateful for the strong Methodists, the good Catholics, the tough-minded Baptists who make up my family tree. And I look forward to that better land where we will join as part of God's great redeemed family to praise Him for being a God who worked in history—in our history—to give us a knowledge of Himself. He has truly been, as the psalmist says, our dwelling place for all generations.



Roll in the Snow

Please permit a swan dive back into childhood. Among my family's more unusual winter traditions was an insane scramble from hot tub¹ to snowdrift—and then back again. (Some of you will identify.)

We'd go skiing at Big Sky, Montana, with our relatives from Wahpeton and after, like, six thousand frozen chairlift rides—*are we having fun yet?*—we'd change into our conservative Adventist swimsuits and grin at each other as we eased into the gurgling, googling liquid.

After a while, though, the hot tub didn't seem so hot anymore, so my aunt Lorrie would holler, "OK, shall we do it?"

"Yeahhhhhh!" we'd holler back.

And with panic in our eyes, we'd rush madly outside into the frigid air and roll in the snow and yelp back to the hot tub where the comparatively boiling bubbles soothed our pathetic shivering bodies. If the hot tub had felt only OK *before* our snow-roll, afterward it felt absolutely heavenly.

Sometimes, to truly appreciate warmth, you have to get cold.

I'll be candid. Over the past few months I've been really wrestling with this church. No, not with our message. This past weekend I reread the Bible's last book and became convicted anew of our prophetic mandate: We *must* keep telling of Jesus and of His revelation—in that order.

It isn't the timeless truths that I struggle with (we specialize in those), but the *timely* truths—the way we do mission on Planet Earth in 1998. I've shared some of these concerns—being honest in our communications and outreach, valuing the different packages people come in and the different needs they bring, empowering nontraditional Adventist youth and young adults, encouraging *public* discussion on that which many discuss privately—and won't rehash them here.

Such concerns have increasingly plagued me to the point that I have trouble dismissing them from my mind. I go home after work and sit with my wife and baby girl and *try* not to think about them, but still do. It isn't healthy, and it isn't fair to my family.

I won't fake easy answers, because I have none. But along with attempting to see things through others' eyes, channeling my energy into ministry, and recognizing that I too am part of the problem, I've found something else that helps:



a roll in the snow. No, not a literal roll in the snow (though that might have some merit), but a "getting away" from the seemingly lukewarm swirl we call the Adventist Church.

For me, rolling in the snow means: playing in a county sports league with non-Christians; observing how people treat each other in public life; listening to talk radio; keeping up with happenings in other churches—you know, the ones that at first glance seem problem-free.

When I do this, when I taste and touch the cold, windblown life *outside* the Adventist Church, it reminds me how comparatively pleasant life is *inside*. It reminds me how much I love this church, this people . . .

I love the people at my local church.

Each week I count the days until we can sing songs together, albeit in not-so-perfect harmony.

I love the people at the General Conference, where I work. As a rule I find them to be some of the most wonderful, devoted, balanced people in the church.

I love the *Review* readers I meet. I love that this past week Panama's Victor Moreno called just to chat and encourage; that Oregon's Nancy Kooy sent me a newspaper clipping about sea horses because she thinks I have a "fascination" with them. Hilarious.

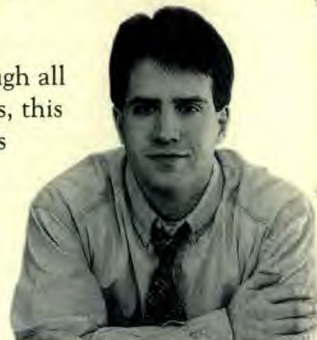
In his *The Jesus I Never Knew*,² Philip Yancey shares his biggest disappointment with the body of Christ—that it has always so "faintly [resembled]" Christ Himself.

I share this disappointment—in myself and my church. You undoubtedly do too. And sometimes it helps to process our grief with each other, to cry it out together.

Still, we must keep splashing, churning, paddling. Because through all our personal and corporate failures, this remains the family of God. And as an occasional roll in the snow reminds us, it's warmest here.

¹ Can also be called a whirlpool. We didn't use "Jacuzzi"; it sounded too seductive.

² Pp. 233-236.



ADVENTIST LIFE

One cold, misty Sabbath morning, my 5-year-old granddaughter Alexis was on her way to church with her father. As they turned onto the main highway heading toward the city, Alexis looked up to see what seemed like hundreds of birds sitting on the power lines.

Studying them for a few minutes, she said, "Daddy, they are going to have a meeting, and they are sitting nice and quiet, waiting for it to start."

—Ruth Wilkins-Moore, Pasadena, California



ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY CREWS

After the church service a young non-Adventist couple and their small son were invited to a member's home for dinner. While in the kitchen preparing the food, the host explained to the young mother that the entrée was gluten steak.

The little boy, who had been nearby listening, went running into the living room shouting, "Daddy! Daddy! They shot a gluten!"

—Phyllis Shoop, Hazelton, British Columbia

HERALD'S TRUMPET

Hi, kids! Did you have a merry Christmas? Remember, it's a new year, so when you write the date on your papers at school, be sure to put 1998, not 1997. If you make a mistake, don't worry—even the *Review* editors forget things sometimes.



Now, let's see . . . what were we talking about? Oh, yes—Herald the *Review* angel is back, and Herald's trumpet is again hidden somewhere in this magazine.

In our last contest (Dec. 11 World Edition) the three winners were Keaton Smith from Altamonte Springs, Florida; Briana Sullivan from Granada Hills, California; and Eric Armstrong from Franklin, Tennessee. Keaton, Briana, and Eric received an official *Guide* water bottle.

Where was Herald's trumpet? In the cartoon on page 7—the Give & Take page. How about that!

If you can find the trumpet this time, send a postcard telling us *where* to: Herald's Trumpet at the Give & Take address below. The prize is *Guide's Greatest Stories*, compiled by Randy Fishell.

Have fun searching—and keep trumpet-ing Jesus' love through 1998 and beyond!

THE LORD'S PRAYER

My Father, my Protector, my God, who dwells in the heavens so high,

Who made the earth—all oceans, mountains, rivers, and sky—

Your name is to be revered. Your presence is so divine, So special, and so holy; above all the universe You shine.

Please take us to heaven soon, in Your mighty kingdom up above.

Please take control of my life, through Your guidance and Your love.

Forgive my sins and careless wrongs in my struggle to do what's right.

Thank You for being understanding and kind when it comes to the human plight. Help me to have a forgiving spirit when it comes to making amends, And help me to remember when to say no when it comes to the crowd and to friends.

Keep Satan away, delivering us from sin, so that we may see the way, For Yours is my heart, the world, and all, and I long to be with You someday. My life is Yours, to the All-powerful One, the glory is Yours with no end. May You come again soon to take us home, and until that time—amen.

—Becky James, senior, Mount Pisgah Academy, Candler, North Carolina



WE NEED YOU

Send Give & Take submissions to . . . Give & Take, *Adventist Review*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904; Fax: 301-680-6638; E-mail: 74532.2564@CompuServe.com. Please include phone number. Submissions will not be returned.

Lions and Tigers and Bears

Getting in step with the God of variety

BY JON PAULIEN

The following is excerpted from an address at a recent church-planting conference. We have retained the elements of the oral delivery.—Editors.

A FEW DAYS AGO I WAS driving along, and I saw something strange up ahead—something I'd never seen on the road before. As I approached, the object of attention gradually came into focus. You may find this hard to believe, but it was a lioness and her cub walking down the road toward me.

It was like "Whoa, roll up the windows!" But the lioness acted as if I were not even there and led her cub right past my car. This was certainly a new experience for me.

Now, if you had been me, what would you have done? Called the police? the zoo? the dog catcher? Or maybe just kept driving to see if there were any other animals out there.

There is no right answer to this quiz, at least not yet. The answer depends on the circumstances. You see, I wasn't all that surprised to see two lions on the road—because I was

driving my car through Kruger National Park in South Africa. And while a lion sighting on the road is noteworthy even in Kruger, the animals are totally free to roam, and it's people who are in cages—four-wheeled cages. It's amazingly common to see elephants, baboons, or zebras crossing the road, and lions are not unexpected.

This experience underlined for me two realities that I'd like to emphasize:

1. We have entered a time in history during which there seem to be no universal solutions. Circumstances alter cases. We are unlikely to find any set strategy for reaching secular people or even for planting churches. General principles? Yes. But principles that need to be applied with a breathtaking flexibility that will scare the daylights out of many Seventh-day Adventists. It's a time for flexibility such as we have never seen before.

2. God loves variety. As Bill Hybels likes to say, "God is a variety junkie." When you think of elephants, lions, rhinoceroses, hyenas, hippos, koalas, platypuses, to name only a few animals, you come to realize that God is extremely creative and that He loves variety almost to a fault.

We haven't even begun to consider birds, fish, plants, or even styles of planets and stars.



And while I gain this from an earthly experience, I believe it to be scriptural as well.

Consider the fact that there are four Gospels. This tells us these same two things. First, there is no set way to proclaim the gospel. Second, God loves variety. Not even an inspired writer can tell the story of Jesus in such a way that it needs no retelling in other forms or in other words. That's why there are four Gospels in the New Testament.

Let me underline the point from the Old Testament as well. God gave the same vision to two people: a pagan king and a Hebrew prophet. I'm speaking of Daniel 2 and 7. God is incredibly flexible; He meets people where they are. To the pagan king Nebuchadnezzar, God portrays the future in terms of an idol. Why not? For Nebuchadnezzar the nations were bright, shining representations of the gods they worshiped. To Daniel, though, the nations were not

beautiful shining images, but vicious carnivorous beasts that were destroying his people.

Even for God there's no set way to reveal Himself. God Himself recognizes that the principles of flexibility and variety are critical in dealing with people.

When I look back on my past 20 years I have discovered that even though there is still hair on my head, I'm a lot like Charlie Brown. You remember Charlie Brown—very slow on the uptake. That's me. Very slow on the uptake. I look at my history and realize that God was trying to teach me all along what took me 20 years to begin to learn.

Reaching Secular New Yorkers

I began pastoring in New York City—the secular cocapital with Hollywood. I was given a church that had formerly been an ethnic church—a German church—and there were still German-speaking people. So the conference felt that I might be somewhat useful there, since I do speak two languages. The church was in a German community that had gone through some changes but was still largely Caucasian, now mostly English-speaking.

But as I reviewed the history of evangelism in that church over the previous 10

to 15 years, I became aware that the church had had virtually no impact on the surrounding community. Instead, evangelism in that church was drawing mostly from neighborhoods two to three miles down the road—ethnic neighborhoods: Black, Hispanic, Asian, etc. And in those neighborhoods were many large churches between 200 and 1,000 members. My church had been simply reaping what others were already reaping.

So I began to ask myself: What is the problem? Why are Caucasian people so hard to reach with the gospel? Why was it that in New York City at that time, of the more than 20,000 Seventh-day Adventists, fewer than 300 belonged to the majority culture? Since progress among Caucasians was not being made, I developed the mistaken idea that it might be a somewhat racial thing—that somehow Whites were more secular and maybe some of the ethnic groups were by definition less secular. So I began to wrestle with that question—How could I bridge the gap? How could I begin to reach some of those secular people?

Meanwhile, in 1978 the conference came up with an idea that was my first exposure to church planting. On a map of New York City they identified 10 Caucasian neighborhoods of

250,000-plus people with no Adventist presence.



PHOTO © PHOTODISC

Our goal was to start planting churches in each of these. One or two plants were actually attempted and were very traditional in nature. At least one of those is still alive today.

From time to time big-name evangelists would come to our conference and harangue the pastors with their success and our failure. They would say, in effect, "If only you would work a little harder, you would have success in these areas as well." But I noticed that when they came, they avoided those 10 areas. They always held their meetings in places in which the numbers were predictable and where no impact was made on my community.

I remember asking one of these leading Adventist evangelists, "Can you name one Caucasian church in North America that is implementing and succeeding at what you've just suggested?" He didn't know of one.

Discovery: Targeting

I began wrestling with the issue and studying and praying, and I came up with a topic that secular New Yorkers would be interested in: longevity and vitality. Then I began trying to figure out how I would present the Adventist message in the context of health, longevity, etc. We made up 9,000 brochures that said "Call for Life" and targeted (my first experience with targeting groups) the neighborhoods closest to our church. Seventy-five people came; it was very exciting. They were all Caucasian English-speaking. We worked with that group and had some success.

The next year I received a special appropriation from the conference, and we said, "Let's really hit the neighborhood." This time we sent out 62,000 invitations. It was a Revelation Seminar, and seven people came. [Laughter.] That was my first clue that topic and audience may not always go together.

(Let me just say, as an aside, that as a specialist in the book of Revelation I'm delighted to share with you my conviction that at the present time we

have a window of opportunity for sharing Revelation in the secular community. Because of Waco, movies like *The Terminator*, and people like The Artist Formerly Known as Prince, there is suddenly an interest in the book of Revelation in the secular community.)

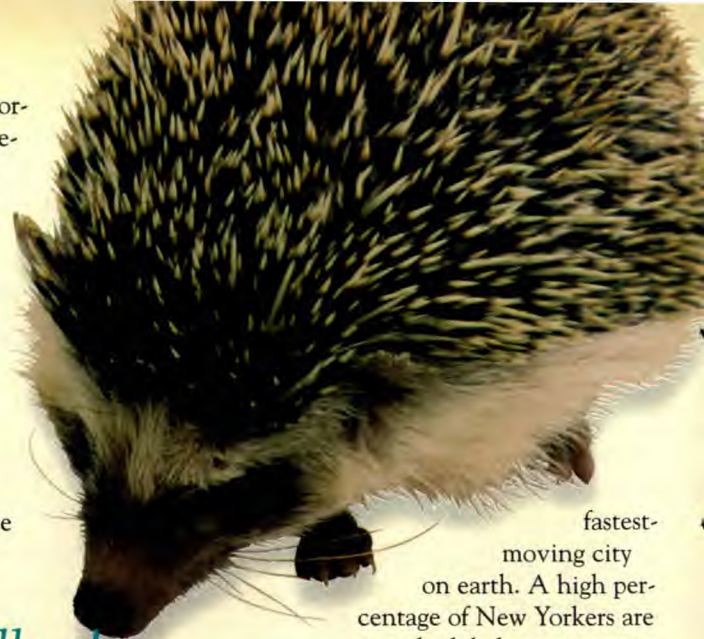
So I began to realize

Generally the traditional package does not seem to be reaching the secular audience.

that felt needs are crucial in reaching out to secular people: Meet the people where they are. Guess what, the New Testament was into that 2,000 years ago: Meet the people where they are. But to me that was a new insight, and I began to realize that if we could latch on to something that was unique to New York, maybe we could reach people on a large scale.

It was around this time that New York City was beginning what became known as the "van ministry." The members would go out in vans and meet secular people on the streets—taking their blood pressure and offering them a Bible study. Out of 100 New Yorkers who'd come on the van for a blood pressure check, three to five were taking Bible studies. Not bad.

So some folk got together and asked the question "What is the number-one issue in New York City? What is the felt need above all other felt needs?" It was obvious once we thought of it: stress. New York is probably the



fastest-moving city on earth. A high percentage of New Yorkers are overscheduled, overcommitted, and totally stressed out.

So a series of lessons was developed called Power to Cope—Bible study guides for dealing with stress. As people came on the vans for blood pressure checks, they'd be asked, "Would you be interested in Bible study guides that help people deal with stress?" And 85 to 87 percent of the people accepted. One day the van parked on Wall Street—the main street of secular America: 242 people came on the van, and 242 people accepted Bible lessons! It must have been a *really* bad day on Wall Street, but it was becoming clear that secular people could be reached when they were met at the point of their felt need.

Not About Race . . .

Meanwhile, a real good friend who was pastoring in the Northeastern Conference invited me to help him with a tent effort in Crown Heights, an ethnic neighborhood just five miles from my church. For three weeks we pitched a tent there, and we baptized 83 people. In contrast, I had pushed this longevity thing for nine months, three or four nights a week, and baptized 12.

One day my friend called me to gloat a bit and ask what was wrong with me. I began to share with him my insights on secular thought. Suddenly he stopped and said, "Wait a minute. It just hit me. Those 83 we baptized—not one of them was an American."

Every one was from Haiti or Jamaica and had arrived in the past two or three years.

His mouth was open, my mouth was open, and it hit me. I said, "You know, Jim, it's no different in the Black community. You get a little money; you get settled; you have a decent neighborhood. Secularization is just as real as it is in any other community."

It began to dawn on me that this was not about race or ethnicity, that secularization was across the board, and that there was a vast variety of target audiences even within an ethnic group.

Slow on the uptake. But God kept teaching me.

The first Sabbath I attended my church in New York City, 45 people were sitting there. I know now that I didn't have a clue what I was doing, but somehow, by the grace of God, three and a half years later 170 people were attending. Most of the baptisms in those years were Caucasian and male. I'm not sure why I attracted mostly men, because that's very unusual, but God was in it. And the new people brought creativity in leadership and energized everything that was going on.

What did I learn during those years? I learned that traditional evangelism was not working with my target audience. And with exceptions, I think that it probably still is generally true. I suspect that part of the genius of NET '95 and NET '96 is that some secular people may be attracted more to a video presentation than to a live speaker because they spend much more time with video than they do with live experts. So we may be seeing some interesting further dynamics there.

But I still find generally the traditional package does not seem to be reaching the secular audience—with exceptions, of course.

I learned, however, that secular people could be reached where they were. They needed to be reached by focusing on their needs. By listening. And evangelism for secular people begins with listening, not with talking. Through variety, flexibility, listening,

focusing on needs, they can be reached in surprising numbers.

After coming to the seminary I received the opportunity from the General Conference Committee on Secularism to do research on reaching secular people. It was in that research that I hammered out the basic outlines of the outreach principles relating Adventism to secular people. And my understanding has not deviated a whole lot in the 12 or 13 years since then.

In sharing this research, I discovered to my surprise that Seventh-day Adventists are hungry for the lost.

Churches have genes, temperaments, and psychological histories just as individuals do.

Often the lost are in their own families, if nothing else. This seminar on reaching secular people seems to burn with fire wherever it goes on six continents now. I developed it with North America in mind, but from Africa, from Asia, from Australia, people are saying, "This connects. This is what we are experiencing too."

Clashes at the Local Church

During these past 16 years I've been a layperson in a local church. It has been a whole new perspective for me. In those 16 years we have had nine pastors and two significant periods of church growth. Both of them took place during periods between pastors. I don't mean the least disrespect to any of those pastors; I'm just observing what took place.

On one of these occasions we got a little tired of guest speakers and invited the youth to see if they could do

some services for us. By youth, we're talking 14 through 19. And they began to plan the worship service, developing skits to go with it, occasionally even preaching—although I or one or two others usually did the preaching. A fascinating thing happened: in a matter of three or four months attendance went from 65 to an average of 140. One Sabbath the count was 170. I knew something had really changed when I arrived at 9:15 a.m. and there wasn't a space anywhere in the parking lot. That's 15 minutes before Sabbath school was scheduled to begin!

About 90 percent of the church was in full support of the youth takeover. To make it even better, we were granted with a pastor who was the best of the nine by far—someone ideally suited for the situation.

But the personality clashes and the divisions in the church began to increase. And the deadlock resulted in the death of a dream. It wasn't what anybody wanted. There is no one in particular to blame, but the division, the mixed commitments, the slight differences of vision—for some reason we couldn't pull it together. And today my church is about where it was before—attendance of about 60 to 70 for Sabbath, with a lot of people wondering if they should be someplace else.

I don't know why we had to go through that. But I have to sit down and say, "What is there to learn?"

I learned that even good pastors and the best intentions can be a real barrier to growth—because if somehow the pastor's vision and the vision of the church are even slightly apart, if everyone starts insisting that their way is the *only* way, the thing can crash even with the best of abilities and the best of intentions.

Churches have genes, temperaments, and psychological histories just as individuals do. Churches have genes—pastors have them; members have them; administrators have them. It's real! And when the genes and psychological histories don't match, the thing often doesn't fly.

In an age of variety and the need for flexibility, competence alone is not

the answer. Somehow the system needs to foster genetic matching and cell division. A good outreach for secular people is not enough. The church environment is critical to both growth and retention. And where you have a mixed commitment, where there is division, it leads to a muddled mission and, in the end, discouragement.

The Answer

The answer to the problem of church temperament was church planting, but I didn't get it yet. And our church didn't get it at that point in time either.

It was shortly afterward that I sat down to write a book—kind of a brave thing for Charlie Brown to do after all those failures. I wasn't really sure what I was saying yet in this book (*Present Truth in the Real World*), but in the process of writing I stumbled onto something critical: Change is a very wrenching experience for most people, even when the results are positive. I learned that it is unfair to try to

wrench a church away from those who have given decades of faithful service to it, even if they are only 10 percent of the current body. It is unfair to wrench a church away from where it has been and say, "You've had your day; now it's our turn." Having a church temperament and history imprinted in the corporate genes means that maintaining the status quo has become a matter of conscience, even where biblical requirements are not at stake. And it is a terrible thing

to force anyone to go against their conscience.

I have learned, for example, that it is unwise to try to make large changes in worship style or in a church's perception of mission, even when it would be a positive change for many. Too many souls are troubled; too many hearts are broken. The world has enough tears already. I appeal to those who have a passion for reaching secu-

It is unfair to wrench a church away and say, "You've had your day; now it's our turn."

lar people and for planting churches to have compassion on those who do not. Coercion and force are tools of Satan, even when exerted in a good cause. It is a terrible thing to force people to go against their consciences.

It's far better to start up a fresh congregation with a clear target and mission than to try to change a church set in its ways for generations. Planting *new* churches accomplishes so many things that could have saved me from this learning curve. It grows the kingdom of God, which had been my goal all along. It meets people where they are, which is what God does. It circumvents the problem of genes by providing a way for every gene to reach out to its companion in a lost world. New church plants would allow every Seventh-day Adventist to reach people they are uniquely equipped to reach. Church planting allows for flexibility. There's no set solution. There is not one way to be a church. You've got to sit down and carve out your own core values as a group.

But church plants do not occur without opposition. The exciting call to a fresh approach to mission will attract the best and the brightest from existing churches. This will tempt people in the existing church to see church planting as a power game or even as a threat to the cause of God. They will be tempted to burden with accusations and innuendo the lives of those bravely leaving comfortable

church venues for the uncertainty of new plants. Leaving a comfortable institutional setting is never easy—and it is often made unnecessarily hard by bitter and endless criticism.

I appeal to those who prefer life in more traditional churches not to hedge the way of others, but to seize the opportunity to achieve real greatness. The greatest statement ever made by a human being was made by John the Baptist: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). That was the height of human expression. Outside of Jesus Himself, no human being ever reached such a high level as John the Baptist when he said that.

I'm thrilled that my slow-on-the-uptake book has played a part in setting a climate within Seventh-day Adventism for both secular outreach and also church planting. And I suspect that the movement has progressed to the point where it has passed me by. I was slow learning, and I'll always be slow learning, but God's hand is still on the wheel. He will finish this work with or without our cooperation. But if we are willing to learn from Him and to follow wherever He leads, we will discover that the best days of this church are still ahead of us. ■

Jon Paulien is a professor of New Testament at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, and

author of Present Truth in the Real World and What the Bible Says About the End-time.

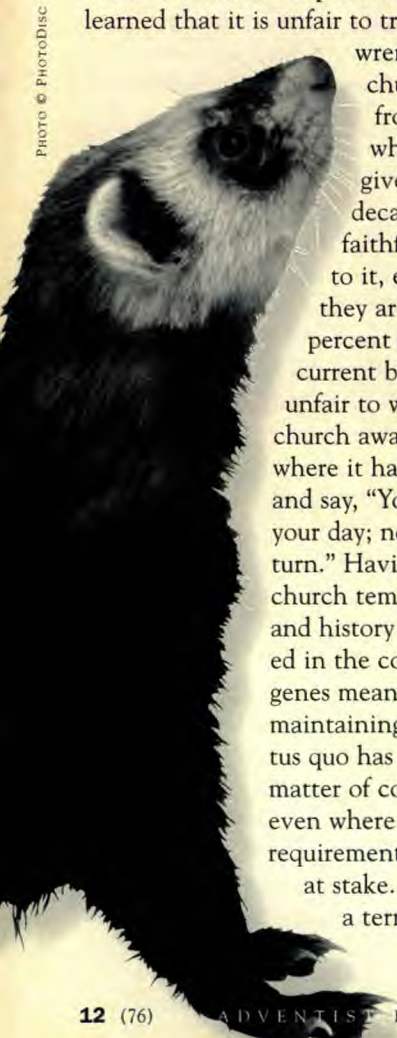


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The Church: Clubhouse or Community?

When our daughter moved away from home, she put in a request for transfer to the new church she started attending. Her home church recommended her transfer, but her new church turned her down on the grounds that they "didn't know her very well." We at her home church felt like we had been slapped in the face, and so did she. She stopped attending that church and has since started attending another—but has never again requested to be transferred. My daughter was hurt and humiliated, and I'm angry. How can a church turn down a request for membership when another church recommends the transfer? My daughter is a good girl. To my knowledge she's never done anything worthy of this embarrassment. This needs an answer.

Allan and Deirdre reply:

Your pain and frustration over this event is completely understandable.

But in order to prevent a bad situation from becoming worse, there may also be an opportunity in all of this for you to encourage her to seek clearer answers about the reasons her request for transfer was turned down. Has she spoken with the pastor or head elder of the church? Have they given her any further explanation of their decision?

Encouraging your daughter to seek reconciliation with the church leaders who appear to have offended her is the biblical way (see Matt. 18:15-17) and holds the greatest chance for promoting healing.

Having said that, we are also frustrated that incidents like this are not as rare as they ought to be. Given your account, that group seems far more like a clubhouse than a church.

Clubhouses are inclined toward keeping a select membership. They have their own codes and secret handshakes, and a language that they alone understand. Their screening process is very stringent, and in many ways an ethos of "keeping others out" blares as the prominent goal of a clubhouse.

In contrast, a church endeavors to embody Christ and His ministry in all aspects of its function. A church seeks out people and embraces new faces as part of the family. Acceptance oozes from such communities, and the world takes notice. We are repeatedly challenged by Stanley Hauerwas's task definition of a community of character:

"The social ethical task of the church, therefore, is to be the kind of community that tells rightly the story of Jesus. . . . We, no less than the first Christians, are the continuation of the truth made possible by God's rule.

We continue this truth when we see that the struggle of each to be faithful to the gospel is essential to our own lives. I understand my own story through seeing the different ways in which others are called to be His disciples. If we so help one another, perhaps, like the early Christians when challenged

about the viability of their faith, we can say, 'But see how we love one another.'"

The contrasts between clubhouses and communities is clear, although they may both have a Seventh-day Adventist church sign out front. Maybe the former needs to post a "members only" placard out front to save us all some grief.

Welcome to 1998! Thanks to all who shared your questions and letters with us last year. Your questions and comments make X-CHANGE relevant and challenging. Send us your questions about young adult life, Christian lifestyle, and Generation X culture to: The X-CHANGE, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; or via E-mail to dream_VISION_ministries@CompuServe.com.

* Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press).

Allan and Deirdre Martin are cofounders of *dre.am VISION* ministries, which strives to empower young people in Christian lifestyle and leadership.



God Is Not

*Shocking as it may sound, it's true.
And I want to tell you why.*

BY JEFF BROMME

I SUSPECT THAT OF ALL CREATION, human beings stand alone in fashioning the concept of fairness. Whereas instinct, breeding, and the quest for survival largely explain the actions of animals, humans conceptualize intangible values by which we govern our behavior. And one of the most powerful of these values is the concept of fairness.

When we speak of something being fair in human experience, we often mean that there is a cause-and-effect relationship between a person's conduct and his or her circumstances. Where we cannot trace circumstances back to conduct, we frequently sense unfairness.

Consider some specific examples. When a drunk driver careens off the road, runs into a tree, and kills themselves, most people do not consider that unfair. Unfortunate, yes. Tragic, yes. But probably not unfair. Which is not to say that we think it fair that all drunk drivers should be killed; only that when it happens, we do not consider it unfair. But if on their way to the tree the drunk runs over a little child, we consider the fate of the child to be very unfair. We do not consider it unfair that a person convicted of murder should spend the rest of their days in prison, for here there

is a cause-and-effect relationship between their conduct and their circumstances. But we consider it very unfair indeed when innocent people are imprisoned.

Our very strong sense that circumstances should follow from conduct presents difficulties in our spiritual life. We are challenged and at times overcome by the prevalence of random pain, suffering, death, and heartache. *If there is a God*, we wonder, *how could these circumstances exist?* We consider the circumstances unfair because we see no relationship between them and the conduct of those who suffer in them. And we cannot reconcile such profound unfairness (as we have defined it) with our concept of a just God. We are thus tempted either to disbelieve the existence of God or to turn from Him.

You may be expecting me now to state that God is fair and that these suspicions we have of His unfairness are unfounded. However, quite to the contrary, I would like to suggest that God is very unfair indeed. However, I believe His unfairness may have two aspects, which I will explain in a moment.

Of the two, Scripture contains a more explicit explanation of what I will call the first aspect of His unfairness than it does of the second. And perhaps the initial step in accepting or even in understanding the second aspect of His unfairness is to view it through the prism of the first.

Put another way, we cannot grapple with the second aspect of His unfairness unless we view it alongside the first. Archaeologists who photograph their discoveries often place a wooden measuring rod in the photo so that when

Fair



they return home and display their photographs, the size of the discovery (and thus sometimes the nature of the discovery) is indicated. By understanding one object in the picture—the measuring rod—the other object, unknown and perhaps confusing, is brought into perspective.

What is the first aspect of God's unfairness—the aspect of which we may capture a glimmer of understanding from Scripture? It is this: that “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). It is this: that while we were yet afar off, the Father saw us and ran to greet us and clothed us in His robe and

placed His ring upon our finger and killed the fatted calf and gave to us a place of honor (Luke 15:20-23). While the plan of redemption and the substitutionary death of Jesus for sinners certainly resonate with universal concepts of justice and fairness, the very decision to set them in motion in the first place is the supreme example of God's unfair-

ness—His mercy, His love.

From cover to cover the Bible teaches in unmistakable language that great spiritual bounty is given to the righteous because it is God's pleasure to do so, not because they are deserving. There is not the slightest bit of fairness here at all. Those who work in the field for one hour receive the same reward as those who toil all day (Matt. 20:1-16). If there is only one message in Scripture, it is that our settled conceptions of conduct and circumstance are completely false. The teachings of Christ radically upset them. Is God fair? No, He is unrelentingly, gloriously, exuberantly unfair. This, then, is the first and exalted, divine, sublime aspect of God's unfairness.

The second aspect is perhaps even more challenging. It is the unfairness we perceive when bad things happen to good people. We face this struggle every time a loyal, decent friend is cut down in the middle of life's passage. (Interestingly enough, and very oddly, if you stop to think about it, we seem less perturbed, less outraged, less offended, when death comes at what we perceive to be the natural end of life.) We face this unfairness when we see the pain of an innocent child. We face it when we contemplate genocide, such as the Holocaust, or in Bosnia, or in Rwanda, or in Cambodia.

I would like to suggest that perhaps the very first step out of the fog spread by the unfair tragedy all around us is to view this second unfairness through the prism of the first unfairness. We must view the suffering of this world—random, cruel, unspeakable, inexplicable—in the same photograph, if you will, with the sublime unfairness of a God who died for us while we were yet sinners.

Juxtaposing these two visions, these two aspects of unfairness, is jarring and dissonant. Yet force yourself to look upon the picture. Like the measuring rod in the archaeologist's photograph, the unfairness of everlasting life in a land far away brings perspective to the confusing and tragic unfairness in this earthly shadow land. In fact, I might go so far as to say we dare not look upon

the second aspect of unfairness without also considering the first aspect.

By embracing the eternal goodness of a gloriously unfair God, we may begin to believe Him when He says that some way, someday, somehow, He will right every wrong, correct every injustice, dry every tear. We may then believe, in the words of the old farmer, that God does not balance the books every season, but only at the final harvest.

Does God cause evil, or merely allow it? Could He prevent it, or is He prevented from stopping it by a larger cosmic struggle? Is suffering sent or permitted? Does God grudgingly use suffering or reluctantly inflict it? Why does He seem to intervene on some occasions and not on others? Why does evil persist?

These are difficult, perhaps impossible, questions. But let us remember that the Divine Figure whom we sometimes sense lurking either malevolently or impotently in the darkened shadows of human pain is the very

same Figure who will welcome us someday to an eternal Paradise so bright it will outshine every shadow, every sorrow here.

We shall then truly know that this life was but the scarred and battered door through which we quickly passed to the everlasting joy of our Father's mansion, and we shall never go back through that door again.

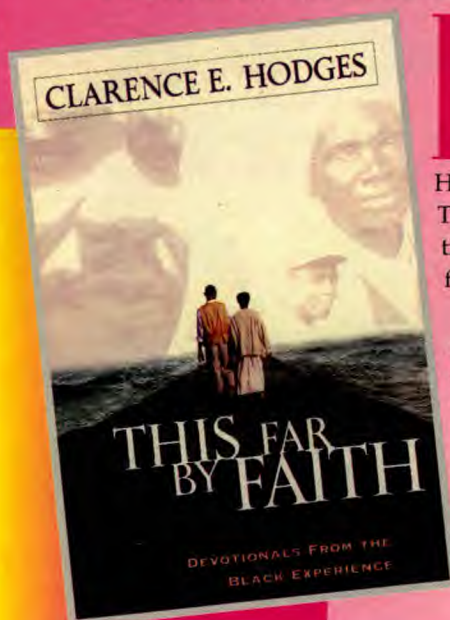
I do not suggest that the perspective of viewing these two aspects of God's unfairness simultaneously will mark the end of our questioning, and I do not suggest that this perspective would be by itself a satisfactory response to all our questions; at least it is not to mine. It is not the end, but only the beginning. But I do believe it is the right place to start. ■

Jeff Bromme is an attorney who lives in Falls Church, Virginia.



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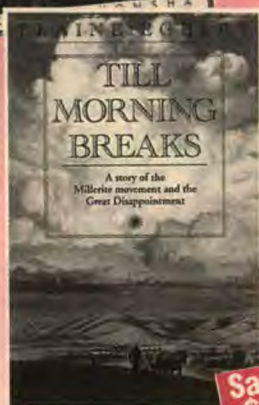
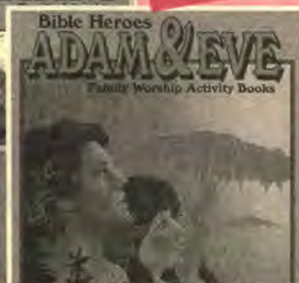
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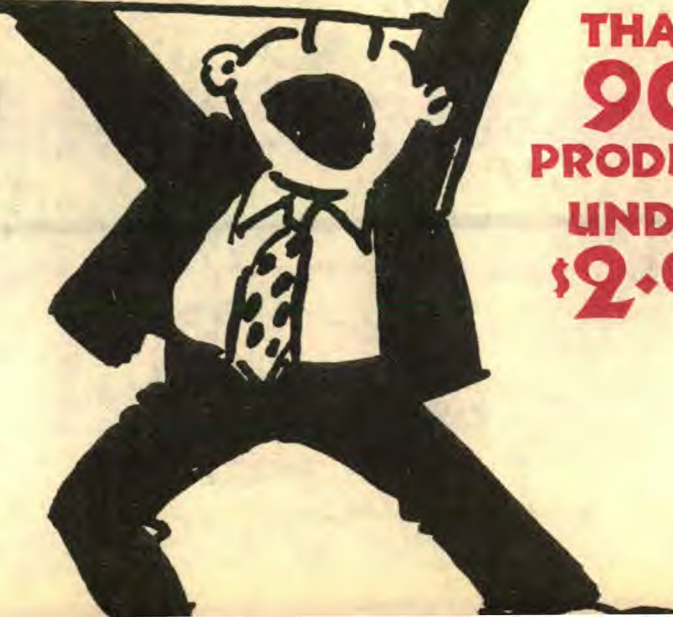
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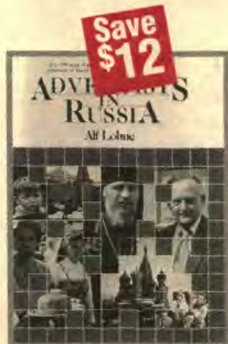
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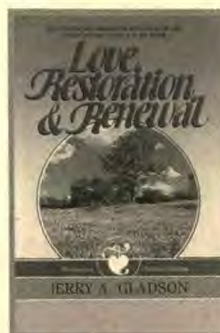
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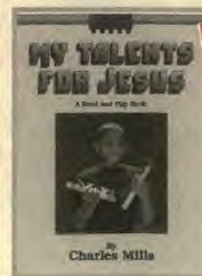


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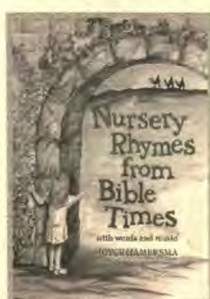
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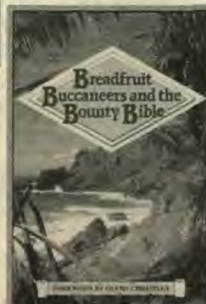


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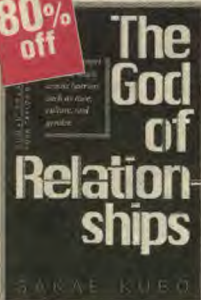
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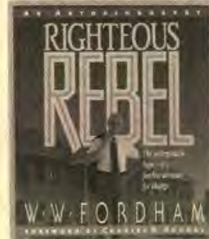
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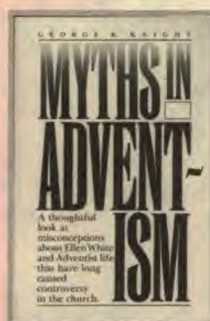
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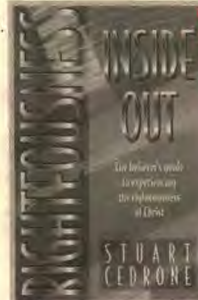
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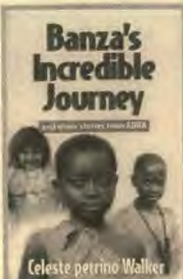
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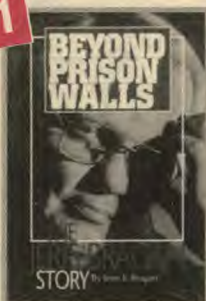
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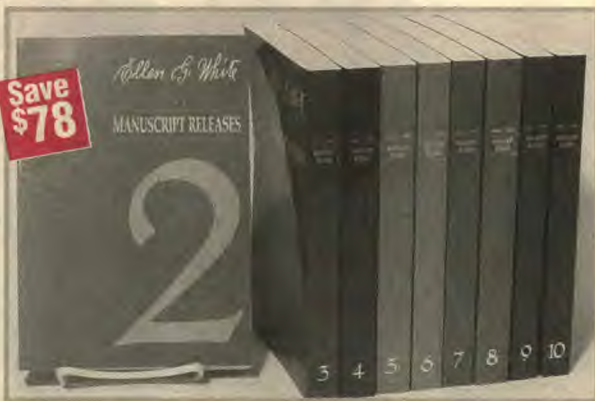
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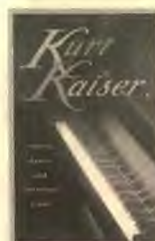
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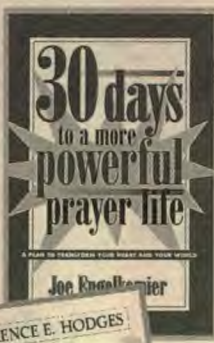
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Stretching the Soul

Learning the Art of Watching God Work



Ronald E. Wilson, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1995, 188 pages, \$9.99, soft cover. Reviewed by Lainie J. Banks, associate pastor, Macedonia Baptist

Church, Bethesda, Maryland. She and her husband live in Gaithersburg, Maryland.

Ronald E. Wilson has written a small book that fits comfortably in the hand as well as the heart. In the spirit of Barnabas he draws from his own life experiences to give words of encouragement to fellow believers. He begins his "long journey" in the valley of personal loss at the death of his wife, Carole.

Wilson makes the rest of the journey pleasurable by his warm sense of humor and credible by the gifted writers he quotes (i.e., A. W. Tozer, John Wesley, Henri Nouwen, and Andrew Murray). He sprinkles scriptural references throughout the book. The author invites the reader to feel the power that stretches the soul while learning the art of watching God work.

Wilson divides the book into three parts, then segments. Each segment (not chapters, since they stand alone and do not bridge one to the other) reveals the lessons the author has learned and brings us closer to seeing God in our everyday activities.

Part 1: The author talks about "my first, faint awareness" as he moves from discovering God in the great and the

ordinary to knowing His will.

Part 2: In "Spiritual Cultural Shock" Wilson touches on the unusual places he has practiced watching God work in the lives of others and recognizing God's part in his own growth.

The author takes us with him through the romantic and, at times, not-so-romantic courtship of his second wife, Mary. We relate as he adjusts from being a solitary man to a family man again.

Wilson says, "Do you truly desire to know God and find Him in the ordinary and mundane things of life? There's no better place than in the midst of family."

Part 3: In "The Long Journey," watching God work through pain, the author comes to the realization that God is not through with him. He ends with a question for the reader: "Do you know what you've got?"

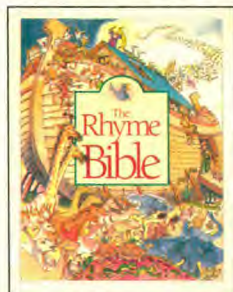
The Epilogue: "My Secret Life as a Bibliophile" could have been called part 4, for it is a major part of the book. Wilson provides a glimpse of his favorite writers and gives them credit for his spiritual growth as well as the quotes he has used.

This is not a book you pick up and read in one sitting. But it is one you return to time and again, drawing strength, insight, and encouragement as it stretches the soul.

"I want to invite you to begin the

same walk I have described here," states the author. "Begin to look for God in the 'smallest and most ordinary things, as well as in the greatest.' . . . Know that nothing escapes his notice, [that] he is never off duty."

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The Rhyme Bible, L. J. Sattgast, Gold'n'Honey Books, Sisters, Oregon, 1996, 448 pages, \$17.99, hardcover.

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Andrews University Evangelism School Hits the Streets

"Jackson 10" Go Door-to-Door for the Lord

BY JACK STENGER, ANDREWS UNIVERSITY PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

There are a lot of doors in Jackson, Michigan. Just ask Matthew Gamble. "Over the course of the summer I felt like I knocked on every one of them," said the Andrews University senior religion major.

Gamble and nine other students got to know the doors, the streets, and most important, the people of Jackson, a city of 37,000 located an hour west of Detroit.

Their door-knocking was just one part of an elaborate evangelism field school that ran from June 12 to August 30. The idea was to give future pastors practical training for evangelism, Bible studies, effective preaching, and church visitation.

The religion majors who participated called themselves the "Jackson 10." While their efforts did not produce the lights and pizzazz that their showbiz counterparts of the 1970s did, their "show" was a lot more lasting. After all, the Jackson Five was about soul music. AU's Jackson 10 was about soul winning.

Even when feet got tired, even when doors got slammed in their faces, students said faith in God kept them going. "All summer long our motto was 'Pass No One By,'" said Antonio Rodriguez, a senior theology major. "Of course, not everyone is interested. But we wanted to give every person the opportunity to make a decision. The rest is up to God."

The evangelistic campaign was held in the Jackson Adventist church school, and Ted Struntz, church pastor and field school coordinator, served as evangelist. As a result of the effort, 11 persons were baptized and others continue in Bible studies.

It was not just the Andrews students who made contributions toward the field school's success. Jackson church members became Jackson 10 "groupies," housing and feeding the students and giving them encouragement. "The church members really made a difference," said Raymond Waller, a senior religion major. "They loved us and picked up our spirits when we felt down."



DOOR-TO-DOOR DISCIPLES: The Jackson 10 students, some pictured here with field school coordinator Keith Mattingly (right, front), knocked on 15,000 doors this past summer.

The field school was sponsored by the Lake Union Conference, the Michigan Conference, and Andrews University. All three entities recognize that practical training is an imperative for students who feel called to ministry.

"Engineers have internships and medical students have residencies because they need practical training. The field school gave our students this same type of nuts-and-bolts experience," said Keith Mattingly, assistant professor of religion at Andrews. "The great thing about this

training is that our students' work meant souls won for God's kingdom."

"These young people learned and saw every kind of experience. We prayed a lot. We cried a lot. We worked a lot and saw the outpouring of God's Spirit," said Struntz.

More than just pastoral ministry lessons were learned at this modern-day school of the prophets. Lessons in spiritual fortitude were in the curriculum as well. "The whole summer was a learning experience," said Waller.

Field school directors divided the city into seven sectors. Students then went in pairs to knock on doors and sign up Bible study students. The whole effort (the group knocked on more than 15,000 doors) led to a five-week evangelistic campaign at summer's end.

Door-to-door canvassing might be tried and true for Adventism, but it was new for most members of the Jackson 10. They visited the upscale suburbs and the working class inner-city neighborhoods. On some days these young gospel workers knocked on doors from 9:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. They shared prayers and offered kind words. In some homes dusty Bibles were pulled from shelves and opened for the first time in years.

The students also met indifference. People summoned to a door by a friendly student can find innumerable reasons to refuse a set of Real Truth Bible studies. "I'm all set," said some. "I go to church down the street." "No thanks." "I'm Baptist." "I'm Catholic." "I already know my Bible."

Fifteen thousand doors. City streets. Worn soles. Won souls. These students won't soon forget the Andrews Jackson 10 Summer 1997 tour.

Adventist Web Site Handles 175,000 Hits a Week

BY KERMIT NETTEBURG, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR

An Adventist site on the World Wide Web is averaging more than 175,000 hits per week. The site is host to such entities as Hart Research Center, Weimar Institute, Three Angels Broadcasting Network (3ABN), Adventist-Laymen's Services and Industries (ASI), Cyberspace Ministry, AdventSource, AdventChat, and hundreds of local schools and churches.

TAGnet is a supporting ministry in northern California that provides Web services and other support for church entities that want a presence on the

World Wide Web.

The growth of TAGnet has been phenomenal, according to its president, Sean Carney: "Last December [1996] we had 100 Adventist organizations publishing on our service. Now we have more than 320. God is truly blessing. We get visits from around 80 different countries and more than 8,000 different visitors each week."

TAGnet provides Web support for local schools, churches, and conferences, as well as other supporting ministries. The local church in Buenos Aires, Argentina, has many

hits each week, as do churches in Texas, Arizona, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Japan.

But the local church with the most hits is in Ecuador. The church posts the Sabbath School lesson in Spanish each week, conducts weekly Sabbath chats, provides hymns, and is a very popular Web site. They can be found at <http://www.tagnet.org/ficoa>.

Cyber Ministry

Another popular site is the Cyberspace Ministry, which provides computer games containing Adventist Bible studies in a variety of languages. These games have been downloaded by thousands of people over the Internet.

The TAGnet ministry is staffed by several people who work in the computer industry and donate all their time and expertise. TAGnet can be found at: <http://www.tagnet.org>.

NEWS BREAK

Second Massacre Erupts on Adventist Campus

At least 270 Tutsi refugees were massacred at the Mudende refugee camp, on the campus of the former Seventh-day Adventist university in Rwanda, on December 11. The killings follow a previous attack in August that left more than 100 dead.

The survivors were taken to nearby Gisenyi. Of the 227 hospitalized, mainly with machete wounds, many are in critical condition.

The latest massacre is part of a rising tide of violence between Hutus and Tutsis that plagues Rwanda's northern border with the Congo, as well as Rwanda's neighbor to the south, Burundi.

After the attack, the guerrillas burned the camp and scattered leaflets preaching genocide. The incident coincided with the visit of United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to the country. Albright, who was on a seven-nation tour of Africa at presstime, spoke of the need to do more to achieve national reconciliation in Rwanda.

"I think there is clearly room for improvement in the human rights record of Rwanda," said Albright. "But I think it's also important for us to understand how difficult it is for a country that has seen a half million people

slaughtered to put itself back together and reconcile."

The Adventist Church operates a program of reconciliation. Recovery and reconciliation seminars began February 1, under the leadership of retired Tutsi pastor Esdras Mpisu, who toured the country with the church's leadership. Church services have provided opportunity for expressions of repentance and forgiveness, says Rwanda Union president Samuel Bimenyimana.

"We greatly regret the ongoing violence, which has taken so many lives," said Lowell Cooper, an associate General Conference secretary. "The violence also prevents us from restarting our educational work, and hampers the humanitarian aid we could provide. It is a tragedy not only for all those involved but for the whole country."—*Adventist News Network*.

Hawaiian Adventist Serves as State Lawmaker



David Pendleton

David A. Pendleton, a Seventh-day Adventist in Kailua, Hawaii, has been serving in the Hawaii House of Representatives for the past year. Pendleton, a graduate of Andrews University, is only the second Adventist in the history of the state to enter elective politics in Hawaii successfully.

Breaking Policy

BY ALEX BRYAN, PASTOR, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Ride or walk?" asks the attendant behind the counter in the clubhouse.

For golfers it's a decision of mere preference: hoof it with golf clubs strapped to *your* back (and pay less), or get behind the wheel of a motorized golf cart with golf clubs strapped to *its* back (and pay more).

For pro golfer Casey Martin this is a more serious question. He suffers from Klippel-Trenaunay-Weber syndrome, a painful circulatory disorder in his lower right leg. For Martin, walking isn't an option. However, the PGA (Professional Golfers' Association) requires that all players walk. No exceptions.

For now, a court injunction has forced the PGA to allow the golfer participation in two January tournaments. A suit filed by Martin against the PGA (which refuses to change its policy) goes to trial on February 2. Should Martin be permitted to compete under

different rules than the rest of the players?

Policy purists would argue an emphatic *no*. "It's not within the established rules." "That's not the way we do things around here." "I wish we could change things, but that's just the way it is." "If we allowed that change it would destroy the way it's

been since the nineteenth century."

I happen to be a walker (and a poor golfer). But in the case of Martin versus the PGA, I side with the rider. How

great might Martin be if we only give him the chance? The next Greg Norman? You never know.

Life is full of missed opportunities that come from unchanging rules and unbending policies. This is true not only in sports but in the rest of the secular world and the church. What inventions, what new ideas, what exciting adventures and successes might be had if we loosened the grip of regulations that exist solely because "that's the way it's always been?"

NEWS COMMENTARY

NEWS BREAK

He is the youngest Republican to serve in Hawaii and the first Filipino to be elected from his district, which has fewer than two percent registered Filipino voters.

Ukrainian Breakaway Congregations Reunite With Seventh-day Adventist Church

Two congregations of Reform Movement Adventists reunited with the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Ukraine. The Reform groups split from the Adventist Church in 1928, and have existed separately since.

In ceremonies on October 12 and November 15 the Reform churches of the Danube River in Nikopol and Perovomaisk united with the local Adventist churches, reports Barbara Huff, administrative assistant for development at the Euro-Asia Division in Moscow, Russia.

"The first step toward reuniting the congregations was holding seminars with the Reform pastors," says Huff. "Another significant step came about when an Adventist woman married a Reform pastor. He changed his previous views and was influential in teaching others."

The two church organizations do not differ widely on points of doctrine, reports Huff, though the Reform lifestyle is more conservative.

Commenting on the reconciliation service, Vladimir Prolinsky, Global Mission director for the Adventist

Ukrainian Union, spoke of the positive atmosphere.

"Something especially touching happened on that day," said Prolinsky. "Members of the two churches that had opposed each other in the past promised to serve God together, to support unity, and to develop a spirit of tolerance and understanding. People felt a heavenly atmosphere that day."

Reform Adventists from Belgorod-Dnestrovski have expressed their desire to unite with the church, and there has been dialogue with three other Reform groups, reports Huff.—*Adventist News Network*.

Union College Initiates Physician Assistant Program

In May, Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, starts the first classes of its new physician assistant program. The two-year P.A. program is one of only two such curriculums offered at Adventist colleges and one of only two such programs available in Nebraska.

Physician assistants are licensed health-care professionals who practice medicine under the supervision of a physician. P.A.s provide a broad range of health-care services and often spend extra time counseling patients on ways to stay healthy, according to program director Michael Huckabee.

Did You Know?

Salvation Army Commands Instant Recognition

According to a nationwide poll conducted by the George Barna Research group, 100 percent of North Americans recognize the name Salvation Army, and 95 percent think favorably of the Army.

For the fifth consecutive year the Salvation Army raised more money through private donations—more than \$1 billion—than any other group, according to the *Chronicle on Philanthropy*. The American Red Cross was a distant second, raising less than half as much.

However, despite being named “America’s favorite charity” in 1996, most people don’t realize that the Salvation Army is primarily an evangelical church.—*Religion News Service*.

Number of Ordained Southern Baptist Women Grows

The number of ordained women in the Southern Baptist Convention—which opposes women pastors—has grown to about 1,225, with a quarter of them serving as chaplains. At least 35 percent of the women serve in church staff positions. At least 85 are pastors, with more than 100 associate pastors.—*Religion News Service*.

For Your Good Health

Depressed Grandparents

Undertaking the role of primary caregiver of a grandchild nearly doubles the risk of depression in grandparents. Researchers say women and those who recently assumed caregiving responsibilities were more depressed, while other older respondents in good health were less depressed.—*Archives of Family Medicine*.

More Bad News About Sugar

Too much fat and too little fiber in diets have long been linked to higher risks of colon and rectal cancer. Now research suggests refined sugar may contribute, especially in overweight individuals. An Italian study of nearly 7,000 people showed the more refined sugar subjects ate, the greater their risk for the two cancers.—*Environmental Nutrition*.

—“For Your Good Health” is compiled by Larry Becker, editor of *Vibrant Life*, the church’s health outreach journal. To subscribe, call 1-800-765-6955.

NEWS BREAK

International Campers Honor Adventist Camps

At a recent convention of Christian Campers International/U.S.A. in Florida CCI officials recognized Seventh-day Adventist camps in North America for their help with the convention and for having the most organized denominational camping association.

During the ceremony CCI president Bob Kobiush



CHRISTIAN CAMPERS: CCI U.S.A. president Bob Kobiush (center) presents an award to NAD camping director Willie Oliver (right) and Gulf States camping leader Bill Wood.

paid a major compliment to the church when he told the delegates, “If you want to do it right in camping, do it the way the Seventh-day Adventists do it.”

Willie Oliver, North American Division camp ministries director, presented Kobiush with a new food service

LLU Launches New Vegetarian Journal



Loma Linda University in California has launched a new periodical that focuses on vegetarian nutrition issues. Each issue of *Vegetarian Nutrition and Health Letter* will include a feature article on a cutting-edge topic written by leading nutrition experts, as well as reports on the latest research.

“Up to now, no university-associated publication has exclusively focused on vegetarian issues,” says Patricia Johnson, associate dean of the LLU School of Public Health. “With the number of vegetarians on the rise, the need is greater than ever for accurate information presented in a way that is easy to understand and that consumers can use in practical ways.”

What's Upcoming

| | | |
|------|-------|----------------------------------|
| Jan. | 17 | Bible Emphasis Day |
| Jan. | 17-24 | Religious Liberty Week |
| Jan. | 24 | Health Ministries Day |
| Feb. | 7 | Bible Evangelism |
| Feb. | 14-21 | Christian Home and Marriage Week |

POST-RUMBLINGS

Adventists share their thoughts on youth and young adult involvement.

Andy Nash's "Ready to Rumble" (October NAD Edition), which argued that nontraditional youth and young adults in the North American Division were being underutilized, included an invitation for readers to share their perspectives. Excerpts from 10 of the 50-plus responses appear here.—Editors.

If we hesitate too long, Generation X, as the baby boomers did before them, will make a mass exodus to where they *do* have a voice in creating their future. Our leadership has suggested that we entice them with a "piece of the pie," but what part do we give—the crust? Give them the best and eat it with them. We must offer leadership roles, committee participation, and substantial local church involvement. What are we scared of—that these young people will show us up? —K. Calvin White, Houston, Texas.

There are many places other than Global Mission needing help in "serving the dinner." Take small churches, for instance. Our district of three small churches includes the following positions filled by persons in their 20s: school board chair, personal ministries director, and head Sabbath school superintendent. All of these positions put them automatically on the church board. There, as a piece of the pie, they can help make such exciting decisions as whether to install satellite equipment for evangelistic seminars and whether the new roof shingles should be tan or gray!

We *need* our young people. I don't know what we would do without them. If there are young adult Adventists saying "I don't live in an area where there are small churches," I suggest finding a town or neighborhood where there are *no* Adventist churches and starting a branch Sabbath school.

That way you can be totally in charge—of the music, the methods, the transportation needs, the recruiting of helpers, the facilities, the finances, any failures, *everything*.—Eileen Glass, via E-mail.

I too am a young adult (age 32) who is fitting in well with the Adventist tradition. My quiet, analytical predisposition seems to fit quite well in our church (I am an elder) because a high percentage of our members are such. Yet I've noticed that this makes it hard for other types of people to fit in.—Dean Willis, Shelton, Washington.

I want the youth to become involved, if only they would. I cannot count the many times I have sat on nominating committees and asked the youth to take an office and been refused. It seems that they want not just a piece of the pie, but the whole pie. All or nothing at all—only they expect the "old" people to pay for the pie and then reward them for taking it.

I think Ellen White said it very wisely when she said our youth need to be "rightly trained." The problem is that they don't want to be rightly trained. They want to do the training in what they *think* it ought to be. Too many of them don't want the counsel of wiser heads, some of whom have been down the road a few years and have experienced some of the bumps. Maybe some of them will have to learn what it took some of us 20 years to learn (I hope not so long)—that God's way is best after all, and the counsel He has given is at least worthy of our consideration.

As a former member of a progressive jazz quartet, I am just as "hip" as I have ever been, though I hope much more Christlike. I can still tickle the ivories, but I refuse to bring

forth an unholy melody from the piano. I want to introduce people to Christ, whom to know is "life eternal." But to introduce Him to others, I have to know Him for myself. That is my prayer for every member of God's remnant people.—*Alfred Webb, Redlands, California.*

I don't think that we give the younger generation (I am 34) the opportunity to fail. We are so concerned with what kids might do that we limit what we let them do. Kids are not stupid, and they will certainly learn and grow through failure. I liked Nash's idea about waiting a year to cast judgment. In the meantime, we must keep two-way communication open so they can feel OK about asking questions and learning. Kids will listen when we allow them to ask questions. Give kids enough rope to hang themselves, and nine times out of 10 they will produce something beautiful out of the rope!

A last point: Adventist colleges work hard to keep track of alumni to make sure they give money. Maybe the colleges could communicate with pastors about who is new to their area so the pastors can seek them out.—*Troy Beans, Loveland, Colorado.*

My generation seems to have forgotten that this church was founded by young people—and that youth are still ready to serve today. It seems that we have also forgotten that women played a major role in founding this church. In fact, Nash could have substituted "women" for "youth" in his article and described the situation pretty much the way it has been since Ellen White's death.—*Patricia A. Habada, Ph.D., assistant director, General Conference Sabbath School/Personal Ministries Department.*

This morning during earliteen Sabbath school (I'm a leader) a guest asked the kids what they could do to be part of their church. Various responses were given, then one of the kids said, "Preach the sermon."

"Yes," said the guest, "but maybe later when you are older."

Well, that's all it took for me. Toward the end of our program I asked the kids if they would really like to do an entire church service, including the sermon. They did.

I've been struggling with my leadership role in the earliteen division, wondering if my participation was really making a difference. But this experience helped me realize that I do have gifts in working with the kids in nontraditional ways, and I'm recommitted to assisting them in service.—*Name Withheld.*

The Boston Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church is proof that when we are taken seriously, we take our church seriously. Under the spiritual guidance and their belief in us, pastors Hyveth Williams, Amado Luzbet, and our caring church members laid the foundation for what is now a very active young adult ministry, called TEAM (Together Experiencing a Ministry). A large per-

centage of us are involved in various capacities in our church, including the board.—*Sandra Smith, age 29, head elder, Boston Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church.*

A few years ago, after graduating from college, I discovered Jesus as my Saviour and friend. I could not help responding to Him with real enthusiasm, rejoicing in my newfound King. My joy and zeal found its fulfillment in music. I wanted to exalt God through playing the piano and singing harmony with other voices. The music that I identified with was new and alive. Many times it was loud and triumphal; other times it was emotionally powerful. I knew that God was calling me to worship Him completely in Spirit and in truth.

I was so excited about sharing my gifts in my local church. My wife and I committed ourselves to every facet of ministry that we were asked to be a part of. We believed that God had called us here and was leading us.

Unfortunately, there were people with influence who didn't want us to use our gifts unless we were doing it exactly as they wanted. In the middle of a song they would close the lid of the piano. They would walk out of a service when I and two other young men asked the congregation to join us in singing songs like "Hosanna," "Sanctuary," and "I Belong to a Mighty God." Finally these people led a church board vote to ban any type of music that involved keyboards, bass guitars, and lyrics projected onto a screen.

Frankly, I'm just tired. After 10 years of commitment, I'm tired. I beg God to give me continued strength to maintain my first love. I ache with a desire to have these people accept my gifts and rejoice that I have dedicated them to God. I am angry with frustration in seeing others my age drift from the church.

I don't believe I am the only one in these circumstances. I live in a small, poor conference. There are no funds for specific young adult ministries. There are no churches within 200 miles that offer even a slightly different worship style and attitude.—*Name Withheld.*

As a fellow student I understand the difficulties faced by my peers. But if we would put self aside and look for opportunities to further the cause of God, we would find that there is no hurdle that cannot be overcome.

I'd also like to ask the youth to take a hard look at why we are at such odds with the older generation. Could it be that the "old-timers" we think don't understand us actually do? Don't you think they faced these problems when they were young? Yet because of their experience they realize that only those who are following God's plan of order will really help this church.—*Doug Randolph, sophomore religion major, Hartland College, Rapidan, Virginia.*

They wanted answers, so He told them a story.



BY SARAH COLEMAN

He dry-dust swallows and turns to James, trudging beside him on the ditched road to Jericho.

"What was your question?"

Ah, yes. "Who will be the greatest?"

"Let me see . . .

A man once traveled this very road.

Tired was he.

(Yes, like you, Peter.)

And lonely. His turban settled lower and lower over his sand-stung eyes.

(Yes, like yours, Judas.)

After another twitch of his forehead, he peered beneath his bushy brows at the horizon and spotted a spot of disappearing dust.

(Yes, he was sure, Thomas.)

Instead of turning to flee, this man continued

onward. His donkey breathed like a gale on Galilee and plodded

like a crowd

in Capernaum.

Finally he reached the horizon and spotted

a spot

of fading humanity in the road.

It was nearly naked, its loincloth caked with dirt and blood.

This man had been attacked on the road.

(Yes, this very road, John.)

A SAMARITAN



ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY CREWS

His donkey's tracks mingled with human prints
leading
fast away.
The man drew a breath and coughed up a tooth as
the traveler pulled his grateful donkey to a stop.
Gasp!
The traveler was a Samaritan!
(Yes, like the well-woman, Philip.)
Now, what should he do?
(No, Peter, he didn't do that.)
He got down on his knees
and hands
in that ditch
and put his sweaty ear next to the man's cracked lips.
And he heard life.
Like a woman lifting her only child for the first time,
he strained his screaming arms around
that limp form.
In one painful heave, he threw the Hebrew across
the fly-snorting donkey's back.
(You'll see, Thomas.)
All the pounding way,
he walked beside the donkey
and its unconscious load.
He kept one hand on the
man's sunburned back and held him in place.

With the other he wet a cloth
in oil and water
and cleansed his wounds.
(Yes, he touched him, Matthew.)
At the inn's door, a hot, red face greeted them.
'Whaddya want?'
Wordlessly the man reached into his travel bag
and pulled out
his life—
two sweat-won pieces of silver,
and gave it away for that unconscious stranger.
(Yes, that blood-caked Hebrew, Thaddaeus.)

"What?
The Samaritan?
He kept traveling on that narrow road.
The Hebrew never paid him back.
(No, never, Judas.)
But then, the Samaritan didn't expect payment.
He just did it,
just did it
because He loved.
(Yes, James. That's your answer.)
Because He loved."

Sarah Coleman is taking a break from college to work as a recruiter for Adventist Frontier Missions in Berrien Springs, Michigan.



The Ghost Mrs. White

BY ROGER W. COON

IN 1974, RUTH Montgomery, the world's foremost female writer about psychic phenomena,¹ wrote to a recent Seventh-day Adventist convert, telling him that she had just received a message from Ellen White.

Ellen White (who died in 1915, almost 60 years earlier) was alleged to have reported from "the other side," through the agency of a "spirit guide," that she now had changed her mind about what she had written about the state of mankind in death in her religious classic, *The Great Controversy*.

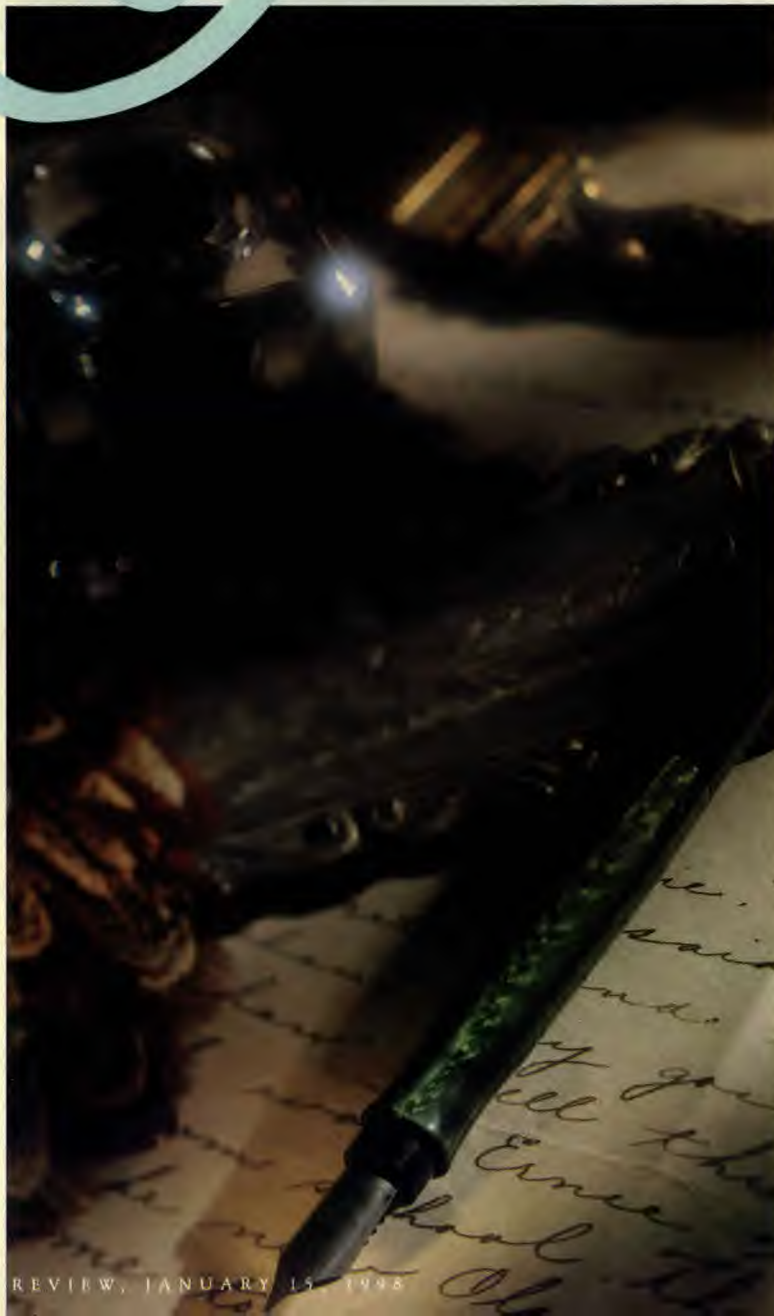
This well-known volume initially appeared in 1858, under the title *Spiritual Gifts*, Volume 1, a modest work of just 219 pages. In chapter 30, "Spiritualism," Ellen White

hinted at something she would substantially enlarge upon in a later edition concerning Satan's evil spirits and Christ's apostles:

"Satan assigns each one of his angels their part to act. He enjoins upon them to be cunning, artful, and sly. He instructs some of them to act the part of the apostles, and speak for them. . . . All this teaching purporting to be from apostles . . . comes [instead] directly from his Satanic majesty. . . .

"Here [in spiritualism] is a channel wholly devoted to himself, under his control, and he can make the world believe what he will."²

In 1884, this earlier 219-page work was expanded into a four-volume set of 1,706



pages, with the series title *The Spirit of Prophecy*. In Volume 4 (which in 1888 and 1911 would be reissued under the title *The Great Controversy*) Ellen White wrote more fully concerning satanic strategy just before the end:

"The apostles, as [impersonated] by these lying spirits, are made to contradict what they wrote [in the Scriptures] at the dictation of the Holy Spirit when on earth. They deny the divine origin of the Bible, and thus tear away the foundation of the Christian's hope, and put out the light that reveals the way to heaven."³

No one is certain whether or not Ellen White also predicted that her own "spirit" would return in similar fashion to "revise" portions of the more than 100 books that presently make up her writings now available in English. But in 1974 a most remarkable event *did* transpire, under unusual circumstances. Here's the fascinating background:

Nicholas Steubing, who had previously been substantially involved in the world of the occult, found Jesus and salvation in a Seventh-day Adventist church in California in the early 1970s, and was led by the Holy Spirit to renounce participation in all forms of psychic phenomena.⁴

Having moved to Michigan in 1973, and still experiencing that "first love" of his newfound faith, Steubing, now 32, felt a deep, compelling burden to share his new knowledge with those who had so strongly influenced his earlier religious thinking.

Accordingly, he mailed a copy of *The Great Controversy* to Ruth Montgomery, then living in Mexico, who had published six books on psychic phenomena between 1965 and 1974. Steubing's accompanying letter suggested that Montgomery might be interested in reading the writings of another woman of Methodist background, of another century, who also just happened to be the fourth most translated author of all time, the most translated *female* writer, and the most translated *American* writer of either gender.

Intrigued, Ruth Montgomery began reading the book. And on April 17, 1974, she wrote to the donor, expressing appreciation for his "most generous" gift. Earlier that same morning she had herself been involved in an automatic writing session.

(In automatic writing the subject takes either pen or pencil in hand, or places the fingertips on a typewriter or computer keyboard, then shifts the mind into a meditative, contemplative stance, and allows the writing instrument, in effect, to write on its own, producing whatever coherent—and verifiable—message the spirit guide may wish to communicate at that particular moment.)⁶

The message that came to Ruth Montgomery that morning of April 17 was startling. She reported, "Oddly enough, in the automatic writing session this morning the Guides brought me a communication which said, 'The woman White who wrote the book you are reading is here and says: *Please, please disregard what I wrote about communication with the living dead.*'"⁷

So what did Ellen White have to say about communication with the dead in *The Great Controversy* that Ruth Montgomery's "guides" wished readers to "please, please disregard"?

Three points seem particularly relevant:

1. In chapter 34 ("Can Our Dead Speak to Us?") Ellen White reiterates the clear Bible teaching that the dead presently rest in an unconscious state. Thus any "ghost" that may appear and purport to be the spirit of some departed person is, in reality, simply an evil angel of Satan,⁸ whose first lie to Adam and Eve in Eden was: "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4).

2. The unbiblical, pagan doctrine of the immortality of the soul is dangerous, in part because it paves the way for spiritualism's success in deceiving human beings in the last days.⁹

3. This false doctrine would be a major factor in worldwide developments just before Jesus returns, because it would be one of the two doctrines upon which Satan would

lead "spiritual Babylon" (including "the leading churches in the United States") to unite against God's commandment-keeping people.¹⁰

No wonder, then, that Satan doesn't want humankind to be aware of his deceptive devices—especially this major eschatological event!

Several other things in the Montgomery letter are of more than passing interest.

In the first place its author capitalized the word "Guides," the buzzword generally used by psychics to identify their spirit-world messengers. In contemporary American stylebooks, such capitalization is customarily employed for references to a deity. Significantly, Isaiah, 700 years before Christ, reported a blasphemous declaration by Lucifer prior to his fall in heaven:

"I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High" (Isa. 14:13, 14).

Thus in artfully subtle fashion Satan continues today to perpetuate his illegitimate claim to the prerogatives of Deity. Indeed, in that first lie in Eden, Satan also even offered our first parents deification (as if he could bestow it!). If they would only follow his counsel, he lied, "ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5).

Secondly, Satan has a consuming envy and an implacable hatred for all divinely inspired prophets. After all, these mortal enemies of his can do something that he, despite all his acknowledged supernatural powers, simply cannot perform: they can both see and foretell the future when they are moved by the Holy Spirit.

And the insolence of the devil toward one of God's most recent prophets is aptly revealed in the "Guides' curt, denigrating reference to "the woman White."

What are we to make of this remarkable experience? Did Ellen White's "ghost" return, through the medium of Ruth Montgomery's "Guides," to offer the prophet's most

recent (if posthumous) "testimony" to her church contradicting what she had previously written while alive about the state of mankind in death?

Of course not. This message came directly from Satan, and for the same purpose as will yet serve him in the near future when we see the fulfillment of Ellen White's 1884 prediction that the "spirits" of the writers of the Bible will "return" to change the truths written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit into a lie.

In fact, right at the end, just before Jesus returns, Satan will publicly impersonate the second coming of Christ! Ellen White viewed in vision this striking, amazing, "crowning act in the great drama of deception" and provides a remarkable eyewitness account in *The Great Controversy*.¹¹

She solemnly concludes this section of her narrative by declaring: "Only those who have been diligent students of the Scriptures and who have received the love of the truth will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world captive."¹²

Indeed: "The last great delusion is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight. So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures. By their testimony every statement and every miracle must be tested. . . . None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict."¹³

Note: "Only those who have been diligent students of the Scriptures . . ." And again: "None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible . . ."

In the very near future we will see fulfilled before our eyes the supernatural acts of Satan foretold by Christ to the apostle John on the island of Patmos 1,900 years ago: "And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which

he had power to do" (Rev. 13:13, 14).

To which inspiration has added more recently: "'He . . . deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by means of those miracles which he had power to do,' not merely those which he pretends to do. Something more than mere impostures is brought to view in this scripture."¹⁴

Again: "Fearful sights of a supernatural character will soon be revealed in the heavens, in token of the power of

*If there was ever
a time when
authentically
Protestant Christians
should stand
upon sola scriptura,
that time is
now.*

miracle-working demons. The spirits of devils will go forth to the kings of the earth and to the whole world, to fasten them in deception, and urge them on to unite with Satan in his last struggle against the government of heaven [Rev. 16:13, 14]. By these agencies, rulers and subjects will be alike deceived. . . . They will perform wonderful miracles of healing and will profess to have revelations from heaven contradicting the testimony of the Scriptures."¹⁵

If there was ever a time when authentically Protestant Christians should stand steadfastly and exclusively upon *sola scriptura*—"the Bible and the Bible only"—that time is now!

Are you, friend, a "diligent" student who has "fortified" your mind with the truths of God's Word? You will never successfully escape the final deceptions of Satan unless you are. ■

¹ By 1974 the top three female American writers on psychic phenomena were Ruth Montgomery (six books), Jane Roberts (four books), and Jeane Dixon (three books). Although Jeane Dixon was probably the better known writer on the occult by the general public, Ruth Montgomery had more published works and in wider circulation: between 1965 and 1985 she authored 10 best-sellers, with literally millions of readers.

² *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, pp. 176-78.

³ *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, p. 375; in both the 1888 and 1911 subsequent editions of *The Great Controversy* this passage appears on p. 557.

⁴ Nicholas Steubing today is a Columbus, Ohio, businessman.

⁵ For a list of the world's top 10 most translated authors (based in part upon 1982 research in the Library of Congress), see Roger W. Coon, *A Gift of Light* (Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1983), pp. 30, 31, note 2.

⁶ In her second book, *A Search for the Truth* (1967), Ruth Montgomery introduces the amazing phenomenon of automatic writing to her readers in some detail: "I held the pencil, yet it seemed to write without me. I had no thought of what was being expressed until I saw the words on the tablet. . . . Here was a phenomenon which clearly I did not control" (pp. 28, 29). Jane Roberts, utilizing automatic writing, amassed a remarkable body of more than 6,000 pages of type from a demon named "Seth," who appeared in a series of five Seth-dictated books (e.g., *The Seth Material* [1970], *Seth Speaks* [1972]), and an additional series of seven other books associated with the Seth communications.

⁷ Letter, Ruth Montgomery to Nicholas Steubing, Cuernavaca, Nogales, Mexico, Apr. 17, 1974, p. 1. (Italics supplied.)

⁸ *The Great Controversy*, pp. 551-562.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 588.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 445, 588. Mrs. White identifies the other doctrine upon which "spiritual Babylon" will unite as Sunday sacredness.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 624, 625.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 625.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 593, 594.

¹⁴ *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 698.

¹⁵ *The Great Controversy*, p. 624.

Roger W. Coon retired as associate secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate at the General Conference in 1993; he continues to serve as adjunct professor of prophetic guidance at the SDA Theological Seminary, Andrews University.



Let's Plan SET '99

CHRIS BLAKE

"Go therefore and make decisions of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, leaving them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19, 20, IEV).¹

A few years after the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, I attended a gathering of Adventist evangelists and church builders who had returned from the former Soviet Union with reports that glowed like Chernobyl bread. "The field is ripe!" exulted more than one speaker. Their stories were indeed extraordinary—thousands of baptisms, a craving for the Word of God, an inexhaustible longing for the hope, peace, and freedom of Jesus of Nazareth.

My friend Steve Case and I were talking following one presentation when a man approached us and introduced himself. In the course of our conversation Steve mentioned that he was headed to Russia the next summer.

The man's eyes gleamed as he leaned forward. "Oh! Are you going over to hold an evangelistic series?"

Steve displayed his toothiest smile while answering, tight-lipped, "No, I'm going over to try to *keep* the ones we're getting." The man stared at Steve, stupefied.

That conversation is replaying in the compact disc of my mind lately in the communications wake of NET '95, NET '96, and as we approach NET '98. Frankly, if the version of Matthew 28:19, 20 written above were correct, I would not be writing this, but thankfully it is not. The Master actually urged us to "make *disciples* of all nations, . . . *teaching* them to obey everything I have commanded you" (NIV). An infinite difference exists between a "decision" and a "disciple." One may be short-lived; the other endures. One can carry the weight of a friend or evangelist; the other carries the weight of the cross of Christ. One is easy to count; the other is as difficult to measure as true love. One builds numbers; the other builds people.

This is not to say that decisions for baptism are wrong. We need decisions. Decisions are to spiritual life what the wedding ceremony is to a marriage. In the same sense, however, what type of marriage places 90 percent of its total

effort on getting to the altar and tasting the cake? What would be the chances of married success? Would we scratch our heads in puzzlement as to why that marriage failed?

One of my favorite stories involves a man who is on his hands and knees under a street lamp at 3:00 a.m. A police officer approaches and says, "Hey, what are you doing there?"

"I'm looking for my wallet," explains the man. "I lost it on the corner of Third and Elm."

"Third and Elm? This is the corner of Seventh and Redwood."

"I know," the man replies, "but the light is better here."

When we look at Christ's mandate to make *disciples*, where are we really losing the wallet?

As a church we argue that we pour oceans of money and effort into building disciples through our schools, and that's true. Our schools are disciple-training centers of Jesus Christ. Yet we seem to give far less emphasis—looking at the money, promotion, and enthusiasm supplied to the NETs—to teaching people outside our schools how to observe all that Jesus commands.² Sabbath schools do not cover it. Could we alternate each "NET" with a "SET" to strengthen our marriages to God?

Jesus showed us that the best teaching *involves* the participant in meaningful, risky endeavor. Good teachers know the learners' creed: "What I hear I forget. What I see I remember. What I do I understand." We can develop creative, workable ways to keep the believers we're gaining and gain the hearts of those we're keeping.³

NET '98 is the first part of discipling, and it deserves applause. But without an equally committed SET '99, it's the sound of one hand clapping.

Ready. Get set. ■

¹ Ineffective Evangelism Version.

² That would extend beyond the Ten Commandments.

³ Next month's column mentions practical ideas for a discipling thrust ("Let's Plan SET '99, Part 2").

Chris Blake teaches at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska.



ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY CREWS

Shasta Emery: Answering the Call

La Sierra University senior Shasta Emery is president of the Adventist Intercollegiate Association (AIA), a network of student leaders on Adventist college campuses across North America. This year, under Emery's leadership, students from every Adventist college campus in North America will join forces on a mission trip to Mexico. Before serving as AIA president, Emery was Student Association president at La Sierra University for two consecutive terms: 1995-1996 and 1996-1997.

Here, Alex Bryan, 1991-1992 AIA president, talks with Emery about Generation X, Adventist colleges, and the future of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Bryan: What is the biggest challenge facing your generation?

Emery: One of the biggest challenges is making a transition from being intellectual to relational. So many of us know about God, but few of us experience God. I have heard it said that we know God's hands but not His face. In other words, we often ask Him to meet our wants and requests, but rarely seek intimacy with Him. In the MTV world everything is so fast-paced and entertaining. We grow bored easily and don't take the time to experience things that may not bring immediate results.

What are some fundamental differences in your generation's ideas and values compared to those of older generations in the Adventist Church?

For our generation, people and relationships are more important than information. We hope to start working again as a community of believers. When you visit some Adventist campuses, you'll notice how much the rules have changed. It used to be that you couldn't go to movies or wear jewelry. I think we're getting to a point now where our generation isn't talking about issues like these. We're asking the bigger questions: Are you ready for the Second Coming? Do you have a relationship with God? More than anything we want authenticity. We want to be real. We want the freedom to doubt and to question. Obviously, this is a big risk, but it will make us stronger.

What advice would you give leaders in the Adventist Church as we approach the twenty-first century?

I hope that the older generations will risk "making fools of themselves" so that others can grow. I hope that our leaders will speak out when the Spirit leads. We need to see God working in them. It is through action that we begin to believe. I plead with Adventist leaders to be open to the leading of the Spirit and to expect changes and surprises. We must quit being so dependent on methods and technology and be more dependent on God.

What is the greatest strength of Adventist colleges?

The relationships we build with people.

As an Adventist leader who happens to be a woman, what would you say to young women who feel God's call to leadership in

a church that is often divided over a woman's role in leadership?

Go do what God has called you to do! He'll take care of you. He'll make a path for you. The problem lies with those around you who can't accept your calling. God will never call anybody who can't fill what He calls them to do. Even though you're a woman or a young person, that doesn't mean God can't make it happen.

What in the Adventist Church gives you cause for hope?
I have a lot of hope because I believe God called our church to a special mission. Honestly, I sometimes fear that we won't step up to the mission. I fear that we'll be too afraid. I fear that our traditions and our policies will hinder us—and then we won't hear His call. But I have hope because I believe we are called, and I know that our commitment is strong. We have so many people in this nation who want to be in heaven. We must answer the call.

Alex Bryan is pastor of the New Community, a Generation X-targeted church recently planted near Atlanta, Georgia.



A Rock Sings

BY MICHAEL YANCEY

I never sing. I may mouth the words to a hymn at church, or even emit some sort of crooning noises, but I do not sing. Not even in the shower or in the car while I am driving alone.

I admire those who sing. I admire even more those who can move me emotionally and spiritually with their voices in song. But I have never been moved to nurture any musical outlet through my vocal cords. "One should never dig where there is no gold," I always say.

My wife, on the other hand, yearns to sing. She dreams of getting up in front of a congregation and letting the Spirit pour through her. She even dangles in front of herself the motivational fantasy of singing opera at the Met. She would like to take singing lessons, and I have encouraged her. I would be proud. But I would not sing with her. I would stand out of sight, stage right, supporting her all the way.

Given my clear aversion to singing, I was startled the other night by my own spontaneous musical outburst. My wife and I had come home after a particularly long day. While switching from day clothes to evening clothes, my wife looked at me and said calmly: "We need to talk."

What followed was an open-heart discussion of our financial future. The frustration and uncertainty welled up inside both of us, and soon we were striding down the rocky and treacherous road of confrontational conversation. After a time I suggested we pray. We bowed our heads together and held hands, and I began a slow, quiet prayer.

"Dear God in heaven, our Creator and sovereign ruler of the universe, we come to You this evening frustrated and looking for answers. We ask for Your blessings in our efforts to move forward, and we ask for Your divine guidance as we make important decisions. We place our lives in Your hands. We know that we have been trying to be self-sufficient. Forgive us for the reliance on our own wisdom. We pray in Your Son's holy name. Amen."

Our heads were still bowed, our eyes closed in meditation. Suddenly something in my mind gave way. It was like a great weight pushed against a wall that suddenly reveals a hidden, long-forgotten passageway. I started to sing softly.

"Hear our prayer, O Lord . . ."

I couldn't believe it. I was actually singing. I was singing to God.

"Hear our prayer, O Lord . . ."

My wife started to sing with me.

"Incline Thine ear to us, and grant us Thy peace. Amen."

We were both quietly crying. We hugged for some time, reassured in the knowledge that God had indeed heard us. He was not only listening to our prayer for guidance, but to our feeble, barely-above-a-whisper song. Will this be the beginning of a wonderful singing career? Doubtful. But what it does signify is that when the Holy Spirit moves in, even the hardest of rocks will sing.

I asked my wife the next morning, "So were you a tiny bit surprised at our little song after prayer last night?"

"I wasn't sure what you were doing at first," she said. "But I'm glad that we sang."

"I am too," I said. "I felt a closeness to God and to you."

In the days that followed, I reflected on singing and prayer. When exactly did I separate the two? When had I divorced the happy marriage of song and prayer? I thought about church services, most of which associate praise in song with prayer. And then I thought about the psalms of David, prayer in song, and the music of prayer. Even if our prayers of praise are not accompanied by music, they must be heard as such in heaven.

A few evenings later my wife and I were praying together before sliding into bed. After we had both taken turns praying aloud and had opened our eyes, my wife looked full into mine. "Would you like to sing?" she whispered.

"Yes," I said. We sang the same song as before, spontaneously. The Spirit moves. ■



ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY CREWS

Michael Yancey is a freelance writer/journalist living in Florida.



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