

ADVENTIST Review

June 17, 1999

Cutting Edge



A Room of Their Own

Walking the fine line between unity and diversity

Sentenced to Life

God in Work Gloves

Our Mixed-up Church

LETTERS

The Least Resistance Kids

Andy Nash's "The Least Resistance



Kids" (Apr. 15 Cutting Edge Edition) was exceptional, required more than one reading, and presented itself with an excitement that

necessitates sharing it with others. I can't seem to say enough for its message.

—Sandy LaFaive
PRINCIPAL/TEACHER
MICHIGAN CONFERENCE

What an excellent article! The comparison between those of us who have stayed in church all these years and the story of Joseph was great. Many times in the past I tried to figure out why I stayed in church while many of my peers did not. I did not feel any better than them! It reminded me of a popular song: "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For." But I just kept going to church—probably it was the path of least resistance for me.

This article put into words many of my beliefs and feelings. It has also given me a different perspective on becoming one of the "churched." Thank you for writing that is relevant and not just regurgitating worn-out information.

—Sarah Gimbel
KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE

Parenting had a lot to do with Joseph's outcome. He received *different* parenting than his brothers. Some of us, fortunately, receive a better picture of God, whether from parents, teachers, spouse, or other source. By God's grace we are learning to focus our resistance against the devil and the ultimate pain of his approach. Keep up the good work.

—Donald Lawrence
RINDGE, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Thank God I stayed these 67 years, for each year gets better as I see Jesus clearer. This message was clear, heart-searching, inspirational,

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intriguing, and much more. The parallel to Joseph (my favorite human Bible character) made it powerful. It was a message I needed to hear and appreciate.

The Review is doing a tremendous job presenting the life-changing good news in a variety of ways to reach this very diverse family of God. I believe you are meeting the challenge.

—Helen Burnett
CLERMONT, FLORIDA

Many thanks to Andy Nash for another simply outstanding article. He hits the nail on the head about the attitudes of many of us baby boomers. Besides being "least resistance kids" as related to church attendance and "staying" in the church, one could expand that whole notion to include our being "least resistance kids" in our marriages, jobs, etc. Thus, when temptation strikes, we are not nearly as strong as we might outwardly appear.

As a least resistance kid returning to our church, I am comforted to know that our relationship with our Lord is key—not who we are or what we've done. Thanks for touching a critically important subject.

—Robert D. Sewell
HERMISTON, OREGON

Women in Ministry

Candid, concise, clear, and commendable. These terms and a host of other words of appreciation should

be applied to Calvin Rock's review of *Women in Ministry* (Book Mark, Apr. 15). For many who have been following the women's ordination debate within Adventism, highlighted by the Utrecht General Conference decision, the book has suggested reason for optimism should the same question be addressed in the future.

Rock's review points out, with surprising candor, that the real issue the seminary staff addresses within *Women in Ministry* is not "ordination" but "hermeneutics." Thanks to Calvin Rock and the *Review* for helping to address the disappointment and dismay experienced by many following the Utrecht decision.

—Jim Kaatz
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

Christian Behavior

I very much appreciated Nathanael Blake's "Jesus Wants Us to Be Liberal—Even Radical" (Apr. 15) and his viewpoints on Christian behavior. However, I was sad to read the editors' footnote stating that Blake's liberal "position on capital punishment is perhaps not shared by the majority of Seventh-day Adventists."

If I'm not misinformed, the majority of Adventists live in countries opposing capital punishment, unlike the United States. In our countries, it's the Christian thing to fight against capital punishment as unfair and inhumane. I know it's a touchy issue for you Americans, but that still leaves you and the capital punishers in the minority.

—Rainer Refsback, PASTOR
GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN

It is a very sad commentary on the political and philosophical climate of the Adventist Church when the editors of the official church paper feel it necessary to indicate that a young Adventist writer's opposition to the death penalty needs some type of

clarification and semidisclaimer.

While Pope John Paul II, Amnesty International, and many others fight for the abolition of the death penalty and for the most basic of human rights for all, the Adventist Church waffles on such a fundamental issue and then wonders why it cannot make a breakthrough in so many segments of society.

—Wayne Malcolm Schafer, Esq.
EDMONTON, ALBERTA, CANADA

Love's Whisper

Thank you for including Carrol Grady's poem, "Love's Whisper," in your April 15 issue. There are few if any forms of written communication that can touch the soul as deeply as poetry. More, please!

—Byron L. Scheuneman
COLUMBIA, MARYLAND

A Very Special Review

To celebrate 150 years of the *Adventist Review*, editors have created a special 64-page anniversary issue. Not a "gingham bonnets and beards" viewpoint, but a fast-paced, contemporary look at how the *Review* has helped shape the church, the "Leading Edge" opens to readers a view of our hopes and dreams and the phenomenal global growth of our church. It will have you smiling, reflecting, rejoicing, and firming your faith journey. To order single copies send a check or money order for \$4.50, or \$19.20 for 10 copies. Price includes priority mail and handling. For credit card orders or multiple copy information, call toll free 1-800-456-3991.

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ADVENTIST Review

COVER STORY

8 A Room of Their Own *When does diversity become divisive?*

BY JULIE Z. LEE

ARTICLES

16 Sentenced to Life *Receiving the wages of sin and the gift of God at the same time*

BY BOB HUNT II

22 A Picture of God in Work Gloves *Catching the reflections of divinity*

BY JIM KILMER

26 Our Mixed-up Church *What can we salvage when things seem to be coming apart?*

BY DANIEL GIANG

DEPARTMENTS

- 2 Letters
- 7 Give & Take
- 13 The X-Change
- 14 Cutting Edge Meditations
- 18 World News & Perspectives
- 25 Book Mark
- 29 Leaving the Comfort Zone
- 30 Reflections

EDITORIALS

- 5 Why She Sings at Midnight
- 6 Church

NEXT WEEK

ACTS 2000

Evangelism in Kumasi looks a lot like Pentecost.

COVER: PASTOR SUNG UM LEADS A GROUP DISCUSSION AT THE UPPER ROOM FELLOWSHIP, TEMPLE CITY, CALIFORNIA.

ADVENTIST Review

"Behold, I come quickly . . ."

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

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Why She Sings at Midnight

BY BILL KNOTT

The clock in the family room was sounding 12:00 when I first heard her singing.

In our green patch of suburban Maryland, birdsongs are a feature of the light. From an hour before dawn to an hour after dusk the woods ring with the trills of mockingbirds and warblers, cardinals and catbirds.

But never at midnight.

"Weird," I muttered to myself as I peered out the window to see if the offender was visible by lamplight. "This songster has a messed-up clock." And in my overblown imagination, I could see a feathered psychologist sitting on a limb, patiently attempting to bring this antisocial behavior to an end.

But still she sang, and still I listened.

"Irritating," I growled after several more minutes of trilling. "How are people supposed to sleep through a racket like that?" I had visions of wakened children wandering down dark hallways in the houses on our street, of half-dead husbands searching for a rock to launch into the nearest tree. The song we love to hear at dawn upsets us in the middle of the night.

But still she sang, and still I listened.

A rising pitch in the nonstop concert signaled some new threat that only the songbird knew. "Alarmist," I sneered. "This is a quiet cul-de-sac. The only danger on this street comes from the cats." Just then I would have gladly sponsored one to fetch this feathered morsel from her tree.

And then I remembered the recent break-in at the house next door, the tools missing from the neighbor's garage, the fire truck that roared past us three weeks ago. I mentally tightened the deadbolt on the doors, both front and back.

Still she sang, and still I listened.

"Irrelevant," I finally concluded, noting that my previous pronouncements had changed the singing not a whit. "She clearly hasn't read the research from the Ecumenical Institute for Avian Singing."

According to the latest poll, fully 83 percent of those surveyed respond unfavorably when confronted with singing after midnight. Most report their interest in ever listening to birdsongs is diminished by untimely and unconventional trilling. Birdsongs are welcomed between 5:30 and 8:00

a.m., and again on either side of dusk, so long as they are pleasant, midrange, and blend in nicely with the others.

Birds that follow these cultural norms can expect good audiences, plentiful nesting materials, and at least adequate seed in the backyard feeder. Birds that ignore the data will find themselves isolated and alone, singing songs no one wants to hear to no one in particular.

But still she sang, and still I listened.

I began to notice patterns in her singing now, lines of full-throated praise followed by occasional notes of warning. Whole arias rolled out that testified of joy, even in the darkness—of hope, even though the day had not yet dawned. Five—or was it six?—distinctive songs emerged, each somehow like the others, yet structured by its own

internal logic. 'Round and 'round the cycle sang, sometimes sweet as lullaby, sometimes more like proclamation.

And as I sat beside my open window, even my curmudgeon's soul grew tender toward the songster. After all, when does one need a song more than in the middle of the night? This singularly beautiful music would be lost in the great chorus of the others. The heart requires its melodies, not in the broad, warm light of noon, but when the lonely hours stretch out like sentinels upon the wall.

Who decreed that relevance is all, that birds (or churches) must continually adapt the singing because some listeners put their fingers in their ears? Why must the music surrender up its mystery and power to win an easy-listening crowd who never want their spirits stirred? What gain is there in doing only what the others do, in polling our way toward the kingdom under a tune designed to never offend or never disturb?

She sings at midnight who grasps the prophecy of dawn. She sings a clear, uncompromising tune that sounds, for all the world, like heaven. She sings because the world needs hope more than it needs its fancy tickled or its ego stroked. Nothing "relevant" will do. Only faithfulness will be rewarded.



Church

ANDY NASH

In our hearts we know how Jesus Christ would do church. It wouldn't look *anything* like the slick, starched churches on Sunday morning television. And truth be told, it wouldn't look like most of our churches, either.

Recently I received an e-message from a Colorado pastor, Byard Parks.*

"Last week," he writes, "I turned 30—and what a fantastic celebration my friends threw! We went to downtown Colorado Springs and set up a birthday party and invited the homeless and poor. My church family set up grills and served hamburgers with all the fixings, chili dogs, baked potatoes, and birthday cupcakes. More than 125 people came through line.

Lots of runaway teenagers, middle-aged homeless men, and even some Hell's Angels. As the 'birthday boy,' it was great to have all these tattooed arms outstretched to me in congratulations and smiles from pierced faces who hadn't had 'home-cooked' food in a long time.

"I sat and visited with one young man, Jeremiah, who had a mohawk, pierced eyebrows, and a hankering to talk. He had a scowl like the visit of a demon, and I soon found out he had just bought a gun to murder his father. Recently he had discovered that his father had molested his 12-year-old sister. A couple other runaway teens came over to join us at our picnic table. It seems tattoo dragons and satanic symbol chains don't dampen one's appreciation for food! Just as these newcomers stuffed their mouths with chili dogs, I said, 'I am gonna pray here for Jeremy. He's got a lot of rough stuff going on at home. If you guys want to bow your heads, you're welcome to.'

"You've never seen such humble looks! These teens folded their hands like angels, one of them removing his baseball cap, revealing a huge tattoo of a snake coiled on his shaved head. I learned that for lives in pain, prayer is always welcome. Chili dogs can wait when the Bread of Life is being served."

Byard's birthday party has much in common with another. In his book *The Kingdom of God Is a Party*, Tony Campolo tells the now-classic story of a jet-lagged night in Honolulu. At 3:30 a.m. in a diner, Campolo overhears some prostitutes chatting in the next booth. One of them, Agnes, mentions that the next day is her birthday.

"So what do you want?" her friend replies sharply. "A birthday party?"

"Why do you have to be so mean?" says Agnes. "I was just telling you, that's all. I've never had a birthday party.

Why should I have one now?"

At that moment Campolo resolves to throw a surprise party for Agnes. The word quietly spreads, and the next night at 3:30 a.m. Campolo, Harry the cook, and a platoon of prostitutes crouch inside the freshly decorated diner as Agnes walks in the door.

"Happy birthday, Agnes!" they shout wildly.

At first Agnes can only stare. But gradually she tears. And when her first-ever birthday cake is revealed, she won't let anyone eat it. "I want to take the cake home," she says.

As the party hums, Harry the cook learns that Campolo is a minister. "Minister!" he says disgustedly. "What kind of church do you belong to?"

"I belong to a church," replies Campolo, "that throws birthday parties for whores at 3:30 in the morning."

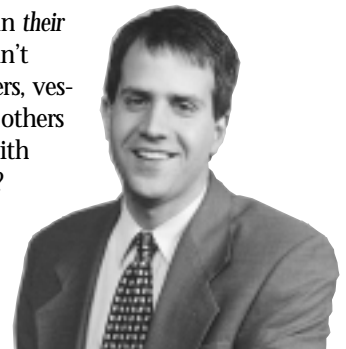
"No, you don't," scoffs Harry. "There's no church like that. If there were, I'd join it."

Do these two stories hit you like they hit me? Do they confront the way you do church?

Obviously, we can't uproot all that we have. As believers we shouldn't "give up meeting together" (Heb. 10:25, NIV) Sabbath morning to worship and study. Yet we must ask: How many outsiders ever set foot inside our services?—even our seeker services? Shouldn't we feed them (physically and spiritually) from within *their* world at least as often as ours? Shouldn't more of our gatherings—socials, dinners, vespers, prayer meetings—be held where others gather? For every Adventist church with walls, shouldn't there be one without?

In our hearts we know how Jesus Christ would do church.

* Byard sends regular epistles to his online cyberchurch. To receive them, write to burningbush@lifesource.net.



GIVE & TAKE

DREAM CENTER

In this feature Adventists share church-related dreams.

ADVENTIST MUSICIANS: I would love to see a "sharing center" for Adventist church musicians—a clearinghouse for new ideas, suggestions, and music, perhaps even a quarterly newsletter similar to the Sabbath school program helps. So many musicians have to start from "scratch" or just keep a status quo. Maybe we could even start training our volunteer musicians in the art of music ministry and working together with preachers.

—Evelyn Kopitzke, 2469 Summer Hills Dr., Blountville, Tennessee 37617; 423-323-5462; kopitzke@tricon.net

WE NEED YOU

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ADVENTIST LIFE

My daughter and her husband attended a marriage enrichment seminar in San Francisco one weekend and asked me to take care of their three children.

On the day I picked up the children, I asked the oldest, 6-year-old Lauren, what she wanted for lunch. When she didn't reply, I said, "How about some Stripples?"

"Grandma," she said, "that's for breakfast."

"How about sandwiches?" I asked.

"Those are good for picnics," she said.

"Well," I replied, "would you like to have some hot dogs?" (We usually have Veja-Links or Saucettes.)

"Grandma," she said, "it's not July fourth!"

—Ofelia A. Pangan, Clovis, California



ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY CREWS

THREE GIRLS AND THEIR GOATS



NOW HOLD STILL: In our continuing series featuring Adventists and their unusual pets (another time we'll feature pets and their unusual Adventists), we find, from left to right, Kelsey, Jocey, and Rheba Correia, of Silver Spring, Maryland, posing with their pet goats. Kelsey has an Angora goat, while Jocey and Rheba chose a pigmy goat.

"Goats make better pets than dogs," says their mom, Barbara. "They love to hang around with us in the yard and follow us on walks in the woods. It's fun to watch them play and butt each other." Did we just trigger a pet goat explosion?



—Matthew Moores, North Highlands, California

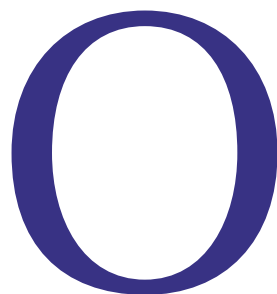
C O V E R S T O R Y



A Room of Their Own

*A step toward unity—
or away from it?*

BY JULIE Z. LEE



N AN
Adventist
college
campus the
bell tower

strikes on a Sabbath morning. The sanctuary, with the early church service just closing, is ready to welcome the second group of worshipers already on their way. On another part of campus, electric guitars and drums warm up to voices singing praise songs. Doors to various Bible study classes open, and the entire campus hums with the beginnings of another Sabbath day. Variety is key when it comes to this generation of individuality and diversity, and every spiritual need is being met on this college campus.

Almost.

In the midst of well-bundled groups migrating toward different corners of the campus, a caravan of cars pulls away from the curb. Thirty miles southwest a Korean-English worship service awaits their arrival.

Self-imposed Separation

Race relations in the United States have changed dramatically over the century. What began as a metaphor of a melting pot has diplomatically evolved into a colorful mosaic, in



FELLOWSHIP: Pastor Um socializes with his congregation before lunch. Um, who graduated from Andrews University and is currently working on his Ph.D. in counseling, immigrated to the United States in 1982. He is fluent in both English and Korean and has proven to be an effective mediator between first- and second-generation Koreans.



COME TO THE TABLE: Upper Room members schedule various ethnic themes for the weekly potluck dinners. This week members enjoy rice and a variety of vegetable side dishes called *banchan*, a typical Korean meal.

which distinctiveness in appearance and culture is celebrated, not denigrated. Yet with the dissolution of the assimilation ideal, another problem

arose: self-imposed ethnic segregation. Racially specific organizations sprouted in communities and touted a return to cultural roots, providing a segue into

justified separation among the minority groups.

The issue has even infiltrated our North American Seventh-day Adventist churches. In the past ethnically distinct services were necessary in order to accommodate language barriers. But over the past 10 years a growing number of congregations have been devoted to English-speaking, yet racially homogenous, gatherings.

In Temple City, California, a group of 80 meet in a cold, drafty church dining hall every Saturday. Vinyl-covered chairs stand in makeshift rows, and a minimal sound system blares the strums of a guitar. Toward the back entrance a fold-out table serves as the welcoming center for all members and guests. A woman in her late 20s lays out name tags, while another sorts overhead transparencies for the praise session. Members greet each other. All communication is written and spoken in English, yet the faces are all Korean.

Meet the Upper Room Fellowship, a Seventh-day Adventist church geared toward meeting the specific needs of English-speaking Korean-Americans. They are the children of immigrants, raised in the United States, commonly referred to as the 1.5 generation.

The Upper Room was created in 1994 by Pastor Sung Um and a group

of young adults after noticing a growing discontent among a certain age population in his youth group.

Um had been the youth pastor for a southern California Korean church for several years. During this time, while most of the group seemed to be growing spiritually, the twentysomething members were becoming frustrated. James Park, a medical student at Loma Linda University, recalls the circumstances that surrounded worship each week.

"I can't speak or understand Korean very well, so I attended the youth service, which was a hodgepodge of ages," says Park, whose parents are members of the church. "But after a while I was torn between staying and finding a new church. While I wanted to stay with my family, after baby-sitting the



VISIONING: Board meetings are held once a month. Um encourages young adult involvement, often giving them his pulpit.

younger crowds, I wasn't receiving any spiritual fulfillment myself."

Another dilemma that struck Park was maintaining a tie with his heritage. Immigrating to the United States at age 4 meant he would learn American culture at school, but Korean culture at home and church. Leaving his parents' church in search of spiritual fulfillment also meant leaving behind a part of his culture.

The problem is hardly isolated to Pastor Um's group. In 1994 the Los Angeles *Times* reported that 60 percent of Korean youth in the Presbyterian Church were leaving. The phenomenon, named the "Silent

Exodus" because the mass departure usually went unnoticed, was attributed to the generation and culture gap that existed between the immigrant parents and their children.

"A group of us began to brainstorm for ways to keep people in church," says Park. "We eventually came up with the idea of forming an English-language Korean young people's church."

In 1994, after much prayer, seven members departed from their parents' church and began to meet with Um and a small young adult group at a Korean Adventist church in Rosemead. Three months



POP-UP CHURCH: Held in another church's dining hall, Sabbath services begin at 10:30 to accommodate those who live far away. Members come to Temple City from all over southern California, some driving an hour one way.

later Um rented space from a church in Temple City that provided a neutral and centralized location in southern California. When the Upper Room was no longer allied with a specific church, which had initially caused a conflict in loyalty among the congregations, young adults began streaming in. In 1995 the Upper Room cut ties from Rosemead, its mother church, and became financially independent. Today the Upper Room is a company church in the conference and welcomes 80 members and up to 70 visitors a week.

Spiritual Apartheid?

The success of churches such as the Upper Room highlight the broader issue of church and culture. The two are almost synonymous, says Karen Chai, contributing writer in *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration*. In her essay, "Competing for the Second Generation: English-Language Ministry at a Korean Protestant Church," Chai writes that church is not only a center of support, but also a community for the immigrants with its own social structure that allows them to hold positions of importance that would otherwise not be possible in their new country.

Chai points out that church is the only place where ethnic segregation is fully accepted, allowing a meeting place for the old and young to identify with others of the same racial background. Thus for the younger generation, raised in the United States, church is often the single link to a heritage they partially understand. Outside of this haven the 1.5 generation had to deal with the complexities of growing up between two cultures (that of

their parents and that of the United States), identifying completely with neither.

"I grew up in a neighborhood without a lot of minorities, so I definitely knew I was different," remembers Judy Lee, an attorney in the Los Angeles area and a charter member of the Upper Room church. "I had to make explanations to people about our tradi-

Chai points out that church is the only place where ethnic segregation is fully accepted.

tions and lifestyle, and sometimes there were small incidents of racist remarks that hurt me. As a result I wanted to belong and blend in, erase the Korean part of my identity, in order to be like my American friends."

While Lee tried assimilation, Miwon Seo, a graduate student at California State University at Northridge and also a member of the

Upper Room, opted to return to Korea for the first time in more than 20 years to discover her cultural roots. "I went to Korea to work as a student missionary and also to find out about my culture," says Seo. "The Koreans treated me like an outsider because I can't speak Korean very well."

Pastor Um himself has a multifarious background. A son of an eminent Adventist pastor in Korea, Um immigrated to the United States in 1982 to study at Andrews University. In 1984 he married Jewel, a 1.5-generation Korean, and now they have three first-generation Korean-American children. He has become a fitting ambassador between the generations, since he is fluent in the languages and cultures of both age groups. After counseling parents and their culturally estranged children, Um believes that the result of such an ambiguous identity—the feelings of rejection from both societies—has left the 1.5 generation without a sense of ownership, whether dealing with country, culture, or church. This uncertainty eventually led to the "exodus." The establishment of a church specifically for this group of Korean-Americans has allowed spiritual and cultural independence for what Um calls "an emotionally interdependent generation."

"The churches are dominated by leaders who are in their 50s and 60s," says Um. "The cultural gap is intensified at church, and there is hardly any room to accommodate the needs of a younger generation. As a result we are losing many young people. I've counseled countless parents who



BLOOMING: The Upper Room Fellowship has grown from seven members in 1994 to more than 80 today. Cradle roll classes have become a necessity.

were distraught over their children's leaving the church. I realized that I had to do something about this serious problem."

"We started the Upper Room Fellowship to bring young adults back to church. We have done this with our Korean friends first because we have the most connection with them. No one will have a better understanding about our journey than we ourselves. Our goal is to use our common ground to be a platform for ministry."

This common ground involves services that blend two different cultures. At the Upper Room, while all literal and verbal communication is in English, sermons are infused with references specific to Korean culture. Korean food is a favorite option at potluck. During Christmas the members decorated a small tree for the hall; for New Year's they donned their traditional Korean costumes for church—a custom at their parents' churches. In this way neither identity is dissolved, only compromised.

"I don't know whether a sense of ethnic affirmation is essential to our spirituality, but it helps," says member Ruth Chung, assistant professor of psychology at the University of Southern California. "Having an ethnic community in which we have a shared culture and experience enhances the unity within the community and fosters fellowship. What we are really talking about is ethnic identity and the need to belong. We need a place like the Upper Room as a refuge."

What About Unity?

But as real as the struggles for cultural identities are, also true are the instructions spoken in the Bible, in which unity in Christ is praised. Such spiritual idealism is difficult to embrace when the richness of multiethnicity is tainted by the complexities of modern society, where integration often translates into assimilation and diversity dilutes into political correctness.

Hyveth Williams, senior pastor of the Campus Hill church in Loma Linda, California, asks that we as a church hold on to idealism anyway. "I

know there is a multiplicity of reasons we should have segregated congregations, but the Bible tells us that in Christ those reasons should go away," says Williams. "My understanding is that the gospel does not obliterate anyone's identity, but it enriches individual identity because when you love God, you learn to love yourself and others of a diverse community."



CONCERNED: Another southern California pastor, Hyveth Williams, says large homogeneous churches must do more to embrace cultural differences.

She has received some criticism from those who feel that such idealism is unrealistic and naive. Williams' own congregation is primarily White, but she and her staff are constantly moving toward a more diverse membership. A multiethnic congregation, says Williams, is a must in a nation that is increasingly moving away from the old melting pot theory to embrace community in diversity.

"We as a church have always believed that the sacred style is the Eurocentric way, as if the cultural elements other groups bring is wrong," she says. "But having a group of different-looking people is not accomplishing diversity. That's just political correctness. I believe in a weekly worship that will honor all cultures and increase the sense of unity."

This would not necessarily entail a

dismantling of "minority" churches such as the Upper Room, says Williams; instead it would call for the "majority" to take a big step.

"In order to break down these humanly constructed barriers, the majority must come into the community of the minority," she says. "Instead of telling the minority groups to close down their church and join the majority church, we must have the majority make an effort to join the minority. We as a church must come to terms and become more inclusive at all levels of organization."

It is difficult to predict what will happen to culturally distinct Adventist congregations. When asked, Pastor Williams laughs and says she is not a prophet, although she is certain that God will find a way to "save us." Pastor Um hopes that the Upper Room will grow to become more multiethnic in the coming years. But for now his church is simply working on bringing the young people back to church, even if it means postponing integration and building a comfortable spiritual community first.

"It is true that we should be able to rise above racial differences," says Chung. "But there is nothing that says we all have to be the same. There are many ways in which individuals and groups differ in how they relate to God. Many people are not going to church anymore. If there is a chance that someone is going to reach them, it's going to be those who can identify with them."

Meanwhile a bell rings in another Sabbath morning, and a carload of 1.5-generation Korean-Americans, having forgone their snooze buttons, begin their weekly pilgrimage. ■

Julie Z. Lee is a public relations intern at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.



Get to Know, Go Slow, Spiritually Grow

A. ALLAN and DEIRDRE MARTIN

I attend an Adventist church that has no young adult groups. I have a 17-year-old daughter who doesn't want to attend church because of this. Do you have any suggestions for getting a young adult group going? We have several young adults who have expressed an interest, but they feel that the current situation reflects a "we don't want them here" attitude.

Allan and Deirdre's reply: We thought it would be helpful to ask the opinions of some of our peers who are creating young adult ministries in their local communities. Here is some of their "eXpert" advice:

Do you have any suggestions for getting a young adult group going?

"I can see how it would be difficult to minister to a generation such as ours that is often critical and questioning. This is a formative time, and I encourage you to continue to demonstrate your love to your daughter and her peers by listening, being honest, and trying to get past the clichés we often use. An 'I don't know' is OK, if it's followed by a 'Let's find out together.'"

—Sherlyn Pang, one of the leaders of FACET, a young adult gathering based in Boston, Massachusetts.

"Before trying to start a new ministry within the church building, young adults need to build trust and continuity among themselves. Begin with a small group Bible study in someone's living room—perhaps in a rotation of living rooms (serve simple refreshments). Study and discuss the Gospel of Mark together, covering a chapter or so each week. Keep the meetings to an hour; don't burn everyone out with late-night sessions. After completing Mark, begin a young adult Sabbath school group and grow naturally from there."

—Andy Nash, cofounder of Friday Hope, a monthly young adult gathering at the General Conference headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland

"It's exciting that your young adults already 'have an interest'; you won't need to do a sales job. I've learned that quantity is not nearly as important as quality. A few people who want to get together to study is a powerful thing. I've been in large young adult gatherings, but they're not as enjoyable as a small group of interested attendees.

"For instance, at my church we recently started a

Sabbath afternoon Bible study and have been averaging three or four people (our young adult group has about 20-25 active members and about 35 total). This ratio may

seem low, but the three others are actively recruiting others.

"It will be a slow process, but the group will grow from the grass roots. If we had used a top-down approach, I wouldn't be nearly as confident.

"Another thing I've found very effective is e-mail (people actually read this stuff :-). I've noticed that whenever I send out an e-mail reminder to people of an event, attendance is always higher. In addition, members tell me that

they enjoy the variety of messages I forward to them. It gives you a way to stay in contact during the week. By the way, Allan and Deirdre have a lot of excellent online resource material/newsletters for young adults (<http://www.tagnet.org/dvm>)."

—Linden deCarmo, a young adult leader facilitating a thriving young adult group in Pembroke Pines, Florida.

Sherlyn, Andy, and Linden are among literally thousands of young adults ready and eager to initiate creative and relevant ministries to their peers. We are confident there are young adults in your congregation or city who are being commissioned by the Holy Spirit to innovate ministries for young adults locally. There's a spiritual movement sweeping our nation and our world. Want to discover more about young adult dreams and visions and connect with other young adults? Visit <http://www.saltyfish.net>.

Send 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.

Allan and Deirdre Martin are cofounders of *dream VISION ministries*, dedicated to empowering young people in Christian lifestyle and leadership.



cutting edge

m e d i t a t i o n s

In this feature Adventists share what's on their hearts. We welcome your brief but spiritual stories, insights, struggles, even drawings and photos. Send to Cutting Edge Meditations, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. (We don't pay for or return submissions to this feature.)—Editors.

Certified to Work?

Uncertainty could be read on the faces of passersby on the main street of Golden, British Columbia. A man with a CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) television camera sauntered up and down the sidewalks filming buildings and stopping occasionally to speak to people—an unusual occurrence for such a small town. He had come seeking details regarding a former firefighter who had been denied continued employment because of a 30-second shortcoming during a physical exam. Having been employed in this capacity for years, the firefighter had demonstrated an obvious ability to perform.

When I picked up my daughter from day care that day, I was met with a simple yet matter-of-fact statement: "I love you, Mom, 'cause Jesus wants us to love everybody." Nice one. I had been humbled by the fact that this small child was putting into practice what she believed He had decreed. There were no tests, no physical exams. Only that she place her trust in Jesus.

As I thought about my own beliefs—maybe to double-check that they were intact—I marveled at the simplicity of this concept. Was I, in my 27 years of life experiences and learning, able to show God the same respect and unquestioned belief as this 4-year-old? Ashamedly, no. Perhaps I, like the governmental department that oversees the firefighters, demanded stringent levels of ability and performance before rendering "employment" to my Lord and Saviour. Awakened by this reality, I imagined God smiling to Himself, grateful that I was able to learn a sim-

ple but profound lesson via a news story and a few unpretentious words out of my child's mouth. Point taken, Lord.
—Janet Crandall, Golden, British Columbia

Finishing Touches

When something or someone has hurt me badly and I want to run away and hide, I force myself to take an overall view of the world as God intended it to be. In doing so, I begin to see myself as a minute yet important part of the master plan. And if He, in His mighty wisdom, thinks highly enough of me to continue molding and polishing and reshaping until one day I fit my assigned spot perfectly, then I have to realize that I am where He wants me to be, and that no situation can wear me down.

And then I stand in awe before Him, amazed that He doesn't just toss me into the slag heap and pick another to take my place. So if I have to be bruised by this old world, lose a loved one, be betrayed by a friend, or whatever, I shall stand fast, knowing that my Lord holds me in His hands, just putting on the "finishing touches."
—Mona Schmidt McKown, Milwaukie, Oregon



PHOTOS © PHOTODISC

Safe in His Care

Recently I was at the front of a line of inmates on a chain bus. In between sections of inmates there is a guard behind a metal and plexiglass partition. Usually the guard is sleeping during transportation.

Before I got on the bus I asked the Lord to guide me and keep me safe. Within 20 minutes of the four-hour ride the other inmates tried to get me to bang on the partition or spit on the guard. When I wouldn't cave in to their demands and threats, they pretty much left me alone and just grumbled about me as though I wasn't there. After three and a half hours and one more threat, I was happy to get off the bus knowing that I had trusted in the Lord to guide me and keep me safe.

"If ye were



of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19).

—Michael Rose, Washington State Penitentiary, Walla Walla, Washington

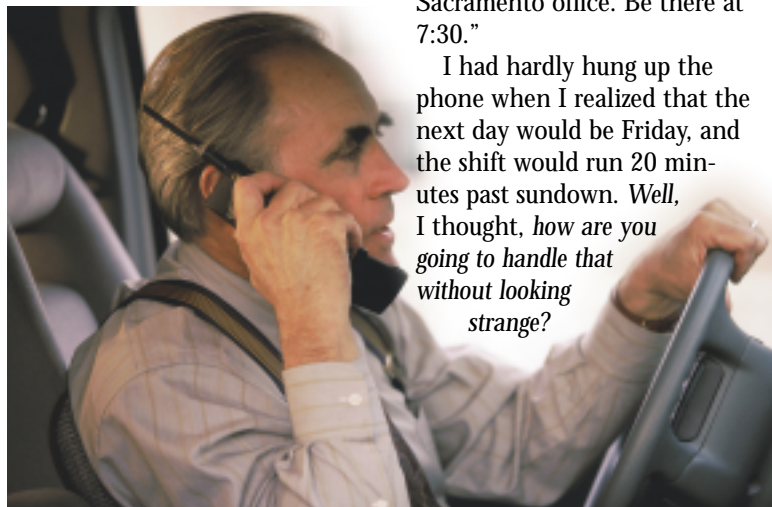
Special Delivery

"Can you work tomorrow?" was usually all the discussion we ever had with the crew chief the night before work assignments were made. We constituted a crew of 25 retired workers who delivered cars and people for a car rental company. We told each other "I don't do this for the money, just to have something to do." The camaraderie we developed was just an added bonus.

"You bet" was my usual answer.

"OK," said the chief one Thursday, "work the south Sacramento office. Be there at 7:30."

I had hardly hung up the phone when I realized that the next day would be Friday, and the shift would run 20 minutes past sundown. Well, I thought, *how are you going to handle that without looking strange?*



About halfway through the day, I told the manager that I couldn't work past 5:30 because of a "previous commitment." That worked, and I went home before sundown, but it bothered me the entire weekend. On Monday, when I next talked to the crew chief, I told him I would prefer not working the south Sacramento office during the winter because it was in a high-crime area, and I didn't like driving home in the dark. What a cop-out! I was feeling "worse and worse" about the whole thing. That night I sat down and wrote a confession explaining the real reason for not working late on Friday. "That's not a problem," he said.

It wasn't long, though, before this was hot news with the rest of the boys. "Hey, Nash, don't forget it's Friday," they'd chide. "Which synagogue do you go to?"

But then one day somebody asked me, "What do you know about Loma Linda? My father-in-law is being referred down there." Then more questions: "Is Armageddon actual or spiritual? Who is a believer? What do you believe in to be a believer?"

I think about that first challenge over Friday work and realize that I almost missed an opportunity to witness for my Lord.

—Don Nash, Sacramento, California

A House Like Grandma's

One Sabbath as the children, seated on the front pew of the church, waited for their story, the young pastor asked them what kind of house Jesus lives in.

Several children waved their arms. "A castle!" they said. "A palace!" "A mansion!" "The Holy Temple of God."

But then a little boy said emphatically, "Jesus lives in a house like my grandma's."

As I sat there thinking about my own grandmother's house, I had to concur with the little boy. His grandma's home must be a little heaven on earth—a retreat from



the harsh realities of daily life. And in his grandma he must find the fruit of Galatians 5: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. This was what I found in my grandmother's home when I was a child.

I am sure there are other homes that are little heavens on earth, made so by some godly parent or grandparent. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, . . . and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

—Frances Harriet Martin, Seattle, Washington

SENTENCED TO LIFE

I did the crime, but I didn't receive the punishment I deserved.

BY BOB HUNT II

STANDING in a courtroom one

October morning in 1984, I heard the judge's words ring out: "This court sentences you to death."

There I was, 27 years old, having grown up in an Adventist home attended Adventist schools, been married to an Adventist woman. I'd been a deacon in the local church. Now I had innocent blood on my hands, and society said that I needed to pay for my crime with

my life. Even before the judge rendered his sentence I felt dead. I didn't care if I died that very moment—I actually begged God to strike me down.

More words from the judge: "I remand you to the custody of the sheriff for transportation to the state penitentiary in Lincoln to await the carrying out of the death sentence, the date of which is yet to be determined."

As I turned to leave the courtroom, I looked into the faces of the victim's elderly parents and saw both hurt and anger. Then I looked across the aisle

into the faces of my parents and saw their hurt, disappointment, and tears. I begged God to destroy me.

CAUGHT IN THE DEVIL'S WEB

How could someone who had grown up in the Adventist Church have fallen so far under Satan's control? It's really not that hard to understand. When I was about 13 years old I allowed pornography to enter my life, thinking at the time it was no big deal. But it took control of my life completely.

When you experiment with one of the devil's toys, it doesn't

take long for Satan to be fully in control. As Paul says in Galatians 5:16, 17: "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish" (NKJV).

I gave in to that lust, and it so desensitized my feelings for other people that I just didn't have any regard left for them or God. After turning my back on God, I killed a 27-year-old woman. But God hadn't given up on me.

Sitting in the city jail, I took the blanket off the bed. I tied one end around the bars and the other end around my neck. I raged against God, *Why didn't You stop me from doing this evil thing? I can't live with myself.*

But just as I was ready to end my life a jailer unexpectedly came by my cell and stopped me. The next day I was moved to the county jail, where I tried to hang myself three more times, only to have someone stop me at the very moment I was about to commit suicide.

I remember telling my family and friends after each attempt that I wasn't really trying to commit suicide, so that they wouldn't worry about me. Yet I didn't want to live—guilt overwhelmed me.

Going Down?

The third or fourth night after I arrived at the county jail my pastor had stopped by and said, “Bob, I’m sorry, but we can’t have the community think we condone your actions by not taking any action. The church is going to have to disfellowship you.”

Is this God's way of telling me that He no longer cares about me either? I wondered. Have I committed the unpardonable sin?

A few nights later as I lay on my bunk, one of the jailers came by my cell and spotted the Bible my parents had given me, sitting on a shelf next to my bunk. “What do you think about God?” he asked. “Do you believe what the Bible teaches about God’s unconditional forgiveness?”

I didn’t know what to say.

He went on to say that Christ’s blood at Calvary not only washed away our “small sins” (his words), but also the “big ones.”

As he talked, he picked up my Bible and read from Isaiah 1:18: “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool” (NIV).

After sentencing, I was taken to the state penitentiary in Lincoln, where I was put on suicide watch. After that I was taken to death row.

I was among inmates whom society considers to be the worst of the worst kind of monsters. But as I began to talk to these men, I began to see that they were human: they had families that were special to them; they cried and laughed. There were several who took part in a weekly Bible study with the prison chaplain.

I spent a year on death row before my sentence was reduced from death to life in prison. Just as Christ died on the cross, opening the door for our salvation, taking our death sentence, so God reached into my life again, as if

“What do you think about God?” he asked.

He were saying, “Bob, I have a plan for your life. I stopped you from taking your life; now I’m stopping the state from taking it.”

Each time I started to get discouraged, the Lord would send someone to me at just the right time. First it was the county jailer, then it was the chaplain at the state penitentiary, then it was a volunteer from one of the community’s Christian fellowships.

Back Home Again

During my first year in prison most of my religious contacts came from non-Adventist Christians. They never failed to show love, support, and a Christlike forgiveness. Yet I missed the support of the church I grew up in, and I wanted to be a part of it again.

I made contact with one Adventist pastor who came and talked to me. He made me feel guilty for giving the church a “black eye.” I wondered: *Should I get rebaptized in the church that I grew up in, the church I believe in? Or should I go to a church that would accept me as Jesus did?* I became discouraged.

I always had the love and support of my parents, and their prayers meant a great deal to me. I knew that leaving the Adventist Church would disap-

point them greatly.

About the same time I started receiving visits from a member of one of the local Adventist churches. He was really a blessing in my struggle. I also received a visit from the local conference president, who helped me understand that I needed to look to Christ and know that the Adventist Church and its members are not yet perfect. If some could not forgive, that wasn’t a reflection on everyone. He reminded me of what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (NKJV).

The burden on my heart became lighter. The Lord began to open my eyes to what He had done in my life. He had blessed me with parents who were always there for me, who always stayed by my side regardless of the circumstances in which I found myself. I

especially caught glimpses of the Lord’s love through the life of my dear, sweet mother (now resting in Jesus). I began to think that if my human parents could be so accepting, how much more is it so with my heavenly Father.

About that time the Lord brought an Adventist pastor into my life, a man who has become a very special friend. Again, the Lord brought him into my life just when I needed him the most.

I thank the Lord for His many blessings in my life. I’m living a life I would never have chosen, a life that I wouldn’t wish on anyone. But through it all I have witnessed firsthand God’s love and mercy. He has shown me in many ways and through many people that even in a state penitentiary I can still have the abundant life—and that Christ is the center of it. ■

Bob Hunt II is serving a life sentence at the Nebraska State Penitentiary in Lincoln, Nebraska.



The Refugee Crisis in the Balkans: Thank You, ADRA, for Being There

BY REINDER BRUINSMA, TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION SECRETARY

In February I made my first visit of the year to Albania. I had come to discuss with Caleb Bru, the Albanian Mission president, and Sean Robinson, Adventist Development and Relief Agency director for Albania, what was ADRA's uncertain future in this ravaged country. Little did I realize that the situation would change drastically in the next few weeks.

Returning a few weeks ago with Trans-European Division treasurer Graham Barham, I learned that 12 expatriates had already arrived to boost the small ADRA staff and that within days another 25 expatriates must be recruited. Together with about 360 nationals, they will be responsible for implementing a range of humanitarian projects that have been entrusted to ADRA.

Desperate Trek

As the conflict in Kosovo escalated, hundreds of thousands of ethnic Albanians began to make their way across the Yugoslavian border, most of them into Albania and Macedonia. As



CARAVAN OF MISERY: Refugees traveled to Albania in all types of vehicles, including tractors, cars, trucks, and on foot.

I write, more than 600,000 refugees have escaped the ethnic cleansing that is still in full swing, while possibly an even higher number of ethnic Albanians are on the move in Kosovo itself. Ever since the early 1990s politicians feared that something like this might happen.

The Adventist Church responded to

the current crisis in unprecedented ways. Many unions in the division, and Adventist organizations throughout the world, have sent help. ADRA has mobilized its network for a major relief effort in Albania, Macedonia, and as far as possible, in Yugoslavia. The ADRA headquarters office in Silver Spring, Maryland, is coordinating the activities in Albania, while ADRA/Germany is taking the lead in channeling aid into Macedonia. John Arthur, the Trans-European Division ADRA director, spearheads efforts to send help to Yugoslavia. Several governments and international organizations are working with ADRA. A large percentage of the food that ADRA helps distribute comes from U.S. government sources.

Barham and I made a five-day fact-finding trip to Albania, to see for ourselves what is happening and to understand better how the division can sup-



SOME CALL IT HOME: One of many refugee camps near Kukës, Albania

port ADRA's efforts. A contract was signed with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and World Food Programme, making ADRA responsible for distributing food to up to 100,000 persons in a number of refugee centers.

Other projects have been submitted to various European governments, some of which have already been accepted. Our goal in traveling to Albania was not just to see the train of tractors pull their wagonloads of displaced people across the border, but to understand better the challenges ADRA is facing in doing what it has promised to do.

Getting to Tirana was a problem in itself. Since practically all commercial flights into Albania have been suspended, we flew via Zurich into northern Greece and then spent \$150 on a three-hour taxi ride to the border. We walked across the border onto Albanian territory, where we were met by the Albanian Mission president.

Another car trip of four hours brought us to Tirana, where we received a thorough briefing from Sean Robinson, the ADRA director, and two ADRA specialists who had arrived about a week earlier. Mike Porter had been made available by ADRA headquarters to direct the food distribution project, while Homer Trecartin had been brought in to deal with the finances.

Trecartin had just accepted a call to become the finance director for ADRA in south Sudan and was enjoying his preembarkation leave. But with a day's notice he was willing to suspend his leave and go on a temporary assignment to Albania.

We told Sean Robinson that we wanted to travel to Kukës, the small town close to the border of Kosovo, which saw its population increase within a few days from about 25,000 to 125,000. It so happened that two seven-ton trucks, donated by the Danish government and filled with blankets, needed to be driven to the border region.

With some trepidation we agreed to drive one of them, following an Albanian driver over more than 100

The Changing Face of Yugoslavia

BY REINDER BRUINSMA, TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION SECRETARY

After a prolonged bloody conflict, the former Yugoslavia was split into a number of independent states: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Slovenia, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which consists of Serbia and Montenegro. Kosovo is a province in the southern part of Yugoslavia. Its previous autonomy has recently been more and more restricted, and the ethnic Albanian minority (14 percent of the total Yugoslav population) has suffered increasing repression.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Balkan countries is part of the Trans-European Division, which has its headquarters in St. Albans, England. In Communist times the entire territory was covered by the Yugoslavian Union. Political realities made a reorganization unavoidable.

Today the South-East European Union comprises Serbia and Montenegro (the new Yugoslavia), Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the recently established Adriatic Union comprises Croatia, Slovenia, and Albania. Most of the nearly 15,000 members live in Croatia and the Serbian part of Yugoslavia.

The church has fewer than 50 members in Kosovo. According to the latest information, about 20 are still there, while the others have fled. Pastor Ashlimovski is still in Pristina, and Sister Dijana Daka, a pastor of ethnic Albanian background, is now in Tirana.

miles of the worst possible mountain roads. After a grueling trip of 11 hours we arrived safely in Kukës around 1:00 a.m., found the house that ADRA has rented for its regional office and for living quarters, and slept fitfully for a few hours. Unfortunately, we were awakened by the torrential rain.

Urgent Need

Word soon reached us that there was an urgent need for blankets at the border crossing. Trucks were also needed to take some refugees to Kukës, where they would find temporary shelter. We realized that it was Sabbath, but few Sabbath mornings have been so meaningful and rewarding as this one. We were able for a few hours to do something very tangible for some of the 15,000 refugees who had used this border crossing into Albania within one 24-hour period.

Being at the border and witnessing this uninterrupted caravan of men, women, and children, in cars, tractors with flatbed carts, horse-drawn wagons, and on foot was a scene we shall not easily forget. The sight of tent cities and muddy fields, full of tractors and

wagons, and people everywhere, will stay with us for a long time. But we shall also carry with us the images of tired and unshaven but totally dedicated ADRA workers such as Todd Bruce, Ken Larsen, Mike Porter, and their Albanian colleagues.

Overwhelming Contrast

As we flew back to Tirana from a field near one of the refugee camps in Kukës in a Swiss Army helicopter that had brought a shipment of food, we saw the majestic landscape of northern Albania and somehow tried to make sense of the strange but overwhelming contrast between the natural beauty of the mountains and rivers and the indescribably ugly suffering that human beings inflict upon themselves and others.

We know that the "final solution" for all tragedy is the divine intervention of Christ's second coming. But while we wait, we must do all we can, in Christlike compassion, to feed those who are hungry and give shelter to those who have lost all their earthly possessions. Clearly, that is what we saw ADRA doing in a most impressive manner.

The Face of Evil

BY BYARD PARKS, PASTOR, COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO

This spring George Lucas launches his fourth movie in the *Star Wars* series. Beyond the metaphysics that underscore *Episode I—The Phantom Menace*, I fear for our planet because of a face—a tattooed face named Darth Maul.

Even before the flick was released, I had to stare eye to fierce eye with this evil face. I first saw it on a magazine cover in my local grocery store. Yellow gleaming eyes, red and black tattoos, and six horns. Then I saw it in the children's coloring book section of my local Target. As the *Star Wars* marketers describe this face, it is "soaked with the evil of the dark side."

Without invitation the public will be forced to stare into this hideous face for the next decade. Wal-Mart alone is already boasting predicted sales of \$250 million. You and I will find this evil face on the back of our morning

Cheerios boxes, on Taco Bell trays, in bookstores, even with kids playing with Darth Maul action figures in the pews of church.

Yes, Darth Maul is fictional. But the evil he represents is not. What alarms me most about this face is the way it caught my gaze. It is not a human head, and so my eyes pored over every feature, trying to make sense of it.

Having to consciously pull my curious eyes away, I suddenly thought about the alluring face of the coming antichrist.

Unlike Darth Maul, the face of the antichrist will be strangely beautiful. We are told that we will be tempted to look and stare—that our simple curiosity will be enough to fell us. When Satan disguised as antichrist comes, the discipline of turning from known evil—be it hideous or beautiful—and our overwhelming affection for the true Christ will be all that holds our eyes in check.

NEWS COMMENTARY

Adventist Church Leaders React to Joint Anglican-Roman Catholic Recommendation

Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders recently responded to the recommendation of a joint Anglican-Roman Catholic international commission that the pope be recognized as "the universal primate."

The publication of the ARCIC III report entitled "The Gift of Authority" includes multiple references to the bishop of Rome and his identification in terms of universal primacy, or leader of all churches.

"Within his wider ministry, the bishop of Rome offers a specific ministry concerning the discernment of truth, as an expression of universal primacy," says the report. "The reception of the primacy of the bishop of Rome entails the recognition of this specific ministry of the universal primate. We believe that this is a gift to be received by all the churches. Such a universal primate will exercise leadership in the world and also in both communions, addressing them in a prophetic way."

"We are keenly aware of the conclusions of this international commission and its desire to achieve unity among the churches," says Jan Paulsen, president of the Adventist Church. "We reaffirm our historical position, which is in



Jan Paulsen

harmony with the Reformation declaration that spiritual authority is vested in the Bible only as the Word of God, and not in an individual. We continue to maintain this conviction as a community of Christian believers."

Ekkehardt Mueller, associate director of the Adventist Church's Biblical Research Institute, commented that while the report is carefully drafted, its appeal is to tradition over the Bible.



Pope John Paul II

"The report strongly stresses the church and its tradition," comments Mueller.

"Again and again reference is made to tradition rather than to Scripture so that Scripture becomes almost secondary.

Accepting the principle of 'the Bible and the Bible only,' Adventists do not find biblical evidence for a universal primacy associated with any human being.

"While the decision of the Anglican Church may advance the ecumenical process and may encourage other churches to come under the umbrella of the universal leadership of the bishop of Rome, and as much as Seventh-day Adventists encourage open communication and good relations with other denominations, Adventists cannot follow the Anglican decision without giving up their understanding of Scripture and their own calling.

"For Adventists the authority of Scripture and the

Did You Know?

Survey: Americans view faith leaders as builders of inclusive society

Americans often point to their religious leaders as those doing the most to help build a more inclusive society, a recent survey concludes.

The results of a nationwide poll of adults on the topic were released April 26 by the National Conference for Community and Justice.

Seventy percent of the 1,035 adults surveyed said their religious or faith leader is doing "some" (24 percent) or "a lot" (46 percent) to make U.S. society more inclusive. Such inclusiveness was defined as aiding in the creation of equal access to real opportunities, such as jobs.

"Americans today, as they have in the past, look toward our faith communities in the battle against racism and the intergroup prejudices that continue to challenge our nation," said Sanford Cloud, NCCJ president and chief executive officer. "But moving forward, leaders from all sectors must join in the effort to transform our society so that we can make America a better place for all of us."
—*Religion News Service*.

For Your Good Health

Dietary Foundation

Postmenopausal women who eat one serving a day of whole-grain food reduce their risk of dying from heart disease by almost one third when compared to women who rarely eat whole grains. Whole grains contain fiber, vitamin E, folate, magnesium, and many phytochemicals that help prevent chronic diseases. Researchers suggest replacing at least some of the refined grains in your diet—white bread, pasta, white rice, many cereals—with whole-grain products.—*American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.

Relief on the Way

For those who suffer from hay fever, relief is in your future. A 23-year study of Brown University alumni found that hay fever symptoms tend to decrease with age. The group of Brown students is now around age 40. Nearly 55 percent of them report their allergy symptoms have improved, and nearly 23 percent say they're symptom-free.—*HealthNews*.

"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.

N E W S B R E A K

authority of the bishop of Rome are incompatible."—*Adventist News Network*.

Babcock University Becomes Reality

On May 10, education officials from the Nigerian government officially chartered Babcock University. The Adventist institution is one of the first three private universities in the country.

Formerly known as Adventist Seminary of West Africa (ASWA), Babcock University is named after the first Adventist missionary to that country, D. C. Babcock, reports Africa-Indian Ocean Division president and university chancellor Luka T. Daniel.

The four-year process to gain university charter was completed during the institution's fortieth anniversary. Established in 1959 as Adventist College of West Africa, the institution was later named ASWA to forestall a government takeover. The charter was presented in a special ceremony in Abuja by Olaiya Ani, Nigeria's minister of education.

NET '98 Goes to Poland

Through the magic of video, the NeXt Millennium Seminar with evangelist Dwight Nelson was recently replayed in 60 locations throughout Poland. Nelson's mes-

sages were all translated into the Polish language.

A total of more than 4,000 visitors attended the meetings, including many non-Adventists.

"Many church members have purchased the whole set of tapes to run small group meetings in their own homes," reports Roman Chalupka, Polish Union communication director. "This way was more effective because many feel more comfortable watching the tapes, playing them again, and making decisions [for Christ] in the homes of neighbors and friends."

It's anticipated that eight cable TV stations in Poland will also air the event, Chalupka says.

News Notes

✓ For the third consecutive year, Arkansas governor **Mike Huckabee** proclaimed May 8 as Safe Television for All Ages Day for the state of Arkansas. The proclamation honors the work of KSBN, an Adventist-owned station in Springdale, and encourages families to speak out for quality television programming.

What's Upcoming

June	26	Thirteenth Sabbath Offering for the Southern Asia-Pacific Division
July	3	Vacation Witnessing emphasis
July	17	Home Study International promotion

A Picture of God in Work Gloves

A father's example has the most significant impact on a boy's moral development.

BY JIM KILMER

I TRIED TO PRAY, BUT WORDS WOULD NOT come. How could I talk to a God who didn't seem interested in my situation? Then another blast.

"What?" my conscience boomed. "You, a minister, a seminary graduate? You surely understand why

God permits suffering. You've preached about Job. You know that when Adam sinned . . ."

Yes, I knew all that. But this was a crisis need. Our infant son, John, had needed corrective surgery, and that seemed hard enough. Now he was home. It was night. Duties of the next day were heavy on my mind. John tried to sleep, but the postoperative pain kept waking him. The only thing that seemed to help was to hold him in my arms and walk until he fell asleep, then place him gently back in his crib and hope he could stay asleep. This process must have been repeated three or more times, and now, once again he was crying.

"Please, Lord, I know You love us. You are our God," I prayed. "Please let John go to sleep. I don't feel as though I can get up one more time." At that, the crying intensified,

and again I got up and walked him to sleep. Now there was a greater burden, a spiritual pain. Why did the Lord not answer? Weakened by lack of sleep, drained by concern, the temptation to doubt pressed heavy upon my heart. Why did God not answer as He had in times past?

In the darkness of night I struggled with my thoughts and tried to pray. I groped for words, but they would not come. Then out of habit, like Martin Luther, I fell back on the classic, the prayer that came from the lips of the Lord Himself.

"Our Father . . . Father?" The word "father" reached into my perturbed soul and drew out an instant flash of memories—hundreds in number. My own dad. A hardworking, tenderhearted logger. I thought of how kind he had always been. He did not need to do a lot of things to try to convince us that he cared for us. His soft voice and gentle manner spoke much. Warm emotion poured forth in the way he simply uttered "son."

I cannot remember Dad ever raising his voice at any family member. Yet he spoke in quiet thunder. I will never forget the day he asked me to help him work on the fence. I wanted to build a fort in the woods. I said, "Dad, do I have to?"

He answered quietly, "Well, someday you ought to come to the point where you would do things just out of love, son."

LOVE! It hit me like a falling tree. Of course I loved my dad. I didn't realize that obedience was related to love. I would be glad to help, and it was really great just to be doing



something with Dad.

Dad was always willing to do the difficult, the thankless job, to help without reward, to serve the church any way he could. He worked hard as a logger and always put food on the table and clothes on our backs, and had money left for new cars and a house. I can remember him getting up before dawn, driving to the woods, working all day, coming home and working late into the night to finish a new house for his family. He moved the family to town and helped to build a church school so we could attend. Tuition was expensive, but never once did I hear him complain. He always gave so much and asked so little.

On the job he did more than his share of work and always gave the benefit of the doubt to others in a business deal. His homecoming was a highlight in our day. We children would watch for the coming of the crew truck, and with the first glint of sun on his hard hat we'd run, yelling "Daddy's home!" He often saved a little tidbit from his lunch. We felt so important opening Dad's lunch pail and eating out of it like a real logger. Sometimes he would let us wear his "tin hat" or clomp around in his cork shoes. Once he brought home a flying squirrel that had fallen out of a tree.

He often read to us at night, and we can remember that more than once he fell asleep while reading. Once he had just read a line about some animal that had "to watch out for," and then he fell asleep. We were eager to know more of the story. "What did he have to watch out for, Dad?" His body seeking rest and his mind still on the job, Dad murmured, "Powder monkeys and stumps." The powder monkeys were workers who blasted stumps out of the way and were often working on the roadway where the men walked to the trees. They did indeed need to watch out for them.

I don't know how he found the energy to play ball with us after work and do all the other things that he did. He made a motor car for my brothers and me, and we will never forget the good times we had with it.

There are other memories, things I would like to forget. I remember how I grew spiritually careless and attended public high school in order to play football. I recall coming home late on Friday night after a game and finding Dad still awake. I found out later that he had spent that time in prayer for me.

Dad's health began to suffer. I realized I was hurting him by my careless life. I turned to the Lord and attended academy my senior year. His prayers were answered. But still I needed to grow. One day while home on school leave, I asked Mom to take me to town

I didn't realize that obedience was related to love.

so I could buy a new shirt for myself. She was willing. I went to the closet to borrow a clean shirt from my dad to wear shopping. There were only two. One was a white shirt for Sabbath. The other was a work shirt. I thought, *That is the story of my dad's life. Work and church. Church and work. Right now he is out there climbing some muddy hillside so I can have a Christian education. I am going to save and buy Dad a shirt.* It was not only a maturing experience in my relationship to my parents, but it helped me realize that I should be more concerned about serving God than trying to get things out of Him.

As I walked my son to sleep that night the previous day's meditation came to mind—the "word of adoption whereby we cry 'abba, father.'" *Abba* really is a more endearing term—closer to "daddy." It was difficult to think of the God of the universe, the King of glory in those terms, but as I thought how my own dad would respond if I came to him with any concern, I fell to my knees and prayed the shortest/longest prayer of my life . . . "Dad!" It was enough. The burden was lifted. I knew my heavenly Father would care. He would do anything in His power to

help. He would suffer with me. Now I could experience what intellectually I knew to be true—the comfort of a loving heavenly Father.

Dad is now 81 years old. His four sons and one daughter have all been successful in their chosen professions. I look back on 35 years of pastoral work, college teaching, mission service, and departmental work.

While studying for a Ph.D. in religious education I pored through research till my eyes burned. But once in a while they watered as I read about the importance of the father-child relationship. The father's love is the most significant relationship around which to build an integrated character. The father's example has the most significant impact upon sons in moral development. A father's love and support are of vital importance in the development of conscience. One could go on. But perhaps the most important legacy a loving father gives is a picture of a self-sacrificing compassionate God.

It was this picture that comforted me in my distress that night.

There have been other times when mountains of difficulty have confronted the advancement of God's work; days of danger in the mission field when mortar shells zoomed over our heads at the rate of 5,000 per day; days of anxious thoughts when our precious daughter lay seriously ill in a hospital bed in a foreign land. Again it seemed that emotions were too frayed or the mind too numb to grasp the promises of God. In each of these cases it was the word "Father" that started the flow of praise and spiritual blessing. All because of one earthly dad whose life has reflected so much the love of our Father in heaven.

This is the greatest gift an earthly father could ever give to his children. ■

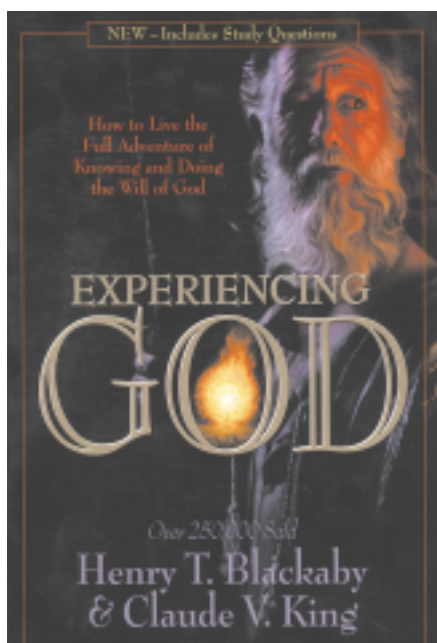
Jim Kilmer is director of the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries departments of the Upper Columbia Conference, Spokane, Washington.



BOOK

• M A R K •

Experiencing God How to Live the Full Adventure of Knowing and Doing the Will of God



Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King, Broadman & Holman Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee, 1994, study questions, 1998, 288 pages, US\$12.99; paperback. Reviewed by Dan Bullock, a church elder who writes from Mount Shasta, California.

In the midst of the current information explosion and many books on the topic, people still have difficulty with the nuts and bolts of a living, personal relationship with God. As an elder in my church for years, I am embarrassed to tell you that only in recent years did I discover my relationship had been more with a concept of God than with

the Person Himself. Thanks to the Holy Spirit, who led me to a wonderful study series, all that has changed.

Studying the Sabbath school lesson, reading a devotional, and saying a prayer every day do not maintain an active relationship with God. We need more than a superficial or merely intellectual devotional life. When we don't experience God's presence and activity in our life we limit Him, preventing the Holy Spirit from reproducing His character of love in us. Can you really know the will of God for you every day? Blackaby and King say "Yes!"

Two years ago, aware of my own needs and those of our church, I looked for a way of improving our spiritual lives. Believing that we live in the last days of earth's history, I prayed that God would teach us what we needed to know. I read Ellen White's statement that "as we approach nearer the end I have seen . . . little groups . . . with their Bibles in their hands" engaging in "a free, conversational study of the Scriptures."* I searched for reading materials that a small, diverse group could use to guide them through Bible study to a deeper friendship with God.

God led me to the Bible-based book *Experiencing God*, and I shared it with our church members. Two small groups formed. We found in this book a systematic and stimulating resource leading us to an intimate relationship with God the person. The authors have a blessed way of presenting Scripture that makes plain each step on the path to knowing and doing God's will on a continual basis.

This study revolutionized our experience with God. I'm not talking about a sensational fervor based on feeling. We began to see God as active all around us. He comes to each of us seeking an individual relationship. The authors give biblical principles

that can be understood and applied to the process of developing this deep friendship with God.

We learned that God speaks to us through several avenues: the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church. As we respond to Him and rearrange our affairs to be obedient to His call, we come to know Him better. As we obey in these daily and moment-to-moment encounters, He does His work through us, and the living experience becomes reality.

This 12-week course requires a commitment of a daily hour of study and journal writing. (You will have surprising things to write.) Weekly group meetings of two and one-half hours give time for mutual sharing and growth. The authors provide a leader's guide, and there is even a youth edition. The newest

version includes study questions in the book. Also available are supplemental videotapes by Blackaby.

As those in our group have been led step-by-step to understand how to see, hear, and relate to God, peace has entered our lives. No more is He out there somewhere as a cold concept. Together our group has gone through an eye- and heart-opening experience, and we see familiar scriptures in a new way.

Experiencing God is the best thing that has happened to our church in my memory. If you long for a clearer spiritual path, I suggest you seek five or six friends and make a trip to your local Christian bookstore for *Experiencing God*.

* *The Voice in Speech and Song*, p. 235.

Experiencing
God is the
best thing that
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Our Mixed-up Church

Will diverse forces drive us apart or pull us together?



ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY CREWS

I GREW UP ATTENDING a cathedral each Sabbath. I loved music master Paul Hill's moving choral anthems. I memorized sermons that Bill Loveless preached when I was 7 years old. As a teenager I sat in the balcony eagerly listening to Jim Londis. Even today, a visit to an Adventist "megachurch" such as Sligo1 lifts my spirit heavenward as cathedrals did for medieval worshipers.

However, my understanding of "church" is most informed by a small church in upstate New York that has 130 members. There is no air-conditioning. The roof leaks. The basement floods on occasion. And the members are "saints" in the sense of a community called apart, not in the sense of perfect individuals.

Visitors often remark about the ethnic diversity of our congregation—there are roughly 60 percent Caucasians, 20 percent African-Americans, 15 percent Hispanics, plus a few of us "others." About 20 percent of the members immigrated to the United States, bringing a wonderful mix of accents to a board meeting. About 5 percent of the church are "differently abled." The members range in age from octogenarians to the flocks of children who run up front for children's story.

If one gets to know folks a bit, the educational and socioeconomic diversity is equally striking. Some members attended the school of hard knocks. Others have strings of degrees longer

than their names. Many members are on fixed incomes. Our clerk once reported that only 38 people were employed full-time.

Casual visitors overlook the most impressive fact about the church: its theological diversity. Members understand their Adventist Christianity from the historical, evangelical, and progressive viewpoints. Abortion: murder or choice? Celebration style of worship: satanism or evangelism? Women in ministry: unbiblical or overdue? Justification, sanctification, perfection, Ellen White, hymn no. 403. Such "hot potatoes" end up mashed and served for fellowship dinner. After "heated" discussions, the discussants roll up their sleeves together at the next work bee.

No conference committee planned this "mixed-up" church (as one of our senior members once termed it). I believe God's Spirit gradually attracted and united diverse Christians together.

Church Unity Demonstrates God

My home church provides a model of the world Seventh-day Adventist Church seeking unity amid ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, and, in some respects, theological differences. How we Adventists handle diversity determines how well we demonstrate God's character to the world. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed that His followers "be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:23, NIV). We witness for Christ most vividly as a united community. When diverse Christians live in unity, we demonstrate to others that Jesus was God.

Paul shared Jesus' concern for unity. He repeatedly returned to the analogy of the "body" to describe the church as a diverse but united organism. Since Jesus ascended to heaven, the world can no longer see His physical body. Instead, it looks to His earthly "body" (the church) to understand what God is like.

When Christ died on the cross, not one bone in His physical body was broken. Yet through the ages and

continuing today, factionalism has broken His spiritual body. Christians have struggled to achieve unity. Some excluded those who disagreed through schism or excommunication. This produced a more homogeneous church, but not necessarily unity. Sometimes a common threat created temporary alliances among erstwhile enemies. At other times aggressive hierarchies used coercive threats or inducements to produce conformity. However, these human methods of creating Christ's body resulted instead in Frankenstein-like monsters: a repulsive mockery of what God intended.

Human methods of bodybuilding cannot substitute for the healing of the Holy Spirit. Paul writes of the Holy Spirit giving gifts to "equip" (RSV) or "prepare" (NIV) Christ's spiritual body for service (Eph. 4:12). The Greeks used *katartizein*, or "equip," to describe setting a fractured bone together so it could function again. In Ephesians 4:1-3 Paul urges us to practice four qualities that enhance the Holy Spirit's unifying ministry.

Humility

The compound Greek term Paul used, *tapeinophrosunee*, derives from two words meaning "humility of mind." Adventists have long discussed modesty of dress as representing God's ideal. How about *modesty of opinion*? This does not preclude confidence in one's beliefs, but a Christian must always remember that "God will teach me more." Thomas Fuller once said: "Wise men learn something of fools; but fools nothing of wise men."

Without "humility of opinion," true discussion cannot occur. Each person simply propounds his or her opinion without considering what the other says. Like televised political "debates," each debater seeks to score points rather than learn.

Christians must exercise "humility of opinion" when discussing all manner of subjects—from whether to pave the parking lot to soteriology.² Not only does "humility of opinion" allow for true discussion to take place; we

might actually learn in the process.

Gentleness

The word Paul uses for “meekness” or “gentleness” refers to the character of tame animals, as contrasted with the ferocity of wild beasts. If the church is to be united, Christians must keep their claws and fangs buried. This means refusing to use “negative advertising” against someone whose understanding differs from our own.

When discussing matters of spiritual and moral consequence, our thoughts easily slip from “My understanding is right” to “Yours is wrong; You are an amoral fool not to see it.” In contrast to us, when Jesus confronted Satan face-to-face in the wilderness, Jesus “stuck to the issues” and never personally attacked His opponent. How much more circumspectly and “tamely” ought you and I to speak about our brothers and sisters.

“Going negative” does more than demean the two sides involved. It besmirches the entire church. Imagine if airline companies engaged in “negative advertising.” One company might say, “Our competitor’s pilots are poorly trained.” Another might advertise, “The other company skimps on fleet maintenance.” One airline company may win and another lose, but many people would decide to travel by train. Similarly, when you and I engage in “negative theology,” one side may win, but it is Christ’s body that gets dragged through the mud.

Patience

Some students grasp a new concept in an instant. Others struggle and must study it carefully. Some receive five talents; others one. How the “strong” and “weak” treat each other determines the degree of unity within the church.

As humans you and I become impatient with one another. I want to see results! The church must become perfect *today!*

Paul’s teacher, Gamaliel, counseled the Sanhedrin to leave the early Christian church alone to see whether

God was indeed leading it. Paul’s other teacher, Jesus, warned us not to weed the field for fear of uprooting wheat. God Himself displays divine patience in waiting to return. Imagine God crying as He watches centuries of inquisitions, terrors, pogroms, holocausts, killing fields, and ethnic cleansings. Yet He waits. Not passively because He cannot intervene, but because His purposes demand it.

When Christians disagree, perhaps

In disagreements among Christians, the object of each must not be to win over the opponent but rather to win the opponent over.

one position is more correct than the other. However, we must let God lead all to an even fuller understanding. Christians must reject coercion or condemnation. The practice of patience with those whose understandings differ from our own can help maintain a united church body.

Love

Behind every act lies an attitude. For those who follow God, the attitude underlying any act must always be love. In disagreements among Christians, the object of each must not be to win over the opponent but rather to win the opponent over. It is hard to persuade the person whom you are attempting to demolish by the force of arguments.

Yes, some say, but what about a person who attempts to pervert the gospel? Should we not vigorously defend the

truth? Speaking the truth with love not only defends the facts but presents them winsomely. No more powerful testimony can be given than to demonstrate the truth of our propositions with the Christian love that shows the fruit of the Spirit of truth. Christians who retain an attitude of love when disagreeing with others keep the church united and attractive.

The Unity Inherent in Our Faith

These four qualities of humility, gentleness, patience, and love cannot be enacted by a church council. They naturally arise within you and me as the Holy Spirit adopts us into the family. Families survive sibling rivalry because the inherent ties they share in common are far stronger than any disputes. Paul reminds us of those things Christians share: “One Spirit, . . . one hope, . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all” (Eph. 4:4-6). This inherent unity among the family of God is based upon our common aspirations and abiding relationship with God the Father.

Seventh-day Adventist Christians arise from the intellectual heritage of the Millerite movement. We defined ourselves by the message of

Revelation 18:4: “Come out of her, my people.” We passionately proclaim present truth. Yet, as Christian Seventh-day Adventists, we must remain united as one body of Christ. Let us hold our understandings confidently and discuss our differences openly. However, let us be humble in our opinions, gentle with our words, patient with our brothers and sisters, and above all, love as we have been loved by God. ■

¹ The Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church in Takoma Park, Maryland, U.S.A.

² The doctrine of salvation.

At the time the article was written, Daniel Giang taught neurology at the University of Rochester.



God Is Right-brained

CHRIS BLAKE

There is a winsomeness in God, a rollicking, frolicking goodness that tickles and refreshes us. We see it in a vein of leaf, in skipping rocks on a smooth lake, in the infinite variety of human voice. But undoubtedly the most glorious creation of God is the human brain. It's about the size of a grapefruit. It's the one organ we cannot transplant and be ourselves. In the human brain there are perhaps 100 billion neurons, or nerve cells, and the number of possible interconnections between these cells is greater than the number of atoms in the known universe.

Nobel laureate Roger Sperry observes that in the brain "there are forces within forces within forces, as in no other cubic half foot in the universe that we know." Dr. Paul Brand adds, "I have been inside a human brain on maybe a half-dozen occasions. Each time I have felt humble and inadequate, a trespasser entering where no man was meant to. Who am I to invade the holy place where a person resides? Perhaps if I worked on brains daily, I would grow more callous and unimpressed. But I think not—the brain surgeons I know still talk of their subject in hushed, almost worshipful tones."

The human brain can be divided into many groupings, including left brain and right brain. Simply put, the left hemisphere of the brain is analytical, the right hemisphere is creative; the left is serial, the right is wholistic. We know and don't know much about the human brain, but the bigger question is "What is God's brain like?" Some view God as a great unblinking cosmic stare—uninvolved, unmoved. Does God really care about you, your dog, bending birches, starlings, leaping dolphins? Albert Einstein confides, "I want to know God's thoughts. The rest are details."

God has to be the epitome of balance to fashion the endlessly intricate mechanism of life and our capacity to enjoy it, a divine blend of logic and laughter. Using His left brain, God eliminated flutter problems in butterfly wings long before scientists eliminated flutter on bridges.* God knitted amino acids, formed retinas, and shaped palates into complexities beyond comprehension. But it becomes increasingly clear that once God analyzed and set up life so that "it was

good," He chose to interact with us as a right-brained being, using metaphor, music, and movement to reach us.

Though He numbers the hairs on our heads, God is not a statistician. Life is less like counting the seeds in an apple and more like counting the apples in a seed. Go figure the calculus of a soul, but first factor in the joy of stretching in the morning. Add to that the roaring of the wind, the rising of the sap, the aroma of baking bread. God definitely has diversity on the brain. No two people have ever been identical in any aspect. Not content with a firefly and a potato bug, God conjured up 300,000 species of beetles and weevils.

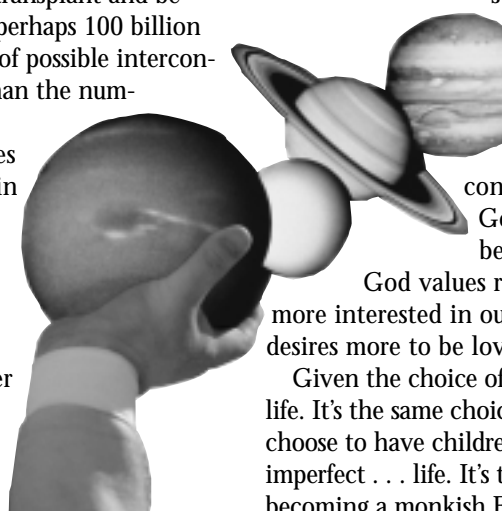
God values relationships more than rules. He's more interested in our nearness than our neatness. He desires more to be loved than to be understood.

Given the choice of flawless perfection or life, God chooses life. It's the same choice earthly parents make when they choose to have children. Fussing, burping, messy, disobedient, imperfect . . . life. It's the choice Jesus made. Instead of becoming a monkish Essene, hidden and shielded from the world's evils and ills, He chose to come into contact with despair and decay, and hope and healing sprang from His fingertips. Confronting the frothing demoniacs, rebuking the mourners by a dead boy, and wading out of the terrified crowd to touch a festering leper, Jesus said yes to life.

Life is wild and wailing, filled with round oceans of spontaneous delight, teeming with wriggling disappointments and ecstasies. We must not restrict God's creative, wholistic activity to religion. God is at work in the world in sweet corn, a soccer kick, and an escalator. God speaks through astronomers, artists, psychologists, and historians. God is our passion and our prize—our banana split, our walking stick, our eyes.

* According to poet Wallace Stevens, "all of our ideas come from the natural world: trees equal umbrellas."

Chris Blake teaches at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska. This adapted passage is in his new book for sharing, *Searching for a God to Love*.



Reluctant Saint, Reluctant Skier

BY KERRY SCHAFER

Waterskiing.

The word strikes terror into my deepest places: an unreasoning fear, incomprehensible to the skiing fanatics of my acquaintance. After all, waterskiing is a harmless amusement—nobody ever gets hurt.

Well, hardly ever. I've managed to damage myself on several occasions, never to the point of death or anything cosmic, but enough to know that water doesn't equate with soft landings. A sufficient cause for anxiety, I suppose, and yet the roots of my fear go back further and deeper—to the commencement of my waterskiing career.

Unlike my brother, who skied enthusiastically and intrepidly at the age of 7, I was finally coaxed into learning by a \$10 bill, blatant bribery by my concerned father. I learned how to get up on skis, pocketed the money, then promptly backslid to the status of dock-watcher.

I am a great disappointment to my family. My father and my brother labor under the belief that God created lakes that humanity might ski. Winds, storms, and darkness are an inconvenience, not a deterrent. Winter is about the only thing that keeps them off the lake, and then only because boats don't run well on frozen surfaces. My mother, although not exactly sharing the mania, enjoys the sport when practiced on hot sunny days. And my husband, who was an ally and a rock of support in nonskiing when I married him, suddenly and enthusiastically went over to the enemy—a miraculous conversion story.

Occasionally I break down under pressure, and today I am going to ski. I sit on the dock with my ski-encumbered feet dangling in the water, watching the boat troll away. The little pile of ski rope beside me is rapidly dwindling. The feeling in the pit of my stomach is not a pleasant one. I recognize it from other moments in my life—waiting my turn to play at a music recital, watching my father read a bad report card, getting pulled over by the police for speeding.

What am I so afraid of? Well, falling, for one thing. Water feels more like concrete if you land the wrong way. But there's more to it than that—I've fallen off both horses and

motorcycles, and that hasn't stopped me from riding them. Of course, if I get to feeling nervous I can stop the horse or the motorcycle and get off, but I can't just stop waterskiing.

An unwritten law of waterskiing etiquette forbids letting go of the rope, unless, of course, you happen to be falling. Being dragged across the lake with your face in the water and your mouth open is an even worse breach of the unspoken code. In this situation, it is best to let go—fast.

I think what really scares me is the loss of control. I've always wanted to be in control. Totally. I don't like working in groups—I want to do

things my way. I resent being told what to do. I've never been tempted to cheat on an exam because I don't trust anyone else to get it right. And when I'm out in the middle of the lake, attached to a ski rope that I can't let go of, and that rope is attached to a boat that I can't control, I am well out of my comfort zone.

Waterskiing is an awful lot like my relationship with God. I'm happy to sit securely on the sidelines and watch other Christians caught up in the exhilaration of faith-led lives. I am impressed by the amazing feats they perform and envious of the way that they seem to be enjoying the whole experience. But I am still reluctant to take hold of the rope and follow the boat. I'd rather be driving.

Today, however, I am going to ski. The rope has dwindled to the requisite amount of slack and I shout "Hit it!" and we're off. I'm doing this in spite of my fear, because my Father is driving, and it makes Him happy when I ski. Besides, I trust Him. I know He won't go too fast or whip me hard around corners. And if I fall, I know He'll come back and pick me up.

All I have to do is hold on. ■

*If I fall, my Father
will come back and
pick me up.*

Kerry Schafer writes from Pasco, Washington.

