

A D V E N T I S T
Review

May 25, 2000

AnchorPoints

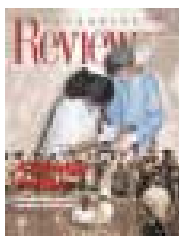
The
ANTI-
CHRIST

*Is the Adventist Interpretation
Still Viable?*

LETTERS

A Strange People

The article “A Strange People” helps us to evaluate our priorities. My own family heritage in Adventist mission and church service goes back nearly 120 years. Large numbers of our family have served, and are serving, in the U.S. and overseas



since that time as physicians, nurses, pastors, teachers, administrators, etc., to help when and where needed.

I know how difficult it is to find people who are willing, able, and qualified for overseas mission service. But let's be realistic and recognize that times have changed. Adventist physicians from the U.S. must now qualify in certain needed specialties if they are to practice in other countries.

Also, the cost of medical education has risen so much that the church is not able to pick up the tab on many new graduates with the needed specialty training. By the time the education bills are paid, these physicians are not well established in much-appreciated and helpful home-mission medical work.

Mission service is a focus on helping people and pointing them to Christ wherever we may live and work. May the Lord help us all have that dedication and focus.

—**J. Stanley McCluskey**
NACHES, WASHINGTON

I enjoyed the article by Scott Christiansen in the March 23 *Adventist Review*. Missionaries will be different in the future. Traditional mission work

often is not effective. We are having more short-term volunteers go to the mission field.

—**Mary A. Workman**
SONOMA, CALIFORNIA

As a technical instructor, I was disturbed by the picture on page 10 of a young man cutting a concrete block with a power saw (Mar. 23 *Review*). He was not wearing any eye or face protection. I did not discover the whole story behind this picture, but it appears to be a tragedy waiting to happen.

—**Gerald H. Moss**
RESEDA, CALIFORNIA

Imagine my surprise at opening the March 23 *Review* and seeing myself in the photograph on page 8! That photo was taken about 50 years ago and is of students attending Middle East College in Beirut, Lebanon. I am standing outside the bus, second from the right.

The article “A Strange People” is excellent. Scott Christiansen brings out very important points regarding missions in the Adventist Church today. With the exception of one person in that photo, we all left the Middle East and now live in the United States. This has weakened the work in Middle Eastern countries.

We also need to remember, however, that many things have changed in the past 100 years, and now there are many qualified nationals in each country to carry on the Lord's work.

—**Dola Farag**
SPOKANE, WASHINGTON

Do We Need the 27 Fundamentals?

I deeply appreciated the article “Do We Need the 27 Fundamentals?” (Mar. 23), by John M. Fowler, and the January 27 article “Cut From the Same Cloth,” by Roger W. Coon. There may be thousands, and perhaps millions, taking their places in God's eternal kingdom who never have been members of the Adventist Church.

Nevertheless, that does not minimize the privilege and responsibility we have as a “remnant” to reaffirm our beliefs—not leaving one of the 27 fundamentals out of our emphasis—with Jesus as the center. Too much importance is given by many of our members and some of our pastors to ecumenicity. This can threaten our identity and compromise our mission.

—**A. Gordon Zytoskee**
PARADISE, CALIFORNIA

Regarding the article “Do We Need the 27 Fundamentals?” the church survived without fundamental beliefs for the first 70 years of its existence. There were no fundamental beliefs when I was baptized.

When 22 fundamental beliefs appeared in 1931, no one asked me to be recertified. Neither was I contacted for recertification when fundamental beliefs jumped to 27 in 1980.

In 1956 Walter Martin asked, “Is belief in these [Ellen G. White's] writings made a test of fellowship in the Seventh-day Adventist Church?” The church answered by quoting White herself when she said: “Such should not be deprived of the benefits and

privileges of the church.”

In 1980, however, the General Conference, in session, and in spite of the above counsel, apparently saw no contradiction in voting fundamental doctrine number 17, which makes Ellen G. White “authoritative” (defined as “determinative” [*Webster’s Dictionary*, 1959 ed.]).

—**Albert C. Koppel**
NEW MARKET, VIRGINIA

The *Adventist Review* is a joy to read. Frequently I am drawn into discussion by a thought-provoking article.

One of my recent “discussions” was sparked by this March 23 John M. Fowler statement: “If we say that Sabbathkeeping is not essential for baptism, we send out a terrible message, one that ultimately compromises the entire doctrinal corpus of Scripture.” If this is the case, it would seem that we ought to consider invalid the previous immersion baptisms of those who join us by profession of faith from Sundaykeeping churches and require them all to be rebaptized.

—**Bruce B. Boyd**
KELOWNA, BRITISH COLUMBIA,
CANADA

I really enjoy reading the *Adventist Review*. It has made me think more about issues that I have avoided.

I have a difficult time with some of the issues that are debated in our church among our members. I have a motto: “God said, I believe it, and that settles it!”

I applaud John M. Fowler (Mar. 23) for taking the stand that baptism and Adventism are not two separate issues but rather a commitment to the whole picture. Our love for Jesus goes hand in hand with the guidelines He has set for our lives. Baptism in the Adventist Church encompasses our love for Christ. Why would you be baptized and then learn what the Bible teaches? I believe people should accept the message as a whole, not in parts. You accept it, then you ask Christ to help

you live the principles that He has shown you through His Word. We are all at different levels; Christ works with each one individually.

—**Deanna Bateman**
HOUSTON, TEXAS

I’m glad John M. Fowler took time to tackle an issue that is very real and needs to be discussed. Unfortunately, he failed to address the real-life, practical consequences that his hard-line position creates.

As Fowler ably demonstrated, we all have and need doctrines. I was glad to see him tackle this problem, although the views expressed were quite traditional. I’d like to see some discussion now from other perspectives, including the practical experiences of pastors in the field.

—**Robert Johnston**
LAKE JACKSON, TEXAS

What to Do With a Problem Pastor (revisited)

The visual imagery employed on the February 24 *Review* cover did much to detract from the article “What to Do With a Problem Pastor,” by Ed Christian. The implication was that questioning a pastor is akin to throwing darts. It is not.

While this was a nice article on how three or four couples solved their frustration with their pastor, it did little to address genuine concerns that a church may have regarding a problem pastor. When there are concerns and theological impasses, a church suffers. Many members voice their disapproval by walking rather than speaking out.

It appears that when a “problem pastor” (or teacher) does surface, the only solution is to reshuffle and send him/her on to another church or school rather than work to improve, retrain, or address the problems. The result, of course, is that many times the problems continue in another church.

—**D. M. Ruggles**
BIRDSBORO, PENNSYLVANIA

ADVENTIST Review

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NEXT WEEK

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A review of God’s blessings over the past five years, and a vision for the future—until He comes.

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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Consulting Editors: Jan Paulsen, Matthew Bediako, Phil Follett, Robert J. Kloosterhuis, A. C. McClure, Leo Ranzolin, R. L. Rawson, Calvin B. Rock, G. Ralph Thompson

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To Writers: We welcome unsolicited manuscripts. (Please query before submitting long articles.) Include address, telephone number, and Social Security number, where available. Address all editorial correspondence to 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600. Editorial office fax number: (301) 680-6638.

E-mail: Internet: reviewmag@adventist.org
CompuServe network: 74617.15
Website: www.adventistreview.org

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

For changes of address: Call 1-800-456-3991, or 301-393-3257, or e-mail addresschanges@rhpa.org
For subscription queries: Call 1-800-456-3991, or 301-393-3257, or e-mail shanson@rhpa.org

Postmaster: Send address changes to *Adventist Review*, 55 West Oak Ridge Drive, Hagerstown, MD 21740-7301.

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The *Adventist Review* (ISSN 0161-1119), published since 1849, is the general paper of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is published by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and is printed 40 times a year each Thursday except the first Thursday of each month by the Review and Herald® Publishing Association. Periodicals postage paid at Hagerstown, MD 21740. Copyright © 2000, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

Vol. 177, No. 21

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A Letter to My Sons

Dear Evan and Brady:

You'll no doubt find it strange and even a bit embarrassing to be reading a letter from me in the *Adventist Review*. Chances are, some classmate or some teacher will tease you because it's here. But by now you already know that living with an editor has its costs. This is one of them.

I was standing in the backyard last evening (near where you left your ball gloves after playing catch), reveling in the song of the wood thrush and the clearing sky after two days of rain. And I found myself thinking of the two of you: how proud your mother and I are of you, how rich our lives have been since God gave you to us, how frequently we smile across the room at each other when you say something wiser than your years. No joy we have ever known begins to compare to the delight of being your parents.

Blame it on the thrush song if you want, but I also found myself aching just a bit last night as well—aching to give the two of you those sweet intangibles of life that sometimes are sensed only at evening in the backyard under a clearing sky after rain. I want you to know the holy joys of listening to wind blow through the pines, of feeling wet grass under your bare feet, of watching fireflies hover above the hayfields in the hour of dusk. I want you to know where the best wild blueberries can be found in July, why canoes are always better than powerboats, how loons sound on a Maine lake at dawn.

In short, I want you to know the world as I came to know it, and as my father and his father and his father came to know it—through your senses. That's why I made sure you tasted the maple sap in the bucket when we visited that sugarcane two months ago, why I'm glad you love the trout stream where I waded when I was your age, why nothing pleases me so much as seeing the two of you outside at play in that fort you're always building near the back fence.

And that's why, as well, I watch with some apprehension your avid interest in the world of keyboards and computer screens. The half-dozen CD-ROM games you own are all the best type—mostly educational software that your friends would probably dismiss as boring. You use the Internet only when we're home, and only then on sites that we've ap-

proved. But I can feel how much the digital world attracts you, pulls you into its quick embrace, promising you a wealth of experience without the blisters, the dirt under the fingernails, the sweat dripping off your chin, the wind in your face. The novelty of animated figures who jump and

wheel and even talk at your command must give a heady sense of power when you're 8 or 9.

But lest you think your fortysomething dad is prejudiced against technology he doesn't fully understand, remember that the computers that fascinate you are the tools of my trade. I think at a keyboard, surf mightily on the Web (research, mind you), and send thousands of e-mails a year. It's because I know the usefulness of this medium that I've also come to understand its limitations.

No screensaver sunset will ever stir your heart to worship. The finest photo of a deep woods walk cannot compare to really being there, with moss and lichen underneath your feet, the smell of balsam and spruce in your nostrils, and a hymn to your Creator on your lips. You'll never stand upon a digitized mountain peak and sing "How Great Thou Art" in full baritone, or whatever voice you will one day have. Only in the world as God made it will you ever get a proper scale to understand your true importance. Remember, as the psalmist said, that He has crowned you with glory and honor (Psalm 8:5).

Much of what seems important in today's technology will be laughable and obsolete within a year. Your peers, who invest heavily in the moment, will have much to regret. But you'll never regret the afternoons you spend following bumblebees or the way you hold my hand those nights we walk without the flashlight.

In our Father's world, we will learn—and re-learn—the trust that anchors our hearts in Him for eternity.

Love,
Dad



The Field of the Dead

KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN

The reports throughout America were varied, but each managed to capture the intense sadness and horrific loss as Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, remembered the people killed in the April 19, 1995, two-ton blast. A moving private ceremony was held on April 19, during which each victim's name was called out and relatives were escorted to the glass, stone, and bronze chair memorializing their loved one. The end of the ceremonies came that evening as the public was invited to hear President Bill Clinton, Attorney General Janet Reno, and a host of other cabinet members whose departments had offices in the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, the destroyed facility. The ceremony was held at the new \$29 million, three-acre site, which will, upon completion, include three major components: an outdoor memorial, a museum, and an antiterrorism research institute.

Washington *Post* writer Lois Romano put it like this: "A powerful but serene memorial featuring 168 empty bronze chairs—one for each person killed in the nation's deadliest act of terrorism—was unveiled here today, as the city once again wept over its massive losses" (Apr. 20).

In *The Oklahoman* (Apr. 19) Associated Press writer Rochelle Hines wrote: "Across from the memorial, at the gutted shell of what was the *Journal Record* newspaper building, a museum is being constructed. . . . The story will be told simply, without drama. . . . Piles of unclaimed house keys, locker keys, gate keys will be on display, all speaking to the normal lives changed by an act of terrorism."

A memorial of towering gates, a long reflecting pool, and a field of 168 empty glass and bronze chairs—with 19 small ones to represent the murdered children—to commemorate the dead.

I've never beheld a picture of it, and yet I can see this field for the dead. Cloudy day, smooth clammy glass and bronze, sculpted as if someone had just gotten up from a soft cushioned couch and the fabric still bears the dimpled impression of the person's shape. A name etched into stone—and history—forever.

I can also imagine the chairs filled. There's a little boy, dragging a piece of gum out of his mouth and deciding if he should stick it on his sister's cheek . . . a teenage girl drawing

hearts on her hand with a red pen . . . a senior couple swapping stories with two friends . . . a mom and dad trying to corral their 2-year-old triplets . . . a business-suited man, with graying temples, barking into a mobile phone . . . a bespeckled woman jotting notes in a leatherbound journal . . . a girl swinging her legs, watching her untied shoelace flap back and forth . . . 10-year-old best friends trading cards (baseball, or perhaps Pokémon) . . . a grandpa and his young granddaughter licking melting ice cream from a waffle cone . . .

In another place, there sits an empty room. Hundreds could enter it, sit in smooth wooden seats, receiving respite from the world today and invigoration to face tomorrow. Children could climb aboard the cool surface, lounge on a parent's lap and swing their feet—happy to sing and join in the celebration of joy happening all around them. Older folks could rest their tired bones, stretch their feet, and visit with people they get to see only once in a while. Hundreds could, but this sanctuary sits miserably vacant—a memorial to the dead who once graced its comforting pews.

The field of chairs—nine rows symbolizing the floors where people died—is a stark dramatic way to remember the tragic dead. Each chair sits atop a glass base and faces a reflecting pool that spans the street where the truck containing the bomb exploded.

But it can also be a reminder to the living, as Romano quotes from part of the mission statement carved into the bronze entry to the memorial: "We come to remember those who were killed, those who survived, and those changed forever."

Sin is a bomb that, if given the chance, will rip us to shreds, leaving us—and our churches—remote, abandoned. This place—the empty room—is a field of the dead. But it doesn't have to be. One was already killed for the multitude that should be filling this room, and if we remember Him who was killed, we can count ourselves as the survivors. We will be changed forever. Regardless of who we are, what we are, or where we come from, we will fill the seats. We will fill the room.



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GIVE & TAKE

CAMP MEETING MOMENTS

It was the summer I turned 14 years old, and also the summer I would be baptized. The setting was the beautiful Gladstone campground in Oregon, when the central feature of the camp was still the splendid old Chautauqua building with its huge domed roof.

Friends had invited me to accompany them for the whole week of camp meeting, and it was a new experience for me. Sunday afternoon was muggy, the kind of day when one's clothes feel like they are glued to the body. My friends had decided to stay by the fan in the tent. I really wanted to listen to the speaker's message—he had spoken the evening before—so I went to the meeting alone.

Elder H.M.S. Richards stepped to the microphone flanked by the King's Heralds. The quartet sang "There Is a Place of Quiet Rest," and as they softly hummed the melody, Richards prayed for the congregation. His words were eloquent, his voice gentle yet compelling, and the familiarity between himself and the One to whom he spoke was powerful. My heart was touched, and the tears began to flow. I had no tissues and was about to walk out of the meeting when a woman sitting next to me handed me a neatly pressed white linen handkerchief.

That meeting was one of a number of turning points in my youthful life. Two people had deeply impressed me—one by his ability to share his knowledge of and his love for God, the other by a simple act of kindness.

—Edna Craik, Walla Walla, Washington



ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY CREWS

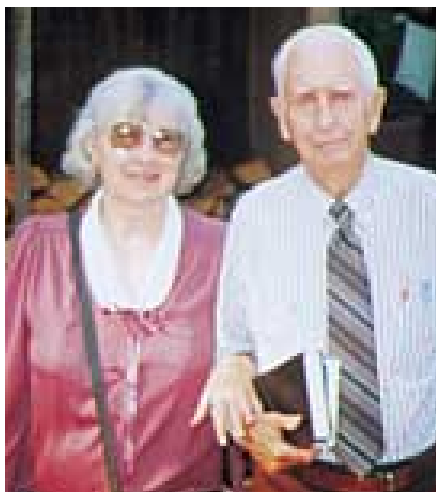
In the year 1912, when I was 12 years old, my parents and four of us younger children (I had 12 siblings) loaded our wagon, hitched the two horses, and headed for Cumberland Conference camp meeting in Athens, Tennessee.

About halfway there we had to cross the big Tennessee River by ferry-boat. While we were out in the river a steamboat came along and blew its loud horn. This frightened our horses, and they reared up. We children were very scared, but the men on board rushed to hold the bridles of each horse until we reached the other side.

An older sister, Celia, from Chattanooga, came up to meet us at camp meeting and was baptized. At that same camp meeting my three younger brothers signed up never to smoke, and throughout their lives they never did.

—Grace Burchard Quinn, Orlando, Florida

CUPID STRIKES AGAIN!



WHIRLWIND ROMANCE:

"Adventist Cupid" computer dating brought us together—Luther Walraven was from California, I from Wisconsin. He caught a bus to visit, I picked him up, and after Luther spent the night in a hotel, we had breakfast at my apartment. I asked him if he wanted to get married. He said yes. This was after only three months of letters and phone calls. Who said a man of 77 and a woman of 70 couldn't be fast! Before the day was over, we were married!

—B. M. Walraven, Balmorhea, Texas

LET'S PRAY

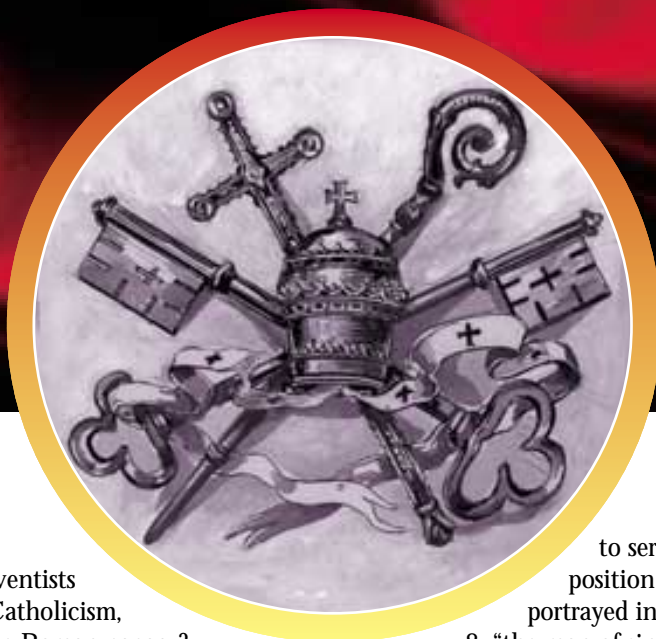
Have a prayer need? Have a few free minutes? Each Wednesday morning at 8:00 the *Adventist Review* staff meets to pray for *people*—children, parents, friends, coworkers. Send your prayer requests and, if possible, pray with us on Wednesday mornings. Let's share in each other's lives.

WE NEED YOU

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THE ANTICHRIST

Is the Adventist interpretation still viable?



BY WOODROW W. WHIDDEN

HOW SHOULD contemporary Adventists relate to Roman Catholicism, and specifically, the Roman papacy? Is it time to reassess our traditional point of view?

Many factors have contributed to the recent upsurge in discussion of this sensitive issue. The NET satellite evangelism crusades of the last five years have proclaimed to far-flung audiences the traditional Adventist understanding of the last great crisis of history as portrayed in Revelation 12-14. At the same time there have been numerous efforts by individuals with independent ministries who have quite openly attacked the pope and Roman Catholicism in ways that were embarrassing to the denomination.

As this is being written, the Adventist Church is taking legal action to restrain one ministry from using the name of the denomination in its anti-Catholic tactics.¹ On another front, one nonofficial Adventist journal recently devoted a major portion of one issue to call for a reappraisal of Adventist attitudes toward the Papacy.²

Should the Traditional Exposition Change?

What is to be made of this delicate situation? Has the Roman Papacy changed to the point that Adventism needs

to seriously reconsider its traditional position that the Papacy is the antichrist portrayed in the “little horn” of Daniel 7 and 8, “the man of sin” of 2 Thessalonians 2, and the leopardlike, or sea, beast of Rev. 13? Has Roman Catholicism changed to such an extent since the Vatican II Council of the early 1960s that Adventism should seriously modify or even jettison its standard antichrist interpretation?

Before Adventists wade into our prophetic expositions on the antichrist, it’s necessary to be very clear about the core issues of the nature and character of any such power. In other words, before anyone attempts an identification, the characteristics of such a person or a system must be readily apparent.

If, for instance, you are going to declare that “pandas” are bears, you must know what the characteristics of the bear family are. Although we have popularly referred to “pandas” as bears, these winsome creatures were once alleged to be more closely related to the raccoon family than the bear clan. Naturalists have carefully studied their nature and characteristics and have sought to clarify which family they belong to.³

For us, the first question is this: What is the nature of the antichrist? What is the very core nature of the teachings, beliefs, and practices of any power that would qualify

it as an antichrist?

We must also honestly confront a second question: Has papal Rome really so changed its essential nature in the past four decades to demand that contemporary Adventism ought, in fairness, to cease and desist from its traditional prophetic interpretations? Has the alleged papal “leopard-like beast” of Revelation 13 now evolved into a domesticated, declawed, gospel-preaching, law-abiding Christian “cat”—some sort of leonine Aslan of the New Israel?⁴

Rome Has Changed

Before answering these questions, we must forthrightly affirm that many positive things have taken place in Roman Catholicism. The great progress made on issues such as religious liberty, the emphasis on Bible study (both lay and scholarly), the strong calls for social justice and obedience to moral law, and the Catholic Church’s important role in the demise of Communism are all truly commendable. At bare minimum, Christian honesty demands that Adventists should commend the modern Papacy for these courageous stands.

We should also praise God that these developments have become a blessing to millions. Adventists should greatly rejoice that it’s now much easier to engage our Roman Catholic friends in Bible study than it was 40 years ago. The Vatican II statements on religious liberty have certainly helped to open the way for Protestant gospel proclamation in formerly repressive Catholic countries where evangelical denominations, including our own, previously found the going very tough.

Has Rome Had a Truly Biblical Change?

But even as we acknowledge (and celebrate) this progress, we must ask: Are these the core issues that would enable us to identify an antichrist? Are we now dealing with a biblical and renewed “gospel” church?

To get a solid biblical answer to these questions, I propose the following litmus tests for any would-be can-

didate for the dubious office of antichrist. What makes any power by nature an “antichrist” is that it either denies or opposes the following:

1. The eternal authority of the ten-commandment law as an unchanging expression of the nature and will of God (Dan. 7:25; Rev. 12:17; 13; 14:12; 2 Thess. 2:3, 4, 7, 8).

2. The gospel of justification by grace through faith alone, not by works of the law (Rev. 14:6, 7; Rom. 1:16, 17; Gal. 1:8, 9; 2:16; 3:1-14).

3. The centrality of Jesus Christ as the only “mediator” between God and humanity (Dan. 8:9-14, 25; 9:24-27; Rev. 13:6; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 9:15).

4. And finally, when such a power denies these great truths, it will ultimately seek to gain adherents by either “false miracles” (2 Thess. 2:7-12; Rev. 13:11-14; 16:12-15) or through compulsory force (Dan. 7:21, 25; 8:9, 10, 23-25; Rev. 13:7-10, 15-17).

On these points, has the Roman papal power actually experienced a biblical conversion?

The issue needs to be clearly drawn: before Adventists identify the Papacy

as the antichrist, we should be able to clearly identify the eternal authority of the law of God as binding on all professed believers, and also define the gospel of salvation by faith alone through the work of Christ as the believer’s one and only mediator. Only then

can the “lawless one” be identified. Only then can credible predictions be made that any power that denies these great truths will likely use miracles and

coercive force to gain adherents to its false laws, distorted gospel, and human mediators.

Doctrine, Not Behavior, Is the Real Test

Adventist interpretation and identification of the antichrist has never been based primarily on the alleged moral failures and corruptions of any religious organization. For 150 years we have held that the core issue is what is being taught about Christ as saving mediator and the closely related issues of the holy law and the “everlasting gospel.”

The Roman Papacy, like any human organization, is a mixed bag morally and ethically. There have been good popes and bad ones, along with great saints and great sinners. But the moral or ethical practice of a given religion is not the central issue for Adventists. All human organizations (including our own “enfeebled and defective”⁵ denomination) are sadly sinful. Neither was moral perfection the issue for the Protestant Reformers and their successors, who consistently identified

the Roman Papacy as an antichrist.

I vividly recall an incident when I was a graduate student at an ecumenically oriented, main-line Protestant seminary. During a seminar on the thought of eighteenth-century American theologian and revivalist Jonathan Edwards, we focused one

day on a discussion of Edwards’ anti-Catholic writings.

The very liberal and ecumenical professor walked into the seminar

We must forthrightly affirm that many positive things have taken place in Roman Catholicism.

room and laid out a folder full of Adventist Revelation Seminar brochures. To my dismay, he promptly proceeded to call Edwards an anti-Catholic bigot because his position on the antichrist was very similar to that espoused in the Adventist brochures.

As calmly as I could, I suggested to him that if he was going to call Edwards a bigot, he must do the same to me. I went on to remind him that what drives purported “cranks” like Edwards and Adventists is not prejudicial bigotry and religious hatred but a deep concern for the issues of law, salvation, and the centrality of Christ as interceding high priest.

I don’t know that I convinced him, but I would like to convince Adventists that these are the issues that compel us reluctantly to identify any anti-Christian perversion of the biblical gospel.

Rome, the Bible, and the Law

It’s very clear from the Bible passages that describe the antichrist that this power seeks to do violence to the law of God, especially the law that deals with “time” and clearly identifies the great Creator/Redeemer God (Dan. 7:25; 2 Thess. 2; Rev. 12:17; and chapter 13).

Why is the biblical law, especially the Ten Commandments, so important to Seventh-day Adventists? Simply because the Bible is very clear that without the law the world is hopelessly prone to moral anarchy. Without law, personal salvation is in jeopardy. Where there is no law, there is no sin. If there is no sin, there is no need of a divine Saviour. Conversely, if there is only a human law, then all we need is a human “savior” to save us from something less than real sin.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that the only way that Jesus can truly be exalted is to spotlight the darkness of our desperately sinful situation rela-

tive to the law. Yet the features of the law that seem to be most in the “crosshairs” of the antichrist are precisely those commandments of the law that have to do with the proper worship of God. The central issue of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 is one of worship: Will humans worship the Creator, or will they worship the

All human organizations (including our own “enfeebled and defective” denomination) are sadly sinful.

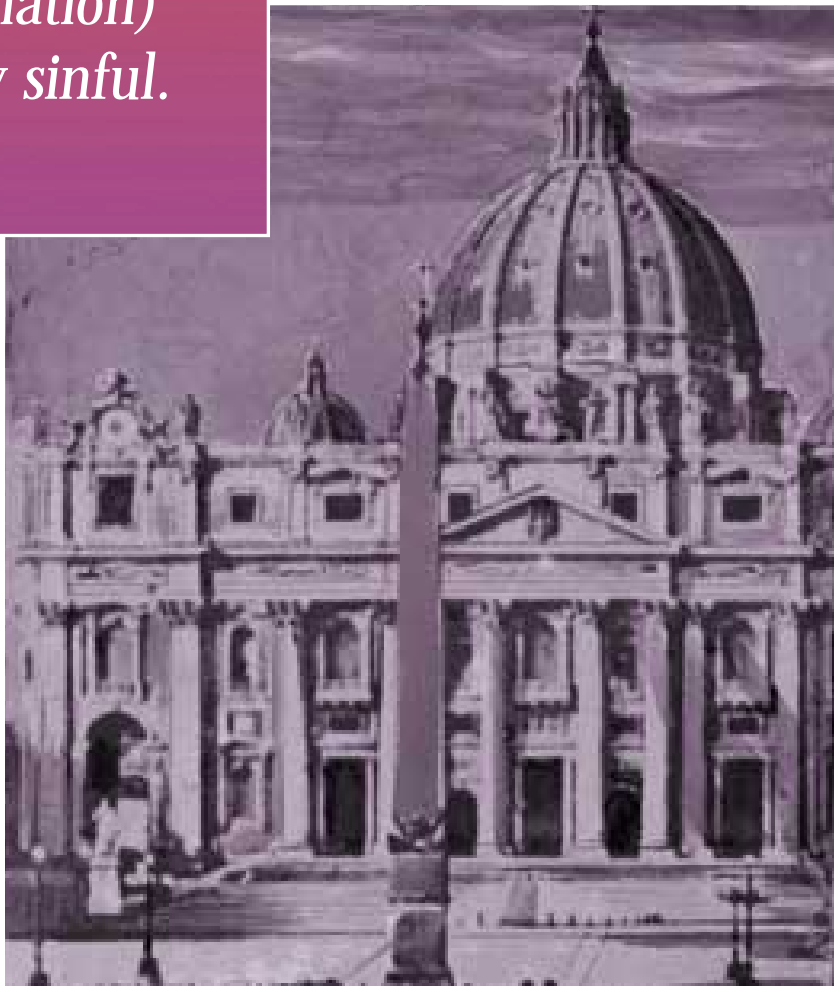
“beast”? Furthermore, all three “beast” powers of Revelation 13 are clearly making war on the first four commandments—the very ones that regulate and define the worship of the true God.⁶

How does papal Rome measure on this first litmus test?

The evidence is simply overwhelming. This biggest of all Christian denominations is a vast engine of opposition to the sacred unity and wholeness of the Ten Commandments, and it has especially centered its attack on the laws of the first table of the Ten Commandments.

This “anti-law” stance is certainly evident in the older catechisms of Roman Catholicism, but is this also true of the post-Vatican II church? The answer—again—is unequivocally “Yes.” Evidence abounds in the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*⁷ and the recent “apostolic letter,” *Dies Domini*, which addressed Sunday sacredness.⁸

Reading these straightforward messages from the Papacy makes it clear that while Rome retained “ten commandments,” they are not the Ten of Exodus 20 and the Ten that Jesus and Paul discoursed on—the very Ten that



Jesus died to vindicate. Based on the most authoritative documents available—the new and definitive catechism of the church developed under the direction of Pope John Paul II—it is clear that papal Rome has not changed.

Rome and Justification by Faith

Why is the doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone so important?

Though we often forget the point, the Protestant Reformation was not originally about the issue of the Bible and the “Bible alone” principle (*sola scriptura*); the Reformers were most concerned with how a person is reconciled to God. The primary reason that Luther began to call papal Rome the antichrist was his belief that the Papacy’s path to justification was unbiblical and destructive of Christian peace and security.⁹

The Roman Catholic way of justification—clearly articulated in the sixteenth-century Council of Trent—says this:

Persons are certainly justified through the grace of God. But it is the sanctifying grace of God, infused into the believer through the sacraments of the church, which produces an inner (or subjective) manifestation of the righteousness of Christ. This inner, “infused” righteousness forms the meritorious basis of the penitent believer’s justification.

Put simply, papal Rome supplants justification by faith alone, which *accounts or reckons* the sinner as righteous for Christ’s sake, with a justification that *makes* a sinner righteous through an inner, sanctifying or transforming grace. Through this transforming grace, the sinner is declared to be justified. The Bible teaching of justification by grace through faith alone is

hopelessly confused with and swallowed up by this inner, sanctifying grace. Put still another way: Rome teaches that the sinner is justified because of what grace does in him or her.

Against this view, the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformers raised the great battle cry of “justification by faith alone, not by works of the law” (*sola fide*). They were not saying that the law was done away with by grace.¹⁰ They were simply declaring that the only way for a person to be truly justified is not by works of obedience, but by faith in the imputed merits of Christ’s righteousness, which are mediated to the believer by Christ in heaven. The believer stands forgiven and accepted *for Christ’s sake* and has a new, *objective* legal standing as sinless before God.

The Reformers never denied sanctifying or transforming grace: It was held to be the inevitable result of receiving Christ by faith—a fruit of the justifying root of Christ’s imputed righteousness.

Why is this issue so crucial today?

If I am saved because of what Christ does in me, rather than what He did for me, how can I ever be sure that my obedience and good works will be enough to satisfy the infinite justice of God?

Two closely related tragedies usually result from a distorted “gospel”:

1. Without the assurance that they are accounted righteous by an objective act of God, sensitive believers almost always succumb to despair. This discouragement causes many to simply “throw in the towel” and abandon the discipline of God’s law. “Since the law can’t be perfectly obeyed,” they conclude, “we should give in to our lusts and get as much as we can out of life.”

2. Knowing that they are never in full conformity with the law of God, some believers are tempted to “slice” the law down to size to convince themselves that they have now met its scaled-down demands—a condition correctly identified as “pharisaism.” The pharisaic route to justification is the most subtle way of degrading the law of God. If the basketball basket were only seven feet high, I could



ILLUSTRATION FROM R&H FILES

become a great slam-dunk artist!

Believers caught in the grip of pharisaism become preoccupied with meeting the mere “letter” of the law in a sterile, mechanical obedience. Not realizing the infinite nature of the righteousness of the law of Christ, they easily convince their desperate souls that the law’s demands have been met. In fact, all they have done is go through the motions in Christless self-deception.¹¹

Does papal Rome, in fact still teach that we are justified by the inner, transforming grace of God instead of by the imputed righteousness of Jesus? Yes, it most certainly does. The conclusions of the Council of Trent are still the standard cited by the new *Catechism*. The official papal way of justification is still one grand system of works righteousness.¹²

Many Protestants have become confused about this topic in recent months because of the highly publicized “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” signed by the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church on October 31, 1999. (For a detailed analysis, see the forthcoming article, “By Grace Alone?” by Clifford Goldstein in the June AnchorPoints Edition.)

While the Joint Declaration has some Lutheran-sounding language, it’s very clear that Rome has not renounced its classic positions outlined above. Nothing in this document denies the theology voted at the Council of Trent 400 years ago or presented in the recent *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Second, the Joint Declaration is a classic example of ecumenical diplomacy, in which the participants seek to find vague agreement without really facing the nasty realities of disagreement. As one astute observer has pointed out, “the Catholic Church now concedes that, as far as justification is concerned, the Lutheran position is acceptable and not a church-dividing doctrine. This does not mean that Roman Catholics have now adopted the Lutheran position. They

have only *condoned* it and will likely continue to articulate their own view of justification in fairly traditional Catholic terms.”¹³

Adventists could wish that Rome had truly embraced the great Lutheran understanding of justification. But until Rome repudiates the conclusions of the Council of Trent—still articulated in its new *Catechism*—no breakthrough has been achieved.

Is papal Rome still engaging in its subtle opposition to biblical justification? The Roman Catholic Church’s

The challenge for this prophetic movement is to earnestly pray and study new ways to exalt Jesus.

most authoritative documents provide conclusive evidence that it is.

Jesus the Only Mediator and Rome

The Roman Catholic way of salvation not only collapses justification into sanctification, but it also tends to deny the centrality of Christ as saving mediator.

The Catholic way of salvation is a vast sacramental system that sees grace as being mediated through the sacraments administered by ordained priests. The sacraments and the human priests (vicars—those who represent the pope, the “vicar of Christ” on earth) are the channels of saving grace. The most important sacraments are the Eucharist (the

Lord’s Supper) and penance.

The emblems of the Lord’s broken body and shed blood aren’t merely signs filled with the spiritual presence of Jesus; through the words (“This is my body”) of the officiating vicar/priest these “hosts” become the very true body and blood of Jesus. And in partaking of these, Catholics partake of Jesus and His saving grace.

The necessity of other mediators than Christ in the Roman system becomes especially apparent when we look at the sacrament of penance.

When a person goes to confession, the penitent receives absolution (forgiveness) of sins from the priest/confessor. The guilt of sin and its eternal penalties are absolved (remitted) by the priest, but the temporal (earthly, time-based) penalties are not. These latter penalties must be satisfied, or “worked off,” through indulgences. These indulgences draw upon the so-called treasury of merit, a vast reservoir of excess merit that Jesus and the saints have gained through their righteous lives. Access to this treasury is the prerogative of the church and is obtained by the faithful through various actions, observances, or financial purchases.

What is to be made of all of this?¹⁴

The New Testament knows nothing about any such unique human priesthood of sacramental intercession (including Mary, the mother of Jesus). The Bible is quite clear that penitents may by faith “come boldly unto the throne of grace” through the intercessions of Christ—the “one mediator between God and men” (Heb. 4:16; 1 Tim. 2:5).

This vast, complicated system has totally taken the focus off of Christ’s mediation in the heavenly sanctuary and has placed it on an earthly sacrifice, created by an earthly, human priesthood, drawing at least partly on the merit of human accomplishment to produce a human righteousness.

When Rome fully repudiates this sacramental understanding of saving grace, so closely bound up with human merit, then, and only then, can we be quite sure that we are on the way to a

truly biblical, Christ-centered breakthrough.

Unrighteous Persuasion

The last identifying mark of any antichrist has to do with its unrighteous attempts to persuade others of its claims, often by purported miracles or through manipulating the power of civil government.

Rome is certainly not now the persecuting power it used to be. But has its essential character actually changed? Are the more moderate developments of the present period actual indications of a new commitment to freedom of conscience and human choice?

Here Ellen White's oft-quoted warning still rings with terrible clarity: "Let the restraints now imposed by secular governments be removed and Rome be reinstated in her former power, and there would speedily be a revival of her tyranny and persecution."¹⁵

Rome is certainly using false miracles to gain adherents. We have only to note the numerous reports of the sightings of the virgin Mary throughout the world to find evidence of this. These sightings, to which tens of thousands of the devout flock, are nothing but a type of spiritualism dressed up in the garb of the apparently pious cult of Mary. According to Scripture, Mary is neither a mediator nor even alive. She is dead, and the rumors of her appearances are either fraudulent, human trickery, self-deception, or a demonic miracle. Yet multitudes are awed by reports of her appearances. Millions seek the miracles that she supposedly works for the hurting and oppressed.

What cannot be accomplished by spectacle is often attempted by force. While it's true that the Papacy is not presently engaged in overt physical persecution, we dare not forget this truism: Any earthly power, political or religious, that doesn't have the love of God as the motive power for obedience will inevitably have to resort to force to get agreement with its beliefs and practices.

Two instructive biblical examples come immediately to mind:

1. When Cain's false, bloodless sacrifice was rejected (in contrast to the blood sacrifice offered by Abel), Cain resorted to force.

2. When the Jews of Christ's day—who played fast and loose with the sacredness of God's law (Mark 7:7-13) and salvation by grace through faith alone—couldn't overcome His teaching, they ultimately put to death the very One who was the author of both the holy law of God and the plan of salvation.

When the law of God is distorted, when the grace of Jesus is transformed into human merit, when the unique mediation of Jesus is supplanted by human mediators, we can be sure that false miracles and governmental tyranny are just around the corner.

Learning to Exalt Jesus

When these four key tests are applied to the Roman Catholic religious system, the sad but inescapable conclusion is that papal Rome is still the great power envisioned in Daniel 7 and 8; 2 Thessalonians 2; and Revelation 13. I write this with no sense of triumphalism or glee, for this is an extremely sad portrait that the Bible paints.

The key question is not whether Adventists should now mount a fresh campaign to figure out new and inventive ways to give the Papacy a good roasting. The challenge is rather for this prophetic movement to earnestly pray and study new ways to exalt Jesus, His law, and His gracious salvation as we have never done before.

If we have not clearly presented the "good news," I fear that our Roman Catholic friends won't be able to receive, in good grace, the bad news about the antichrist. This is the ultimate core issue for all peoples—be they non-Christians, Catholic Christians (both Greek and Latin), or Protestants: Do we love the "only mediator," the "lawgiver," enough that we would willingly die for those caught up in the antichrist system?

Our objective cannot be simply to win a debate over the identity of the antichrist. We must make certain that

our witness to Jesus and His marvelous plan of salvation effectually calls honest-hearted seekers out of the "Babylonian" system. If we lovingly witness for Jesus and His "once for all" sacrifice for sin, the antichrist will be exposed as never before.

¹A case is now pending in a Florida court in which the Seventh-day Adventist Church is urging the court to require that an offshoot congregation no longer use the name of the church in its billboard attacks on the Papacy and Roman Catholics.

²"Adventism and Catholicism," *Spectrum* 27, issue 3 (Summer 1999): 30-52.

³During a recent visit to the panda exhibit at the world-famous San Diego Zoo we learned that naturalists now lean to the theory that pandas are, after all, members of the bear clan, not the raccoon rabble.

⁴The reference here to Aslan draws upon the imaginative Christ figure in C. S. Lewis's classic children's story *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

⁵Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 15.

⁶See the very perceptive discussion of this issue in Jon Paulien's *What the Bible Says About the End-Time* (part 4), especially chapter 11, pages 121-129.

⁷*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1994), pp. 498-611.

⁸Issued from the Vatican on May 31, 1998.

⁹See James M. Kittleson's very readable and insightful biography of Martin Luther entitled *Luther the Reformer: The Story of the Man and His Career* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1986), pp. 152ff.

¹⁰This is the false teaching of *antinomianism*, from the Greek words *anti* (against or taking the place of) and *nomos* (law). That is, justifying grace does away with the law.

¹¹This was Paul's sad state before he caught a vision of Christ's righteousness; see Philippians 3:1-15, especially verses 5-7.

¹²*Catechism*, pp. 366-370. Especially see the authoritative citation on page 367 from the Council of Trent—the definitive word on justifying grace that denied the Reformation doctrine of "faith alone, without works of the law."

¹³Douglass A. Sweeney, "Taming the Reformation," *Christianity Today*, Jan. 10, 2000, pp. 63-65.

¹⁴*Catechism*, pp. 384-399 (on the Eucharist and priesthood); pp. 481-490 (on grace and justification), and pp. 370-374 (on indulgences).

¹⁵Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 564.

Woodrow W. Whidden is a professor of religion at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.



The Right Stuff— Is Love

My daughter Jenny and I seldom clash, but when we do, it can be an event of high drama. Recently sent to time-out for some infraction, our usually good-natured 6-year-old flung her little arms across her inflated chest, lifted her chin defiantly, and declared, “I’m not talking to you again until Dad comes home!” Clearly Jenny’s acute sense of justice had been affronted, especially as that justice pertained to her all-important sense of personal honor.

As I watched my little Joan of Arc resign herself to her cruel and unjust fate, I saw what so many parents see when confronted with our children at their most unattractive—I saw myself. And it wasn’t a heartwarming sight.

An accomplished martyr by the time I enrolled in kindergarten, I drove my mother crazy with my self-righteous silences, often sulking over real or imagined slights for days, even weeks. Early adolescence brought a turning point. Sent to my room to “think about” my sullen attitude, I clamped my skinny arms across my chest and consoled myself with this bit of defiance: “Let her think about it. I’m the one who’s right!” Whereupon I was confronted with a thought that didn’t originate in my mutinous mind: *You can be “right,” or you can be loved—but you can’t be both.*

To my sorrow, I’ve often rejected the warmth these words could have brought into my life, opting instead for the chilly consolations of “being right.” But marriage and motherhood have made it painfully clear: We can’t encase ourselves in the armor of infallibility and expect to remain tender and vulnerable enough to give and receive love. Love for others and love of being right can never share the throne.

Seventh-day Adventists know something about all this. We know the gratifying self-esteem that comes with membership in the “right” church. We enjoy the personal and spiritual benefits that derive from rightness—from eating right, living right, believing what’s right, and worshiping on the day that’s right. Yet we remain, in my estimation, an incomplete and conflicted people. In our hearts we sense that being loved and loving are better than being right, but we’re not quite sure how to get there from here.

We’ve experimented with some attractive possibilities.

We’ve tried lots of slogans and programs, projects and promotions. We’ve tried loosening up our lifestyles and livening up our worship styles. We’ve tried to achieve inclusiveness by downplaying distinctiveness. But though our flight from legalism has taken us down some intriguing paths, it hasn’t brought us to that longed-for promised land of love.

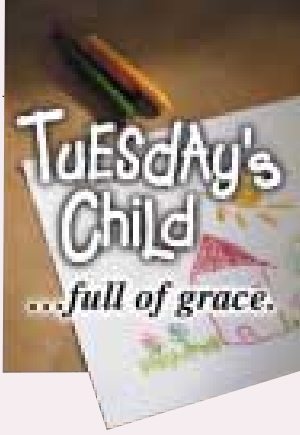
Yet there remains a way to love, and I believe it’s the way of repentance—the way of the broken heart. It’s a narrow way, because it doesn’t allow for egos inflated with spiritual pride and self-sufficiency. It’s a simple way, not at all dependent upon money, policy, or technology. It’s an apparently obscure way, because we would not suppose that the fragrant fruit of love springs from such an unattractive “root out of dry ground” (Isa. 53:2, NIV).

It’s the way of Mary Magdalene, who loved much because her broken, appreciative heart had been forgiven much (see Luke 7:36-50). The way of Paul, who comprehended that “the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13, NIV), because he’d first comprehended that he, and no one else, was “the foremost of sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15, RSV). The way of Daniel, who, though “highly esteemed” of heaven (Dan. 10:11, NIV), identified himself with his erring people and interceded on their behalf: “We have sinned, we have done wrong” (Dan. 9:15, NIV); “We have rebelled against” God (verse 9, NIV).

Perhaps the last and greatest temptation of a scripturally informed and morally articulate people is the temptation to believe that the goodness we experience by association with Christ derives from ourselves. Yet this is precisely the temptation that must be overcome if we would know self-forgetful, soul-winning love. Self-righteousness must go. Spiritual self-sufficiency must go. All pride of ownership of “the truth” must go. They must give way to a corporate appreciation for the *agape* of Christ, that we may lighten this dying earth with His glory and help to prepare a people for His soon return.

Leslie Kay writes from Chloride, Arizona, where she lives with her husband and two daughters.





Non-identical Twins

Sean and Ian are identical twins. Very identical twins. People who know twins well can usually tell them apart without too much trouble. One twin might have a certain freckle, or one's nose might be a little longer, or their ears might be shaped a bit differently. But Sean and Ian are so identical that sometimes their own mother has a hard time telling them apart.

Even identical twins are different in some way, however. After all, no two people, not even twins, are exactly alike. And even though Sean and Ian's mother sometimes can't tell them apart at just a glance, she knows who's who as soon as she asks them to do something.

"Take care of your coats, lunch boxes, and backpacks," she tells them as soon as they get home from school. Sean dumps his stuff in the middle of the living room floor, kicks off his shoes, and flops on the sofa. Ian takes his lunch box to the kitchen and puts the ice pack in the freezer. Before he hangs up his coat he pulls all the papers out of his backpack and puts them where Mom will see them. Then he kicks off his shoes and flops on the sofa next to Sean.

After supper Mom asks the boys to clear the table and help put the food away. Ian carries his plate to the sink and puts the milk in the refrigerator. Sean runs off to do something else.

When Mom asks for help emptying the dishwasher, Sean complains about how much work he's expected to do. Ian has his shelf of the dishwasher emptied before Sean stops moaning about how overworked he is.

Homework, bathtime, tooth brushing—it's all the same. Ian pretty much does as he's asked, and Sean pretty

much doesn't. Sean will usually argue instead of obeying the first time. Ian will usually obey the first time instead of arguing.

After bedtime stories and prayers, when Mom is tucking her boys into bed, she kisses each of them good night and tells each of them, "I love you." They each hug her tightly and whisper back, "I love you too."

Then Mom closes the door to their room behind her and thinks about how much she loves each of her sons. They both tell her they love her too, but she wishes they would both show it with their obedience.

Family Time

On Tuesday (or whatever day you choose), invite your family to worship God with you.

☞ Ask each of the adults in your family to tell you about a time they showed their love for someone by doing what they were asked to do.

☞ Turn to Numbers 22 and 23 in your Bible and read about a man who refused to obey God. What did God do with his disobedience? (Hint: He turned it into worship.)

☞ Make a crossword puzzle about ways we can show obedience and worship to God. Begin by using the word worship as your first "across" word, and the word obedience as your first "down" word. Start obedience off the "o" in worship.

☞ When you pray, ask God to help you remember that obedience is an act of worship. Ask Him to make you willing to obey Him.



World Church President “Amazed and Delighted” at Church Growth in Mexico

BY JONATHAN GALLAGHER, NEWS DIRECTOR, GENERAL CONFERENCE

The growth of the church in Mexico is nothing short of amazing, and I am delighted to be able to be here with you,” world church president Jan Paulsen told the 20,000-strong crowd at just one of several large baptismal ceremonies held in Mexico February 12, 13. Paulsen preached to overflow crowds at services in Poza Rica on Sabbath and Catemaco on Sunday.

Paulsen joined David Javier Perez, leader of the Adventist Church in southern Mexico, and Juan Andrade, leader of the church in north Veracruz and Hildago, to officiate in the Poza Rica baptismal service.

The town’s municipal gymnasium couldn’t hold the crowd of more than 6,000 who attended the day’s services.

The visiting Adventist delegation also had the opportunity to meet a number of key civil leaders, including the local state deputy, Jorge Elias Rodríguez.

Children’s Ministry

Before the baptisms at Catemaco on Sunday, February 13, the visiting Adventist delegation spent time at the children’s ministry meetings, where Paulsen challenged those ministering to children to remember their target audience:

“Jeremiah reminds the captive people of God’s promise to them at the Exodus: ‘If you seek Me with all your heart, you shall find Me. You think I

have forgotten you, but I have not. I will let Myself be found by you.’

“I want you to consider this as you minister to children: don’t make finding God complicated. In ministering Jesus Christ to the children, do not use complicated words or theological formulas. Jesus the Saviour is profoundly findable. God is not difficult to find. ‘If

you’ve seen Me, you will find Me,’ He says.

“Also, the children of Israel complained about having no food in the desert. ‘I will feed you,’ says God. ‘In this way you can know I am the God who leads you. Meet Me every morning in the field, and I will feed you.’

“This applies very especially to you who are teaching the children. Share with them God’s invitation to meet the Lord every day and come to know the God who is eager to feed them.”

Baptisms in Town Famous for Witchcraft

The mass baptism of more than 4,000 persons in Catemaco on Sunday was particularly significant because of the town’s reputation as the witchcraft center for the whole of Mexico.

“We are here to be part of the great celebration of faith in this area, to participate in the baptismal services, to show the worldwide nature of the Adventist Church that so many are joining. We are here to present Jesus Christ as the only hope for now and for the future,” Paulsen told reporters covering the events. In his baptismal

service address to the candidates, Paulsen pointed to the only way of salvation.

“On His way to Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked His disciples, ‘Whom do you say I am?’ That is the question for all of us. For there is only one way into the kingdom, only one way of salvation—by accepting Jesus Christ.

“If you hope to have a future beyond this life, this is only by accepting Jesus Christ. Jesus is now the Lord of your life. We have only one destination: the new earth.

“Today you are beginning that journey. Never give up. I know how difficult it can be, but do not allow yourself to be distracted on the journey. Christ has made it possible for each of us to become winners.

“Through God, we can all be overcomers. He who called you will never abandon you, never leave you. Today your future begins, a future that will never end. Eternity is God’s gift to you today.”

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Mexican church leaders praised the work of the laypeople and gave thanks to God for the dramatic growth of the many congregations in Mexico. “The Holy Spirit is working, and the harvest is exceptional,” concluded Perez.



IN STUDY: Paulsen reviews his sermon on the flight to Poza Rica. R: L. V. McMillan, communication director for the Inter-American Division



A WELCOME RECEPTION: The visiting Adventist delegation receives a warm welcome at the Poza Rica, Mexico, airport.



THE SPOKEN WORD: Jan Paulsen (left) preaches at a worship service while Israel Leito translates into Spanish.



A CHILD SHALL LEAD: Young preachers at the meetings in Catemaco, Mexico, pose onstage. Right: 11-year-old Elizabeth Reyes Hernandez, from Sierra Mixe, was warmly greeted by Paulsen.



A GREAT OPPORTUNITY: The visiting Adventist delegation had the opportunity to meet a number of key civil leaders, including the local state deputy, Jorge Elias Rodríguez (center).



CROWDED HOUSE: Part of the Sabbath congregation in Poza Rica, Mexico, stands awaiting prayer during the worship service.



FOR THE CHILDREN: Many packed the children's ministry meetings at Catemaco, Mexico.



A JOYOUS OCCASION: Many publicly gave their hearts and lives to Jesus during the mass baptism of more than 4,000 at Catemaco.

N E W S B R E A K

Miami Trademark Ruling Favors General Conference

On April 27 a federal judge in Miami, Florida, ruled that the Eternal Gospel Church of Seventh-day Adventists of West Palm Beach must stop using the name "Seventh-day Adventist" to identify its congregation and radio broadcasts.

This ruling is significant because it strengthens the Seventh-day Adventist Church's ongoing efforts to protect its name, says Walter Carson, an attorney in the General Conference Office of General Counsel. It also affirmed the church's right to the name.

The ruling, issued by Judge James Lawrence King in the U.S. district court, enjoins the Eternal Gospel Church and its pastor, Raphael Perez, from using the words "Seventh-day Adventist," the acronym SDA, or the Spanish equivalent to advertise or publicize their congregation. The court found these terms "confusingly similar" to the Adventist Church's registered names and trademarks.

The judgment culminates a two-year effort against the Eternal Gospel Church and Pastor Perez. According to court documents, the Eternal Gospel Church was formed in 1991 by Perez and has 40 to 50 supporters. In 1991

and 1992 Perez attempted to gain admission to the Southeastern Conference and later the Florida Conference. Each time the conferences denied Perez membership, the judge noted.

In 1994 Perez ran newspaper advertisements around the United States using the Seventh-day Adventist name, or "SDA." These names have also been used widely in flyers, billboards, audiotape recordings, and on radio broadcasts.

Carson says "this decision confirms the belief of the church that it has the right to protect the integrity of the church's name. It shows that individuals cannot misuse the church's good name."

According to Carson, "The church's name is a form of property known as intellectual property that must be protected. If you allow people to use it, you lose the rights the law affords to protect it."

However, press reports indicate that Pastor Perez, a former Adventist lay member, will likely appeal the decision. According to the Miami *Herald* newspaper, Perez does not intend to stop using the Seventh-day Adventist name.

Since the church registered its name in 1980 fewer than six cases have been filed in the courts and only three have gone to judgment, Carson says.

Why the Bonfire Collapsed

BY DORIS STICKLE BURDICK, PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTOR, SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY

Structural problems and organizational failure brought down the bonfire. That was the final report earlier this month (May 2) of a five-person panel investigating the November 18, 1999, tragedy at Texas A&M University in which 11 students and one recent graduate were killed.

The massive 40-foot-high bonfire tower, more than twice the weight of the world's largest 747 jumbo jet, was being built of logs the size of telephone poles wired together in four wedding-cake-like tiers. Student builders had no written design plan.

The commission determined that excessive stress on the lowest tier caused structural failure. The stack lacked adequate wire and cables to hold it together, and the ground had a slight slope. Irresponsible behavior was cited. Inadequate skills and knowledge, and inattention to milder problems in the 90-year tradition of the bonfire, con-

tributed to organizational failure.

If precautions are taken, a safe bonfire is possible, said Leo Linbeck, Jr., the construction executive who headed the commission.

What does this report mean to me? That excessive stress can literally put me at risk. That God's Word provides a strong base and Christ's life a safe pattern. That His love can bind us together in the strength of church community. That His wisdom can keep me balanced, secure from slippery slopes. That behaving responsibly and learning from the past help prevent disaster.

Trust in leaders doesn't obviate the need for thoughtful following. "To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen" (Jude 24, 25, NIV).

NEWS COMMENTARY

NEWS BREAK

Early-Morning Fire Destroys Oregon School

An early-morning fire on April 6 completely destroyed the Tillamook Adventist School in Tillamook, Oregon.

The blaze apparently started in the hallway of the 20-year-old structure. "We believe we have burglary and a fire to cover up the crime," says Warren Minder, a special assistant to the Oregon Conference superintendent. The loss tallies about \$1.5 million. The 15,000-square-foot structure had five classrooms, a gymnasium, an administrative suite, and a multipurpose room. Seventy-four students are enrolled at Tillamook.

In addition to the loss of school property many students lost all their personal property, including clothing, glasses, and books.

Minder says a school will be relocated in the adjacent Adventist church for five weeks. Though the loss is traumatic, Minder believes the tragedy has pulled the town of 4,000 together in unprecedented ways.

"The pastors have come and offered help. A local community college has offered the use of their computer lab. The hospital came out and fed the firefighters," Minder says. "At a recent meeting of town officials, there was great support in seeing that the school was rebuilt quickly because it's been a real asset to the area."

New President at Columbia Union College

Randal R. Wisbey, president of Canadian University College in College Heights, Alberta, became the eighteenth president of Columbia Union College in Takoma Park, Maryland, on April 26.



Randal R. Wisbey

Wisbey, 43, served in Canada since 1998. Before going to Canada, he was professor of youth ministry and director of a master's program in youth ministry at the Seventh-day Adventist

Theological Seminary at Andrews University.

"I'm delighted that he will join the college," says Harold Lee, Columbia Union president and board chair. "This is a very positive move for our institution."

Correction

Although General Conference research assistant **John Wycliffe** was selected to join President Bill Clinton's delegation on his visit to India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, Wycliffe did not make the trip, as was reported in the April 20 Newsbreak.

THWACK!

Read the first sentence of Scripture. Notice, it says nothing about justification, zilch about atonement, and nada about the Second Coming. There are no comments about salvation, redemption, the law, 1888, or even the mark of the beast.

Now, the reason for the omissions is simple, and that's because all these teachings are meaningless psycho-drivel apart from this one: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1).

Aristotle, in his *Metaphysics*, wrote that the only way to understand something is know its causes. What brought it into existence? How did it get here? What is its origin?

He's right, and that's why Scripture begins, not with eschatology, soteriology, or Christology, but with causes, in this case the cause being that "God created the heaven and the earth"—the foundation upon which all that follows rests. If you get this cause wrong, everything else will likely be wrong too. This first cause is so crucial that God gave us an in-your-face reminder of it, every week. It's called the Sabbath, and more than pointing to salvation, redemption, or deliverance, it points to the first cause, creation—because on that, and that alone, all that we believe (such as salvation, redemption, and deliverance) rests. Destroy or weaken this cause, and what follows is destroyed or weakened as well.

No wonder, then, that the Lord has taken one seventh of our lives to help keep the first cause before us, something He didn't do for any other Christian teaching simply because no other Christian teaching has validity apart from this one.

Think about it: most, if not all, of our beliefs as Christians become babble severed from the Creation account. Salvation? The atonement? The cross? What can these mean apart from origins? What is atonement in a world without a Creator? From what are we saved in a godless universe? And if evolution explains us, then the cross is nothing but another murdered Jew. How can one make sense of the Fall apart from our origins? What have we fallen from, and to what are we restored? Apart from the biblical account of origins, our most basic beliefs—from the cross to the Second Coming—put us in the same class as flat-earthers, black-helicopter paranoids, and Moonies.

After severing from the denomination to start a new church, a former Adventist minister in Maryland abandoned the fourth commandment. His argument, basically, is that the seventh-day Sabbath is nullified under the new covenant. How amazing that the new covenant nullifies the one specific sign of the only thing that makes the new

covenant meaningful: Creation. New covenant, old covenant, the cross, atonement . . . they all become linguistic blabber apart from the first cause, because upon this first cause, and this alone, all these truths (and every other one) rests.

The seventh-day Sabbath is like a nail that—*Thwack!*—with unbroken regularity returns us each week to the foundation of all that we are or could be. We're so busy running to and fro, spending money, mak-

ing money, going here, going there, going everywhere, and then—*Thwack!*—Sabbath comes and reattaches us to the ground of our being, the starting point of everything that follows, because everything that's anything to us becomes that only because God created it and us to begin with. The Sabbath doesn't bring us half, a quarter, or nine tenths of the way back; each week—*Thwack!*—it nails us to ground zero, to the most fundamental and elementary level of human existence, the starting point of all that comes after. By returning us to the beginning, the Sabbath gives us a chance each week, in a sense, to "start over," to refocus on who we are, on what's really important, and to remember how we got here and where we ultimately want to go.

With unceasing regularity, and with no exceptions, the Sabbath silently hurls over the horizon and into every crack and cranny of our lives, reminding us that every crack and cranny belongs to our Maker, the One who put us here, the One who "in the beginning" created the heavens and the earth, an act that remains the irrefutable foundation of all Christian belief, and of which the seventh-day Sabbath—*Thwack!*—is the irrefutable, obtrusive, and unyielding sign.

The Sabbath reattaches us to the ground of our being.

Clifford Goldstein is editor of the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide.



Image Isn't Everything

Representing God to the community involves more than the personal appearance of the members.



BY ANDY MCDONALD

WHILE DOING SOME ROUTINE business at his Seventh-day Adventist church, a member noticed a pickup truck pull alongside the church sign out by the road. A man got out of the truck, unloaded his tools, and began to dig and work around the church sign.

When the member was ready to leave, he stopped and asked the worker, "Did the pastor ask you to do some work here around the sign?" The stranger seemed a bit hesitant, but replied, "No, the pastor didn't ask me to do any work here."

Now the member was concerned and probed further, "Did someone from the church ask you to come and work here?"

The man doing the work seemed a little embarrassed as he again replied, "No, none of the leadership asked me to do this work." Then almost apologetically he said, "Let me just be honest with you. I'm a neighbor. I took it as long as I could, but I can't take it anymore. I decided I just had to do something to try to make this area look better."

What an indictment against this local body of believers.

A Wall of Ugliness

The truths taught within the walls of that church facility are great life-changing truths about the God of the universe, the God of beauty and order, the God who wants to spend time with humans in a personal way and share eternity with them. But here is a case in which one neighbor wasn't able to get past the exterior to discover what is taught on the interior. Member neglect built a wall of ugliness shutting out this fine neighbor.

I can only imagine the conversations this man had around his dinner table about the church across the way. His speculations may have included doubt about the members' support of their church, some kind of flawed thinking that God doesn't care about beauty, that they must not teach the Bible, because it says to care for the earth, be a good neighbor, and do unto others as you would have them do to you. Certainly with the entrance to the church in such a poor condition that a neighbor feels impelled to improve it, something must be "wrong" with the church.

The neighbor was right—there is something wrong with this church. It may or may not have to do with poor theology, but there has been a failure to take seriously the responsibility to represent God rightly to the community. I remember hearing lectures just before our parochial elementary school field trips. The essence of those talks went like this: "On today's outing you don't just represent yourself—you represent the school, the local church, the denomination. People will make assessments about our beliefs, and even about God, based on their contact with you."

If this is true in our personal manner and decorum, it is abundantly real when it comes to our church facilities. It isn't necessary for us to become outlandish and overdo our facilities, but whether they are an architectural masterpiece with grounds like a well-kept garden, or a simple structure with just grass and some bushes, they must be well maintained.

A Reflection of God

A good guide for church buildings would include making

them a little nicer than the homes of the members who attend the church. The grounds should be better cared for than those in the neighborhood in which the church is located. God certainly had the nicest tent in Israel's wilderness wandering and the best house in Jerusalem. Today we know that God dwells, not in some house of worship, but in the heart of each believer. The place where the believers assemble for

Checklist for Evaluating Your Church:

1. Lawn—green or brown, grass or weeds.
2. Sign—clean or dirty, current or outdated.
3. Shrubbery—alive or dead, sparse or plentiful.
4. Building—clean or dirty, paint attached or peeling.
5. Roof—assures one of dryness inside, wonder if you'll need a bucket if it rains.
6. Windows—clean or dirty, complete or broken.
7. Walks and curb—edged or growing over.
8. Drive and parking—in or out of repair.
9. Overall—if this were a store, would you do business there? (And this is just the outside!)

corporate worship must reflect, to the best of the worshipers' ability, the perfection of the God who is worshiped. God really does deserve our best.

Your assignment, should you choose to accept it, is to drive around your neighborhood, survey churches, then drive past yours as if you were a stranger and ask yourself these three questions:

1. Would the way our church is kept on the outside cause me to want to visit inside?
2. Is there evidence from the exterior that I'd want to know the people who worship inside?
3. From just seeing this building, what would I imagine to be this congregation's view of God?

If your church misses the mark of its outside inviting you inside, then make a list of what is needed to fix it, and get to work making it right. We've all eaten a meal in a hole-in-the-wall kind of restaurant where great food was served, and we've eaten in beautiful settings where the food was terrible. But how nice it is when there are both the wonderful atmosphere of a well-kept facility and great food, too.

The church is God's means to reach the world. Let's make sure that we are the hope of the world in our neighborhood, and not an embarrassment that neighbors feel obliged to fix.

Andy McDonald is senior pastor at the Florida Hospital Seventh-day Adventist Church in Orlando.



It was an experience filled with sentiment, emotion, and nostalgia.

Journey of

BY DICK RENTFRO

SPRING HAD COME AGAIN. But it did not come to my heart. There seemed no lessening of the sadness I felt at being without Rose. Two years had gone by, and I still missed my wife terribly. As one often does when alone, I thought a lot about the past. On one particular day I remembered a place that had inspired and thrilled me years earlier. I decided to take a journey of the heart. A journey that would bring fresh assurance of a wonderful future for Rose and me.

Being retired, I didn't have to make employment adjustments. And, I thought a bit woefully, no special arrangements at all. Who would miss me?

The Journey

I boarded the Starlight Amtrak train on a sunny morning. The train wound through my home state of Washington, then Oregon, and into California. On the train I was no longer alone. At 79 one can afford to be friendly and not be misunderstood. Service people appreciate being complimented, and I took pictures of some of them for my "travel album." They and other travelers became my companions and friends along the way.

The train followed the coast for a period of time, moving south to Los Angeles. Sometimes the ocean came so close I could have imagined I sat on a ship overlooking the water. After the Starlight I took a short ride into the city of Glendale, California, just outside Los Angeles. Glendale



the Heart

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clasped mine, as had happened so many years ago.

But I'd come to see the painting.

Hubert Eaton, the founder of Forest Lawn, had searched the world for a portrayal of the resurrection of Jesus. In time he gave up, believing that that piece of art had never been painted. His quest was for a realistic portrayal of the Resurrection. A picture gradually formed in his mind, he wrote out his ideas, then held a competition among America's finest artists. When the artists had painted their last stroke, a committee of experts agreed on the work of Robert Clark. Today in the Hall of the Crucifixion in Forest Lawn hangs *The Resurrection*, the painting that fulfilled Eaton's conception.

The painting takes up the entire building. To view it is a spiritual experience. The artist shows our Lord the moment of His resurrection, emerging from the tomb with hands raised to heaven in view of a great cloud of witnesses. Interspersed throughout are houses of worship representing many persuasions. On a nearby hill stand three stark crosses.

A Cloud of Witnesses

But now the time had come for me to visit the stones symbolizing those in that "great cloud of witnesses." I came on this journey of the heart, not just to take in the beauty and promise of that glorious painting, but to pay tribute to a few of the witnesses represented there.

I reflected that many Christian churches have usually interpreted this cloud of witnesses as godly people who have gone to heaven. As a pastor I'd preached the Advent message for more than 50 years, and the "cloud of witnesses" had often seemed puzzling until I connected Hebrews 11 and 12.

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1). I had since chastised myself for not seeing the words in the context of chapter 11, the great faith chapter that tells of some who make up the hon-

boasts one of the world's finest cemeteries—Forest Lawn.

Forest Lawn remains special for me, because that's where my mother and grandparents await the resurrection. Many notables have made their resting place there: songwriter Carrie Jacobs Bond; sculptor of Mount Rushmore fame Gutzon Borglum; Nobel Prize winner Andrew Millikan; and Golden Gate Bridge builder Joseph B. Strauss. They all have honored crypts below the Last Supper Window, created by using stained glass from Leonardo da

Vinci's original sketches. Celebrities' names can be seen in stone all over the park.

I'd Always Wanted to See It

I went first to the Church of the Recessional, which is an exact copy of one located in Rottingdean, Sussex, England (circa A.D. 940), where Rudyard Kipling went to pray. What memories this place has for me! Rose and I had our wedding here in 1943. I reached my hand through the old stone ring there, but no other hand

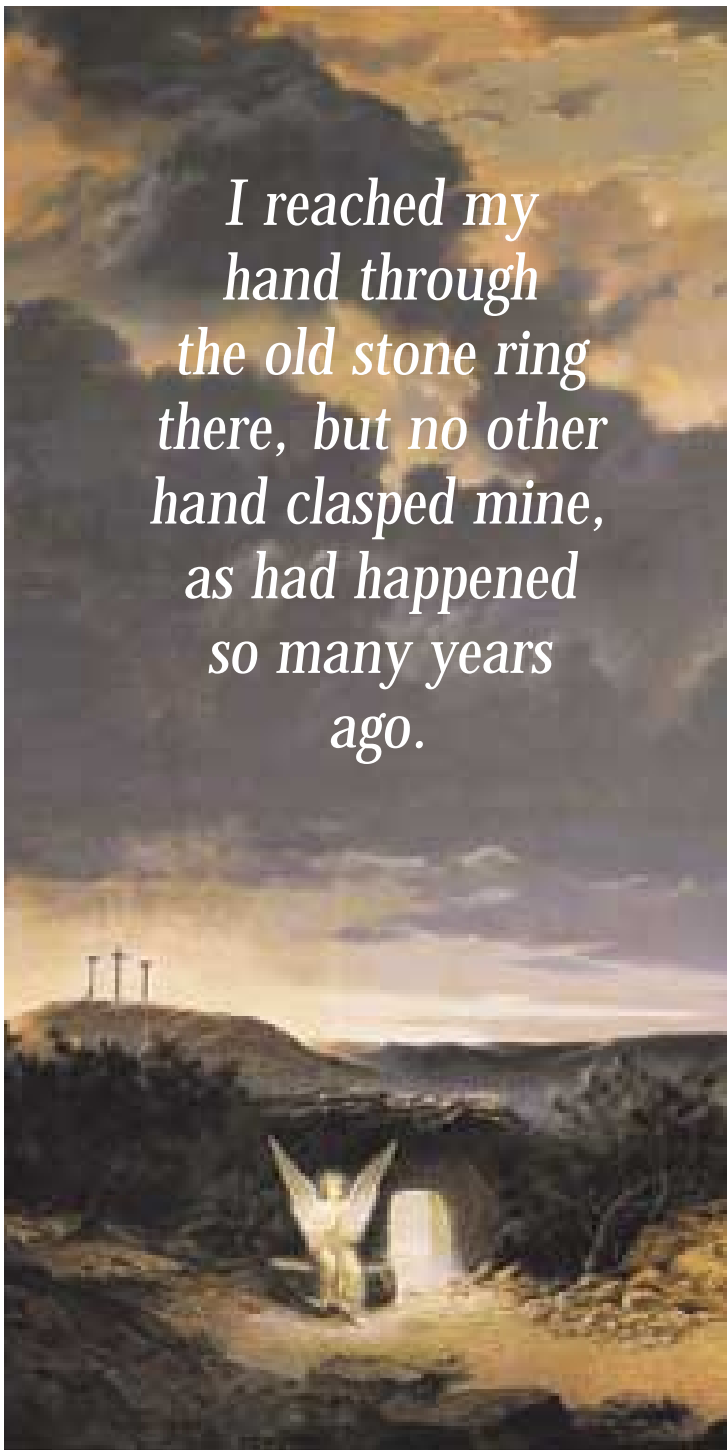
ored group of winners: Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah.

“These all died in the faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country [which is heaven]” (Heb. 11:13, 14).

Joseph, of course, is mentioned in this faith chapter, a type of Christ and an ideal for youth. His name is no surprise. Moses? Of course! The greatest man in the Old Testament. But in verse 31 is “the harlot Rahab.” How could she be included with the champions of faith? And Samson? He pulled off some tough acts. And David, “and others” (verse 36). I concluded God must not judge people the way we judge them. *Only He* has the facts, *only He* knows our motives. If He is in the heart, that’s what counts the most.

Time for Flowers

After some research I found and visited the resting places of some of those in the “great cloud of witnesses,” as noted by Paul in Hebrews 12. I purchased fresh flowers for a few of those “witnesses.” They included my mother and grandmother, A. G. Daniells (one-time president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and one who had worked closely with Ellen White), J. L. McElhany (another past president), Eugene Farnsworth (who anointed me at the age of 10 when I was severely ill). I placed the flowers



I reached my hand through the old stone ring there, but no other hand clasped mine, as had happened so many years ago.

on the graves.

Later in the day in Loma Linda, I visited the simple gravesite of my gospel hero, H.M.S. Richards, Sr., as well as my uncle, Clarence Rentfro, the Adventist Church’s first missionary to Portugal.

Those in that “great cloud of witnesses” are buried all over the world. They are not in heaven cheering us

on. But they cheer us onward and upward by their memories—the lives they lived and the difference they made. My mother’s prayers still follow me.

I visited the crypts of Carol Lombard and Clark Gable at her side, symbolic of those we may meet in heaven but never expect to see there. I placed fresh flowers there, too. Why? I remember meeting the actress when I was 19 years old and working as a bellhop. Her mother had given me a tip and told me to “buy a good book.” Another relative had given a copy of *The Desire of Ages* to Clark Gable, who had thanked him warmly for it.

Yes, there will be those in heaven who may not expect to see us as well. Only God sees the purpose of the heart; it makes no difference if we are great or small in this world. God knows that His Son died for us.

“For therein is the righteousness of God revered from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Rom. 1:17).

Well, I am back home again with my feet up and reflecting on my sentimental journey. It turned out to be a sort of retreat. It not only brought back pleasant memories, but pointed to an even more pleasant future and many wonderful reunions.

Dick Rentfro is a retired pastor-evangelist living in Ellensburg, Washington.



Jerusalem Encounter

*Tracing the footsteps of Christ—
and learning that being a believer
still requires sacrifice*

BY VIOLET M. BATES as told to DIANA L. DYER

I WOUND MY WAY THROUGH THE NARROW, twisted streets of the city of old Jerusalem. The dusty streets seemed hardly wide enough for two donkeys to pass, loaded as they were with towering burdens that swayed from side to side, threatening to topple the small beasts as they trudged along.

Earlier in the week I had remonstrated with one merchant as he mercilessly beat his small donkey, who had fallen beneath her heavy load and lay unable to get up. He had seemed chagrined and ceased his beating, at least as long as I was in sight. But today I had no thought for donkeys or merchants. My one aim was to get to the Garden Tomb, just outside the Damascus Gate. A group of Christians were meeting there for a Communion service that Sabbath afternoon.

Companion Needed

I had set out alone on foot through the Old City, still enclosed in its high thick walls. It was all so quaint and unfamiliar, and I began to fear that I had lost my way. Everywhere I looked people were clothed in their Middle Eastern attire, intently going about their business. I stopped and turned, searching for a familiar face, for someone dressed as a Westerner, someone who could help me.

I'd had some misgivings when I accepted the gift of this trip to the Middle East from a group of my former students and friends. Years of globe-hopping had convinced me that most trips don't meet expectations. Plus, the thought of the Middle East in the heat of the summer was not to my liking; and the threat of frequently erupting violence frightened me a little. Yet knowing how much this gift had cost those who had so graciously and generously contributed for it, I had put

my misgivings aside and determined to make the most of the opportunity.

Unlike my former experiences, this trip had far exceeded my expectations—emotionally and spiritually. I had been fascinated by the sights of Luxor and Al-Karnak in Egypt, thinking of Moses growing up there, and of the wealth and power offered to him. This once-powerful world empire was now a pile of magnificent ruins, while the man who had rejected their hypnotic allurements lives in a city whose builder and maker is God.

We visited rose-red Petra, rocky fortress of the Edomites, the now-extinct race descended from Esau and the traditional site of the apostle Paul's three-year stint in the desert after his conversion. It was spectacular in every way.

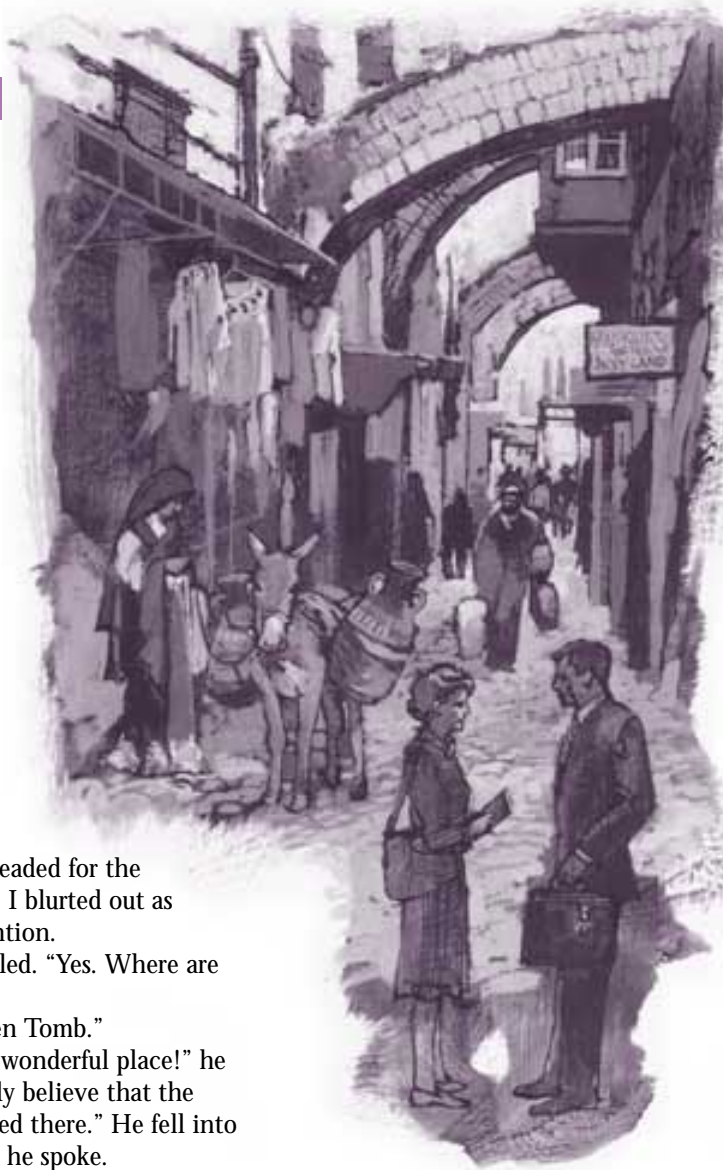
The trip was thrilling beyond anything I had imagined. It wasn't just the scenery or the tourist attractions that thrilled me; I seemed to have a sense of God, of Jesus as the Son of God, walking the earth in this place.

It was the vividness of the reality of Jesus that had impressed my mind and driven me to attend the Communion service at the Garden Tomb—even if I had to walk there alone.

Searching for a Friendly Face

Now, fearing that I was lost, but scarcely concerned for my own safety, I frantically searched for someone to direct me. I was eager to arrive on time for the one event I was sure would be the highlight of the whole trip.

Then I spotted him: a handsome young man, dressed in a Western suit, as if he might be a businessman on an important errand. He looked Jewish, but I hoped that he spoke



English. “Am I headed for the Damascus Gate?” I blurted out as I caught his attention.

His eyes sparkled. “Yes. Where are you going?”

“To the Garden Tomb.”

“Oh, that is a wonderful place!” he exclaimed. “I truly believe that the Messiah was buried there.” He fell into step beside me as he spoke.

I was so astonished that I reached out and gave him a hug. “I’m so glad to meet a Christian.”

“Shhh! Don’t say that so loud. The last time I was identified as a Christian Jew I was beaten so hard that I ended up in the hospital for a week.” He spoke soberly, keeping step with me as we walked along.

We approached the Wailing Wall on our way. “It’s so sad to see those Jews weeping and praying for the Messiah to come.” I spoke quietly this time.

“You’d be surprised how many are weeping and praying for the Jews to accept the Messiah who has already come,” he said.

“Then it is hard for a Jew to be a Christian?”

“My family disowned me when I became a believer in the Messiah.

They had a funeral, complete with a casket, and mourned as if I had died.”

I stopped, horrified. “How do you get along? Do you have a job?”

“A Jew who becomes a Christian is like a man without a country. It is almost impossible to find work.” He spoke intently, then sighed, “But I know a half dozen or more who are in the same boat.”

Strength in Numbers

“What church do you belong to? Are they able to help you?” I wanted to know.

He looked troubled, almost apologetic. “I don’t belong to any church. I have attended a few, but there are some things I just can’t understand. I can’t see how Jesus’ death on the cross made unclean meats clean. And I have

trouble with the idea that the Messiah’s death abolished the commandments and that we are now to keep Sunday holy.”

“Why, young man, I believe just as you do,” I exclaimed. “You should become a Seventh-day Adventist. We keep the seventh day as the Sabbath, according to the commandments; and we don’t eat unclean meats, either. There is a small Seventh-day Adventist church here in Jerusalem. I think there are about five members. Come with me to the Garden Tomb and join us in a Communion service!” I could scarcely restrain my excitement.

“I can’t go today. I have another appointment. But I would love to go with you.” And with that we said our goodbyes and parted company. I was so stunned that I didn’t even think to get his name and address; how I wish I had thought to give him a little money.

I have no way of finding out if he ever did find the little Seventh-day Adventist church in old Jerusalem; if he ever became a member. But I pray often that he did.

I have many memories of my visit to the Middle East. But my dearest memory is of that chance encounter with the nameless Jew who demonstrated to me the truth that against all odds God still has “seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” I expect to meet him again, in the New Jerusalem.

*Violet M. Bates
(l) taught at the
Loma Linda
University
School of*



Dentistry for many years, and now lives in Fortuna, California. Diana Dyer (r) is a registered nurse who lives in Hydesville, California.



At Rest

ALLEN, Rose Meister—age 103; d. Jan. 30, 2000, Cleveland, Tenn. She served as a teacher, with many years of mission service in India and Thailand.

BARBER, Lloyd E.—b. Feb. 17, 1921, Oakland, Calif.; d. Jan. 6, 2000, Nashville, Tenn. He worked with the church's printing presses for 36 years in Hawaii, Indonesia, Tennessee, and Maryland. He helped plan and build the Review and Herald in Hagerstown and served there as associate superintendent until he retired in 1986. He is survived by his wife, Maidelle; two sons, Wayne and Gary; and three grandchildren.

BOND, Carroll Walter Elmer—b. June 22, 1904, Hanford, Calif.; d. Oct. 15, 1999, Auburn, Calif. He served as a singing evangelist, composer of gospel songs, pastor, and educator. He is survived by his wife, Pauliene; one son, Carol Ellsworth; one daughter, Arladell Nelson; seven grandchildren; and 12 great-grandchildren.

CENTER, Maxine Larson—b. Nov. 17, 1938, Chowchilla, Calif.; died Oct. 5, 1999, Decatur, Ga. She served with her pastor husband in the Gulf States Conference, Georgia-Cumberland Conference, and the Southern Union Conference. She is survived by her husband, Richard; one son, Douglas; one daughter, Pamela; two brothers, Don and Rollo Larson; two sisters, Gail Walker and Phyllis Asgeirsson; and two grandchildren.

COON, Lester Orville—age 98, d. Jan. 5, 2000, Augusta, Ga. He served as a pastor and evangelist all over North America for 71 years. He is survived by his wife, Madge; two sons, Douglas and Victor; five daughters, Emma Flynt, Lillian Bagley, Marilyn Martin, Nellie Stone, and Wallis Gebow; three stepsons, Joe, Jeff, and Page Lambeth; one stepdaughter, Madge Davis; 32 grandchildren; 36 great-grandchildren; and six great-great-grandchildren.

DELHOVE, Lydie May—b. May 7, 1911, Leicester, Eng.; d. Dec. 31, 1999, St. Helena, Calif. She served 30 years as a medical missionary in the Congo, Rwanda, and Malawi. She is

survived by two brothers, Paul and John; and one sister, Clara Staples.

DITTBERNER, Jesse Lee—b. May 6, 1914, Mankato, Minn.; d. Dec. 27, 1999, Yucaipa, Calif. He served the church as an evangelist and pastor in Colorado and Texas and as president of the Wyoming, Nebraska, Northern Union, and Atlantic Union conferences. He is survived by his wife, Dorothy; one son, Larry; one daughter, Virginia (Ginger) Nicola; and three grandchildren.

DOWER, N. R.—b. Aug. 10, 1911, St. John's, Nfld., Canada; d. Nov. 13, 1999, Chattanooga, Tenn. He served for 44 years as pastor in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Texas, and Washington. He was secretary of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference from 1966 until his retirement in 1980. He is survived by his wife, Margaret; one son, Richard; one daughter, Karen Isenock; one stepson, Rudy Bata; two stepdaughters, Karen Okuno and Rita Jo Beaulieu; four grandchildren; six step-grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

GODDARD, Dan R.—b. Jan. 22, 1923, Greenville, S.C.; d. Jan. 2, 2000, Loma Linda, Calif. He served as a pastor for 35 years in Colorado and California. He is survived by his wife, Miriam; one son, Dan W.; one daughter, Ellen Schonfeld; one stepdaughter, Julia Di Biase; and five grandchildren.

Balance Sheet

The cool morning breeze gently mixed the aroma of sweet perfumes and musky aftershave as office workers gathered in the worship room. I settled back in my seat waiting to receive my morning blessing. It had been a frantic week of corrections and last-minute entries to prepare an important financial statement.

I hoped the speaker would be one of the departmental directors back from one of the far territories of our division with a glowing report of how God's work was rapidly progressing among the Russian people; something to make our routine office work seem more worthwhile.

But no, he began speaking about Mary. And as the narrative continued, portraying Mary's quest for the ultimate gift for the Man she loved so much, a familiar irritation began to rise within me. This story always bothered me. Why did she have to buy such expensive perfume? Jesus knew how much she loved Him. He would have appreciated anything she gave Him. Does He really need our gifts? He already owns the cattle on a thousand hills.

What Jesus *really* would have wanted Mary to do, I reasoned, would be to save her money for the hard years that He knew were ahead. "It was an extravagant waste of money," I reassured myself, and turned my attention back to the speaker. He was recounting the various reactions to Mary's gift.

Judas's words struck me forcibly. How closely they paralleled my own. Judas? I didn't want to be anything like him—look how he turned out. But on the other hand I didn't want to be like Mary, either—foolishly giving everything I have. A whole year's wages was too much; she was making me look bad. Wasn't I giving enough already? Every month I gave my tithe, and on top of that another portion for offering. That was generous enough, wasn't it? I knew others who gave much less.

However, I also knew others who gave much more than I did—and this irritated me in the same way that Mary's gift did. It seemed that they couldn't be satisfied giving what I would consider a "normal" amount—they had to go all out and give practically everything they

owned—house, land, savings.

Well, what if I gave Him everything I owned? It would be pure foolishness. How would I live from day to day? Who would pay for my kids to go to college? How much did He want, anyway? In the midst of my angry thoughts an image of a balance sheet came to mind, and suddenly my commitment to Jesus seemed to loom up as a liability threatening my assets.

Then a curious thought flitted into my mind. Where was I on Jesus' balance sheet? He considers me an asset. But look what I cost Him. He paid for me with His very life. Before I was even born He made the transaction that would grant me eternal life. Could anything I give equal that? Can anyone place a monetary value on eternal life?

Was I like Simon, the healed leper, so fiercely competing to impress Jesus with my gifts that I was unable to acknowledge His acceptance of others' gifts, regardless of the amount, as equal to mine? I realized that I had always missed the point of Mary's story. It wasn't the cost of the gift that mattered to Jesus—it was the love. The same kind of love that drove Him to the cross—for Mary and for me. He loves me with that kind of love.

I felt from deep within a desire to be more like Mary. I was tired of calculating what to give and what to keep. Without Jesus my everything would be nothing. Without Him as the center of my life, anything I did, including the division financial statement I had just prepared, would be meaningless.

I took a deep breath. Humbly, in my heart, I made the adjusting entry that reestablished Jesus as the asset against the liability of my sins. Through my acceptance of His transaction of love, my life balanced again. I left the worship room that morning with a new understanding of monetary giving. My gifts to Jesus aren't an expense—they're a transfer of love between assets.

Ruthi D. Booth was working as an accountant at the division office in Moscow at the time of writing. She is now an accountant at Atlantic Union College in South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

