Courting Trouble

Are attorneys necessary for solving disputes in the twentieth century?
Class Acts

We at our house have read your recent special issue Class Acts (undated, but corresponds to April 30) and have also shared it with others. You presented 25 of these “class acts.” Could we add our two cents’ worth and propose a twenty-sixth? Our nomination is the Review staff, who so ably prepared this issue. Great job!

—Barney E. McLarty, M.D.
Calhoun, Georgia

Thanks for your note. Assistant editor Stephen Chavez coordinated this issue.
—Editors.

To Share a Dream

Thank you for William Johnsson’s “To Share a Dream” (A pr. 23). It made my heart feel so good to know that all could have the weekly Review. I am 81 years young, and I look forward to the Review every week, and for Jesus to come soon.

—Gertrude Pearcy
Crestview, Florida

Knott Bad at All

The Northwest’s loss was certainly the Review’s gain when Bill Knott joined your staff. Eagerly we await the issues with his byline. What a breath of fresh air his writing brings, as well as nostalgia in these days when questions, scoffing, and indifference pervade some of our great Adventist minds. Such creativity, such thought-provoking thoughts, such personal vulnerability, such

A Final Call for Fresh Voices

If you’re an Adventist age 35 or under, you’re eligible for our AnchorPoints contest. But hurry—the July 31 deadline is fast approaching. Here again are the specifications and guidelines:

1. Write an essay about one of the Adventist Church’s 27 fundamental beliefs. Tell what the doctrine is all about, what it means to you personally, and how it’s made a difference in your life or in the life of someone you know. (You may find it helpful to refresh your mind on the 27 fundamentals by consulting the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, your baptismal certificate, or another source.)

2. Articles should be 1,700 words or fewer, typewritten, and double-spaced.

3. The Review staff will award three prizes—a grand prize of $700 and two runner-up prizes of $500 each. Other articles accepted will merit an honorarium according to our regular rates.

4. To qualify, your article (on paper and on a three-inch disk, if possible) should reach us no later than July 31, 1998. Please include your complete address and telephone number (if any); your age; a photo of yourself; a one-sentence bio giving your occupation (student, homemaker, electrician, whatever); and your Social Security number (if you live in the U.S.). Because of time considerations and logistics, nothing sent to us can be returned.

5. Send your article to: AnchorPoints Contest, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600, U.S.A.
deep insight, and last but not least, such strong, positive Adventist theology and sense of Adventist roots can be found in his articles that by the end of each epistle my husband and I find ourselves rejoicing that we have the marvelous privilege of being part of this great Advent faith!

God bless Bill Knott! God bless everyone at the Review!

— Anita Shultz and Phil Shultz
Portland, Oregon

New Drug for Smokers (cont.)
In response to Dr. Arnott’s letter about Zyban (May NAD Edition):
I was a one-pack-a-day smoker for 10 years when I heard of Zyban. I had tried nearly every kind of treatment, with the most successful being quitting cold turkey. I returned to smoking a few weeks later.

When I took my Zyban two-month prescription to the pharmacist and they told me that it was $90 per month and that the insurance company wouldn’t pay for it, I put off getting the prescription filled for two months. When I realized that in those two months I had spent nearly $150 on cigarettes anyway, I decided to get the Zyban.

I was concerned about the seizure warning as well, and I was very restless during the first two weeks of taking the Zyban, but that was the only side effect. Within a week of taking my first pill, my cigarettes started to taste awful, and the only real desire I had for them was from the mental addiction. I had no withdrawal symptoms from the nicotine.

I have been free from cigarettes for three months now. Although that might not seem like a long time to some, it is to someone who has been smoking for 10 years. The Zyban worked so well that I stayed on it for only one month instead of the recommended two. It cost $90 for me to quit smoking, and I have already saved twice that much. I recommend it to every smoker I know.

— Heidi Carsten
Lincoln, Nebraska

Not “Relegated”
Regarding Rhoda Friend’s May 14 letter: Please do not speak of teaching kindergarten Sabbath school as something to which “intelligent, wise, and gifted” women are “relegated.”

From my own experience—though I am probably not what anyone would consider intelligent, wise, or gifted—I can say that nothing I have ever done has been more beneficial to my own spiritual growth than preparing kindergarten, cradle roll, and primary Sabbath school lessons and programs. There are surely others like me who have spent our best years in those Sabbath school departments, have had the most fun, and have been the most blessed. Now that age and/or weariness prevents continued work in those divisions, it is difficult to find another area of church work we can love as much.

— Betti Knickerbocker
Laurel, Maryland

Letters Policy
The Review welcomes your letters. Short, specific letters are the most effective and have the best chance at being published. Letters will be edited for space and clarity only. Send correspondence to Letters to the Editor, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; Internet: Reviewmag@adventist.org CompuServe network: 74617,15.
My mom and dad seem to think that just because people my age say things differently and ask tough questions that we don’t have much of a relationship with God. That’s not it at all. My parents are the ones who taught me about Jesus in the first place. I haven’t forgotten. I’m just trying to make it my own.
Over soup and sandwiches in a midtown Alberta, Canada, restaurant, my husband and I visited with two thirtysomething friends from out of town. My pastor-husband, Bob, had married them, and through the years we’d played together, endured sadness with the closeness reminiscent of family, and rejoiced as they became successful in well-paying careers. Their visits were stimulating as we had this unvoiced rule that discussions of any topic were fair game.

As we finished our sandwiches, Bob leaned back in what he hoped was a not-too-intense pose, and asked, “Are you going to church?” With no pause between the end of the question and the response, the wife leaned forward in an intended intensity and asked, “Why should we?”

We could have answered, “Because it’s the Sabbath”; “Because we have the truth”; “Because your parents were Seventh-day Adventists”; or “Because all of us need to worship God.” But those answers would not have been good enough. In fact, I don’t remember what we did say. Her question, though, haunted me.

Because we worked at Canadian University College, I knew where to get some answers. I invited a group of young people to our home (rather, I bribed them with dessert or a T-shirt or something else of significant value) and asked them to answer questions about the relevance of church attendance.

After some small talk, I asked the first question: Why should you go to church?

One young woman said she knew she should go to church to learn about God. Another person responded by saying he should go so that he could bless others. Someone else said that “church was for worship”; and another added, “To gain a blessing for myself.” Other responses were “It’s the biblically correct thing to do”; “For relationships, because they are a major part of our lives”; and “Because we are the ones who will take care of our church in the future.”

Good answers, I thought, and I was even more eager to hear their answers to the next question. Why do you go to church?

They began with rather pat replies, such as “For spiritual growth” and “To hear God’s guidance through the preacher,” but then they more openly added, “To see my friends”; “The music”; and “My parents would be disappointed if I didn’t.” Other responses were: “To discover the other more important reasons that God keeps taking me back”; “To compare my faith with others”; “Because I love to meet my church family and praise God with them”; and “To stimulate my thinking.”

They’re responding fairly openly, I think. Now the third.

What do you expect from your church?

First of all, they expected love. Someone added friendship, another said encouragement, then acceptance, and “I expect happiness from a family who is happy in Christ.” One young woman requested nonjudgmental attitudes, another wanted wisdom, and one of the guys said he wanted “the same that I give and sometimes more.”

The reason I go to church is that I want something to pray about,” said one of the respondents. “I hope for guidance in a lot of relevant issues,” ventured another. A young man followed with “I want to come out feeling good.”

Thoughtful consideration of those answers would have been a good idea, but this wasn’t the time. And there was one more question.

What are you willing to give your church?

“I want to give as much as possible,” vowed a young woman. Another said she wanted to liven it up, and a young man added that he wanted to share what he believes. Other answers included moral support; wisdom; and tithes and offerings. The last response came from a young man who had just received his acceptance into Loma Linda’s dental school. “I will try to bring as many people as I can. I’ll give my time and my talents. All our church really needs is more life with more people.”

Time well spent, I thought as the students left. The first question, “Why should we?” can be answered with right answers—and quickly. The last one, “What are you willing to give?” requires a commitment that only we, individually, can give. It’s the time and talent promise, the commitment to bring as many people as I can, that is all our church really needs.
hey came from the East and West, from America’s heartland and the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, from large Northern cities and the farmlands of the South.

In all, 24 major faith leaders, educators, and government representatives, including a White House staffer, came together this past March to a summit conference on poverty, to make a commitment to address the plight of North America’s poor.

Episcopalians and Evangelicals, Mormons and Muslims, Orthodox and Unitarians, all gathered near Carbondale, Illinois, at the invitation of former U.S. senator Paul Simon, who now directs the Institute for Public Policy at Southern Illinois University.

The think tank brought together a diverse group of thought leaders, including Pat Robertson, founder of the 700 Club television ministry; Wallace D. Mohammed, leader of the Muslim American Society; and José Rojas, director of volunteerism for the North American Division, who represented the Adventist Church. Next year the group wants to hold a dialog with congressional representatives in Washington, D.C.

During the March meeting, the religious leaders engaged in round-table discussions and hammered out a proposed agenda to help government, the private sector, and religious communities jointly and separately impact poverty in North America.

U.S. Census Bureau statistics show that 36.5 million persons (13.7 percent of the population) had incomes below official poverty guidelines ($15,600 for a family of four) in 1996, little change from the previous year.¹

While 16 million Whites (8.6 percent) fell below the poverty line, 9.7 million Blacks (28.4 percent, or more than one in four) and 8.7 million Hispanics (nearly one in three) did so in 1996.

Approximately 14.5 million children under age 18 (20.5 percent, or more than one in every five) and 5 million children under age 6 (22.5 percent, or nearly one in every four) suffered under the bondage of poverty.²

Despite America’s unprecedented prosperity, no other Western industrialized nation has such a high percentage of its people living in poverty. Simon believes that many more people will inevitably suffer as the economy slows down and the welfare system is phased out.³

In a Statement of Common Commitment, which was circulated to the press and public officials, the coalition called on federal and state governments to initiate a program of guaranteed temporary job opportunities for those who cannot find private-sector employment. Such a program should also include a screening process to identify those who need remedial help to strengthen their literacy skills.

The six-page document also encourages congregations to move beyond a sporadic, field-trip approach to ministry. The statement calls on congregations to evaluate carefully what they can systematically do to impact poverty, both individually or by partnering with other faith groups.

Suggested projects that churches might consider include offering free professional services when needed, providing volunteer mentoring or tutoring services, seeking employment on behalf of an ex-convict, offering transportation and child care for those seeking work, providing part-time work for a disabled person, making transitional shelter for the needy, establishing links and support networks with inner-city congregations who are poor, placing some investment dollars at the service of the poor.

While many Adventist congregations have a rich tradition of helping others, we should always take the opportunity to restudy our commitment to the needy. In light of changing times, we too must reevaluate what we’re doing. Can we do more? Can we impact more people, update our methods and programs, partner with other ministries, or experiment with new creative programs?

Only with a sacrificial commitment will those in need truly be able to tell us, “I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me” (Matt. 25:35, 36).

² Ibid.
GIVE & TAKE

LITTLE FOOTPRINTS, BIG FOOTPRINTS

Little footprints
Fresh-tilled garden soil
Next to big footprints.

Two big little steps
Next to one little big step . . .

Walkin' with my boy
Heart is full of joy.

Rain clouds
Water drops
Thunder clapping nearby . . .

Big tug from a little hand
Two arms stretched up high
Little heart thumpty-thump
Arms clasped round my neck.

All is right.
It's O.K.

Big footprints
Fresh-tilled garden soil.
— Bill Scott, Fort White, Florida

Photo by Lori Scott

ADVENTIST LIFE

My daughter Victoria, like most 3-year-olds, is always looking for an excuse not to go to sleep. On any given night her excuses might sound like this: “I’m hungry”; “I don’t like my bed anymore”; “I haven’t brushed my teeth yet”; “I need to use the bathroom.” My personal favorite is “You and Daddy have no one to sleep with.”

Her latest ploy to stay out of her bed I can only look on as inspired. On occasional nights when we might be tempted to skip worship and fall into bed from sheer exhaustion, her cry is “We haven’t had worship yet!” She will not settle for a prayer only—there must be at least two songs, a memory verse, and individual prayers. In Victoria’s mind this might just be another delay tactic, but I am convinced that the Holy Spirit is using her to remind my husband and me where our priorities lie.
— Marcia Getfield, Huntsville, Alabama

When my children were small, we enjoyed listening to the Sojourners, a gospel quartet from Oregon. One day I was reading the Bible aloud for worship and came to Psalm 39:12: “I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner.”

“Look at that!” I remarked to the children. “The Sojourners are in the Bible!” “Oh!” 10-year-old Melissa said excitedly. “Are the Heritage Singers in there too?”
— Susan Davis, Boring, Oregon

One evening my grandson’s daddy brought home a video titled Superman. Mama became alarmed at the video’s content and said, “Kevin, turn that off. No more Superman. It’s bad for little boys.”

Early the next morning Kevin, age 3, bounded down the stairs to the television and inserted the questionable video. I happened to be visiting, so I stopped Kevin to have a little chat. “Now, Kevin,” I said, “you know your mommy doesn’t want you to watch Superman. You want Jesus to put good things and good pictures into your mind, don’t you?”

“But Grandma,” Kevin retorted innocently, “I want some bad, too!”
— Joanne Foss, Yuma, Arizona

DID THE DISCIPLES DRIVE A HONDA?

MOTO MESSAGE: Our license plate contest has long since passed, but we liked this late submission from Helen Stiles, whose Honda Accord is here parked at Pacific Press Publishing Association in Nampa, Idaho.
LOOKING DOWN THE AGES TO OUR DAY, Jesus said, “Because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.” “Then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another” (Matt. 24:12, 10, NKJV).

This general atrophy of love and quickness to take offense underlies all the other disturbing signs of our society’s deterioration. One expression of that declining love is the proliferation of lawsuits between individuals. Taught from the schoolyard to “take care of yourself,” hundreds of thousands of Americans each year launch lawsuits against real or imagined adversaries.

Especially alarming is the increase of rancorous lawsuits between church members, a trend that sows discord and division in God’s family and blunts its witness to the world. Litigation between members can also spawn offshoots of disaffected persons who have felt wronged by other members and are convinced that the denomination has apostatized because of a perceived departure from divine counsel against believers’ suing one another.

Any day’s headlines will reveal, litigation is expensive and stressful. Seldom do people engage in it unless they have felt deeply wronged and offended. But when one Christian sues another, God’s method for settling conflicts between believers has usually been overlooked or rejected.

Disobedience to divine counsel on this point is not new. Consider Corinth. Among other failings for which the apostle Paul admonished them, the first-century Corinthian believers were prone to take legal action against one another. With characteristic directness, Paul protested: “When one of you has a grievance against a brother, does he dare to go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, matters pertaining to this life! If then you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who are least esteemed by the church? I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no man among you wise enough to decide between members of the brotherhood, but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers? To have lawsuits at all with one another is defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?” (1 Cor. 6:1-7, RSV).

Paul, writing under the Spirit’s inspiration, felt strongly about this matter. He even went so far as to say that it’s better for Christians to let themselves be wronged and cheated without any redress than to sue one another. A biding by that counsel demands a high degree of self-transcendence and forgiveness that only Christ’s love can inspire.

Seventh-day Adventists also have Spirit of Prophecy guidance on this question. “When troubles arise in the church we should not go for help to lawyers not of our faith. God does not desire us to open church difficulties before those who do not fear Him. He would not have us depend for help on those who do not obey His requirements. Those who trust in such counselors show that they have not faith in God. By their lack of faith the Lord is greatly dishonored, and their course works greatly to the injury of themselves. In appealing to unbelievers to settle difficulties in the church they are biting and devouring one another, ‘to be consumed one of
another’ (Gal. 5:15).

“These men cast aside the counsel God has given, and do the very things He has bid them not to do. They show that they have chosen the world as their judge, and in heaven their names are registered as one with unbelievers. Christ is crucified afresh, and put to open shame. Let these men know that God does not hear their prayers. They insult His holy name, and He will leave them to the buffettings of Satan until they shall see their folly and seek the Lord by confession of their sin.

“Matters connected with the church are to be kept within its own borders. If a Christian is abused, he is to take it patiently; if defrauded, he is not to appeal to the courts of justice. Rather let him suffer loss and wrong. God will deal with the unworthy church member who defrauds his brother or the cause of God; the Christian need not contend for his rights. God will deal with the one who violates these rights. ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord’ (Rom. 12:19). An account is kept of all these matters, and for all the Lord declares that He will avenge. He will bring every work into judgment.”

Scripture continually exhorts us to let Jesus be our example in all things, including the way we deal with injustice (1 Peter 2:21). When he was reviled, “He . . . did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously” (verse 23, NKJV). This scripture is well known. Why, then, do many believers exhibit little maturity and patience in dealing with conflicts, especially with fellow members?

Twenty years of pastoral experience have led me to identify several factors that may account for this:

- a lack of intimate connection with Christ
- a weak prayer life
- little practical experience in God’s Word
- preoccupation with the pain and humiliation of offenses suffered.

Other related reasons could undoubtedly be cited. But any one or more of the above could make it easy, perhaps inevitable, to adopt the vindictive attitudes and practices of the world.

Each of us is tested on this point at some moment in our Christian lives. Jesus declared that none of us can escape offenses and mistreatment. He pronounced a woe, however, not on victims of offense, but on perpetrators (Luke 17:1, 2).

Christians generally, and Seventh-day Adventists in particular, need a deep understanding of God’s method for settling differences. Scriptural principles must be highlighted and observed in the same way as we should practice other doctrinal beliefs such as tithing, Sabbath observance, and health reform.

It’s beyond the scope of this article to present a complete plan for dealing redemptively with conflicts between church members, but a few foundational principles can be offered. These principles apply equally to potential plaintiffs and defendants in lawsuits between believers.

1. A bove all other considerations, seek God’s glory first (see 1 Peter 4:11; 1 Cor. 10:31).
2. Remember that true love (agape) “suffers long and is kind . . . does not envy . . . does not seek its own” (1 Cor. 13:4, 5, NKJV).
3. Search your own heart to see if you have given needless offense to anyone. Don’t be above admitting that you might have provoked another to take legal action against you.
4. Examine your own motives for seeking justice. Is your primary motive to avoid pain and loss, injury and insult, or is it to reclaim an erring brother or sister in Christ? Does the desire for revenge color your actions?
5. Follow Christ’s method and spirit of conflict resolution. Do not be self-righteous or condemnatory. Confront the issues openly in a spirit of love (see Matt. 18:15-17; Gal. 6:1, 2).

Because it is God’s intention that all who accept the gospel of peace be committed, in partnership with Christ, to a ministry of reconciliation (see 2 Cor. 5:19-21), must we then be acquiescent to injustices done to ourselves or others? Not at all. But it means we are to approach wrongdoers in a redemptive spirit that honors each person’s best...
Another Angle

By Marla O. Anderson, talking to Roy Adams

The matter of litigation between church members can become exceedingly complex in today’s society. This fact emerges, we think, in the following piece, gleaned from an earlier interview with Judge Marla O. Anderson.—Editors.

Adams: What do you think about Adventists taking one another to court?

Anderson: It really depends on why they’re going to court. Is it out of revenge, out of anger? Or are they peaceably trying to resolve a matter that is too costly to walk away from? There are all kinds of quarrels and disagreements among members—both major and minor—that ought to remain within the church. Such things ought not to be exposed before the general public.

But there are some things that I think require intervention, simply because they’re so large. Let’s say, for example, that two members are in a business partnership and the business is about to dissolve. They can subject their families and everyone else to large tax liabilities and a variety of other governmental intrusions (depending on how the business is structured) if matters are not properly resolved. If they can’t agree on how to dissolve or otherwise terminate the business (and sometimes even if they can agree), there might be wisdom in resorting to the courts to ensure that matters are resolved fairly and for the good of all concerned.

How do you feel about Paul’s injunction that Christians should not take one another to court, but rather suffer loss? It’s sometimes better to suffer loss. Yet one needs to ask what are the legal and personal implications if the matter goes unsettled. In this age of large business deals and agreements—having to do with property and other large investments—you have to decide whether it’s wise to subject your family and others to what can amount to considerable financial damage. There may be tax implications. Or some creditor may be coming after your house or property.

Now, if somebody simply owes you a sum of money and you know you can walk away without it severely impacting your family’s welfare, that’s one thing. But if you have some entangled business relationship, with tax implications and large debts and creditors—things of that nature—then you may want to have these matters resolved in the proper way: through the courts. Keep in mind that it’s not just to make a point or seek revenge, but to protect yourself and your family from significant and irreparable harm.

Are you familiar with the arbitration system within the church?

Not that much. But I think it’s an avenue that should be tried. It’s always better, if possible, to have fellow members assist you to resolve a matter before resorting to the courts. However, you may have a member who is very stubborn, someone who is not willing to work through that system, then the only remaining avenue may be the courts. If you cannot get remedy through the informal process, and the matter is sufficiently serious, then you may need to go one step further.

How about the church itself? Over what sort of issues might it go to court against its own member?

The church has to take a hard look at why it’s suing. Is it just to make a point? Or is there some important aspect of the institution that needs protection? What is the harm to the church if the suit is not brought versus the good anticipated if it goes to law? Can it simply take the loss and walk away? Or is the matter so entangled as to need a court to disentangle it? I think these are the relevant questions.

And again, it is a weighing process of the harm versus the good that can result.

Maria O. Anderson is a municipal court judge in Monterey, California. Roy Adams is an associate editor of the Adventist Review.
point of view.

If you continue to believe that you are in the right and the other person is in the wrong but can't come to an agreement, then take one or two mature fellow believers who will help you discuss this issue further with the person concerned.

This last stage of intervention doesn't invariably justify the complainant's position. Additional counselors are called in at this point to help evaluate the issues and determine whether the problem is with the accuser, the accused, or with both. The complaint may be discovered to be groundless; the issue may originate in a misunderstanding. It may be a matter of perception rather than principle, and not an actual wrongdoing. Jesus' method of mediation is designed both to protect the innocent and to call the guilty to account, with justice and compassion toward all.

Jesus further allows that if the accused person is in the wrong but refuses to acknowledge his or her offense, the matter should be brought before the church body for a decision. A according to Seventh-day Adventist polity, based on Matthew 18, this should occur in two stages, beginning with the church board as the next level of mediation. If the efforts of the board prove fruitless, then the case should be brought before a duly called business meeting of the whole congregation. Those against whom allegations are brought must be given full and respectful opportunity to speak for themselves.

If the Scripturally-guided judgment of the body is that the accused is in the wrong, then he or she should be admonished or disciplined in line with church policy by reprimand or disfellowship, according to the seriousness of the offense. These proceedings are never to be conducted with the atmosphere of an inquisition, however. If the congregation's goals are to establish truth and peace, the likelihood of resolution and reconciliation is greatly enhanced.

"Let the members of the church, as the representatives of Christ, unite in prayer and loving entreaty that the offender may be restored. The Holy Spirit will speak through His servants, pleading with the wanderer to return to God. Paul the apostle, speaking by inspiration, says, 'A s though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God' (2 Cor. 5:20). He who rejects this united overture has broken the tie that binds him to Christ, and thus has severed himself from the fellowship of the church. H enchforth, said Jesus, 'let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.' But he is not to be regarded as cut off from the mercy of God. Let him not be despised or neglected by his former brethren, but be treated with tenderness and compassion, as one of the lost sheep that Christ is still seeking to bring to His fold."¹

One additional matter requires consideration. We are reminded on every side that this is a litigious age. From the temporal standpoint, the church is a huge corporation with considerable financial resources. It is no wonder that at times Satan would move upon some disgruntled individuals to sue the denomination or one of its institutions for colossal sums of money. Though the church must live in a material world, its final witness must be a spiritual one. We have only one ultimate protection against such assaults. God revealed it to Moses in these words: "But if you indeed obey H is [the Saviour's] voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries" (Ex. 23:22, N K J V). A clear example of this is Balaam's inability to conjure up a curse on Israel when the nation was living in obedience to God. But when Israel was seduced into departing from H is laws, the nation became vulnerable to the enemy's attack.

Faithfulness does not automatically guarantee protection against all injustice done to either individuals or to the body of Christ. But when we are faithful to Bible principles, the Lord will diminish the force of the enemy’s blows and ultimately render them powerless (Luke 10:19). A s believers we are called to something more significant than simply escaping injustice: we are also to avoid being inflictors of harm.

To this end, church members do well to resolve that, by G od's grace, our lives will be permeated with the golden rule: "W hatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets" (M att. 7:12, RSV). If we cherish this principle in all its bearings, "justice" will "roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (A mos 5:24, RSV). If biblical and Spirit of Prophecy principles are followed, then there will be little occasion for church members suing one another, or their denomination, or members of other denominations. Each of us is called by our participation in Christ's body to the role of peacemaker and conciliator.

A fter all, Jesus did not say "Blessed are the righteous plaintiffs," but rather "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." (M att. 5:9).²


² See Ken Sande, "Peacemaker Seminar—Learning How to Resolve Conflict Biblically." This is available from the Institute of Christian Conciliation, 1537 A venue D, Suite 352, Billings, Montana 59102. Phone: (406) 256-1583. Sande's seminar is perhaps the best material that exists on this subject. Its clarity, depth, and balance are exemplary and authoritative.

¹ In matters of child abuse or other dangerous crimes, prompt reporting to the proper authorities is biblically right and legally required. (See R om. 13:1-5; T itus 3:1.)


Brian Jones is pastor of the Berkeley Springs, West Virginia, Seventh-day Adventist Church.

ADVENTIST REVIEW, JUNE 25, 1998 (859) 11
What’s in a Name?

Attorney Walter Carson talks about why the name of the Adventist Church must be protected.

BY BILL KNOTT

His brow furrows as he stares out the conference room window at the clouds piling up in the blue Maryland sky.

“Whenever the church leadership concludes that we have to use the legal system to defend the good name of the church, we get a lot of mail,” he says slowly. “Not only is there a cultural distrust of the court system in America, but Adventists have even greater reasons for being wary of litigation.

“Our serious approach to Scripture, particularly Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 6, means that we will always have reservations about using the court system under even the most clear-cut circumstances.”

For Walter Carson, a lawyer working in the Office of General Counsel at church headquarters, the issues that swirl around the uses and misuses of the name of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are weighty and troubling.

“We receive letters that inform us that by applying for and receiving trademark protection for the name of the church, we have fulfilled prophecies from the book of Revelation,” he adds. “In the thinking of these sincere members, we have applied for protection to ‘the beast’ and have formed an image to it. Trying to protect the good name of the church through the legal system from those who would abuse it is just another evidence to these members of how the church has corrupted itself.”

Carson has worked in the General Conference Office of General Counsel for 21 years and is the department’s “go-to” person on issues of trademark protection and intellectual property rights. A long with other members of the six-member staff, he has been involved in several pivotal cases that have affected the opportunity of dissident groups to use the name “Seventh-day Adventist” to describe themselves. A February 1996 decision by the U.S. Trademark Trial and Appeal Board of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office confirmed the church’s trademark registration of the name “Seventh-day Adventist” and allows the church exclusive use of the name “Adventist” as well.

“The perspective that my colleagues and I share along with church leadership is that these are really matters of stewardship,” says Carson. “When the name ‘Seventh-day Adventist’ was taken by Sabbathkeeping Adventists as their official name, there were a host of implications for the future, some of which were comprehended by those who voted the action.

“To that point, title to property had only been held by individuals beginning in 1863, it could be held by a legal corporation functioning as an arm of the church. Without a formal organization or an officially-approved ministerial force, disaffected or self-appointed preachers could represent themselves as being fully Adventist.

“Both of those issues are still with us, as some of the litigation we are involved in will show,” he adds. “Can a dissident group or breakaway pastors legitimately use the name ‘Seventh-day Adventist’ to describe a ministry when they have removed themselves from the worldwide fellowship of the church that bears that name? We think not.”

At issue in the U.S. District Court of New York at present is a case involving an unincorporated group that separated itself from the Immanuel Seventh-day Adventist Church in Brooklyn. Taking the name “Emmanuel Seventh-day Adventist Church,” the group has also filed a
suit to claim tithes and offerings belonging to the established Adventist congregation organized with the Greater New York Conference. Conference leaders are responding to the civil case in a state court, while the General Conference has filed suit on the trademark infringement issue in Federal court.

"Some Adventists might feel that we would do well to ignore these abuses," Carson says. "They say, 'Let God work out the problems.' But there is a moral—and even monetary—value to the name of the church, as suits like this one show. A name may not be tangible, but it has a distinct value in the marketplace of ideas. The damaging publicity that attended the Waco tragedy some years ago, in which the Koresh group was incorrectly linked with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, created great confusion in the public mind.

"A name, particularly the name of a faith community, identifies it and its value system as distinct from all others. Those who would co-opt that name or trade on its potential for goodwill are acting unethically and illegally. They confuse the public, the media, and, at times, even our own members."

Carson expresses mild amusement at the contradictory attitudes that some Adventists have toward their denomination's involvement in litigation.

"When the church files a lawsuit to protect the rights of an Adventist employee who has been discriminated against or fired for Sabbathkeeping, there is little except applause. Similarly, when this office has filed amicus (friend of the court) briefs in high-profile legal cases that affect the constitutional rights of Adventists and other religious adherents, this is perceived as a legitimate activity by most, if not all, Adventists."

"But protecting the good name of the church through litigation troubles many Adventists," he says, noting that an average of nearly 10 situations arise each year that require some response from his office. "Our first response is to attempt a brotherly approach to those who are no longer acting brotherly. We ask them to discontinue their use of a name that they no longer bear as a result of their choices. Most of the time, the only response we receive to our request is 'We'll do what we want.'"

"Both Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 6 address the negative influence of adversarial, brother versus brother lawsuits," Carson notes (see "Courting Trouble," page 8, for a fuller discussion). "But both also imply a time when the dissenting brother is no longer acting like a brother who recognizes the authority of the church to resolve issues, and is a candidate for a different kind of response from the church."

"These decisions are made carefully and, I would add, prayerfully, with full counsel from the General Conference leadership. Our goal is consistent with the biblical counsel to resolve all differences at the lowest level possible and thus preserve the opportunity for improved relationships in the future."

Carson anticipates more cases involving the name of the church to emerge in the months ahead. "The explosion of information and business represented by the growth of the Internet will bring many complex issues to the fore," he says. "We aren't yet clear on how the laws protecting the use of the church's name will apply to electronic media or to the various websites that describe themselves as Adventists. Our goal is to faithfully apply the principles of our work so that the name Seventh-day Adventist continues to have a clear, unambiguous meaning to the public and in the minds of all who hold this church dear."

Our goal is to resolve all differences at the lowest level possible.
A NEW COMMANDMENT I GIVE UNTO you, That ye love one another: as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. These words are not the words of man, but the words of our Redeemer; and how important it is that we fulfill the instruction that He has given!

There is nothing that can so weaken the influence of the church as the lack of love. Christ says, “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” If we are to meet opposition from our enemies, who are represented as wolves, let us be careful that we do not manifest the same spirit among ourselves. The enemy well knows that if we do not have love one for another, he can gain his object, and wound and weaken the church, by causing differences among brethren. He can lead them to surmise evil, to speak evil, to accuse, condemn, and hate one another. In this way the cause of God is brought into dishonor, the name of Christ is reproached, and untold harm is done to the souls of men.

How careful we should be, that our words and actions are all in harmony with the sacred truth that God has committed to us! The people of the world are looking to us, to see what our faith is doing for our characters and lives. They are watching to see if it is having a sanctifying effect on our hearts, if we are becoming changed into the likeness of Christ. They are ready to discover every defect in our lives, every inconsistency in our actions. Let us give them no occasion to reproach our faith.

It is not the opposition of the world that will most endanger us; it is the evil cherished right in our midst that works our most grievous disaster. It is the unconsecrated lives of half-hearted professors that retard the work of the truth, and bring darkness upon the church of God.

There is no surer way of weakening ourselves in spiritual things, than to be envious, suspicious of one another, full of fault-finding and evil surmising. “This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”

God would have us individually come into that position where He can bestow His love upon us. He has placed a high value upon man, and has redeemed us by the sacrifice of His only begotten Son, and we are to see in our fellow-man the purchase of the blood of Christ. If we have this love one for another, we shall be growing in love for God and the truth. We have been pained at heart to see how little love is cherished in our midst. Love is a plant of heavenly origin, and if we would have it flourish in our hearts, we must cultivate it daily. Mildness, gentleness, long-suffering, not being easily provoked, bearing all things, enduring all things—these are the fruits upon the precious tree of love.

When you are associated together, be guarded in your words. Let your conversation be of such a nature that you will have no need of repentance. “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.” If the love of the truth is in your heart, you will talk of the truth. You will talk of the blessed hope that you have in Jesus. If you have love in your heart, you will seek...
to establish and build up your brother in the most holy faith. If a word is dropped that is detrimental to the character of your friend or brother, do not encourage this evil-speaking. It is the work of the enemy. Kindly remind the speaker that the word of God forbids that kind of conversation. We are to empty the heart of everything that defiles the soul temple, that Christ may dwell within. Our Redeemer has told us how we may reveal Him to the world. If we cherish His Spirit, if we manifest His love to others, if we guard one another’s interests, if we are kind, patient, forbearing, the world will have an evidence by the fruits we bear, that we are the children of God. It is the unity in the church that enables it to exert a conscious influence upon unbelievers and worldlings. . . .

God does not want us to place ourselves upon the judgment-seat, and judge each other. But how frequently this is done! Oh! how careful we should be lest we judge our brother. We are assured that as we judge, we shall be judged; that as we mete to others, it shall be measured to us again. Christ has said: “I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” In view of this, let your words be of such a character that they will meet the approval of God. When we see errors in others, let us remem-

ber that we have faults graver, perhaps, in the sight of God, than the fault we condemn in our brother. Instead of publishing his defects, ask God to bless him, and to help him to overcome his error. Christ will approve of this spirit and action, and will open the way for you to speak a word of wisdom that will impart strength and help to him who is weak in the faith.

The work of building one another up in the most holy faith is a blessed work; but the work of tearing down is a work full of bitterness and sorrow. Christ identifies Himself with us suffering children; for He says, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” If all would carry out the instruction given by Christ, what love and unity would exist among His followers!

Every heart has its own sorrows and disappointments, and we should seek to lighten one another’s burdens by manifesting the love of Jesus to those around us. If our conversation were upon heaven and heavenly things, evil-speaking would soon cease to have any attraction for us. We would not then be placing our feet on the enemy’s dangerous ground. We would not then be entering into temptation, or falling under the power of the evil one.

Instead of finding fault with others, let us be critical with ourselves. The question with each one of us should be, Is my heart right before God? Will this course of action glorify my Father which is in heaven? If you have cherished a wrong spirit, let it be banished from the soul. It is your duty to eradicate from your heart everything that is of a defiling nature; every root of bitterness should be plucked up, lest others be contaminated by its baleful influence. Do not allow one poisonous plant to remain in the soil of your heart. Root it out this very hour, and plant in its stead the plant of love. Let Jesus be enshrined in the soul.

Christ is our example. He went about doing good. He lived to bless others. Love beautified and ennobled all His actions, and we are commanded to follow in His steps. Let us remember that God sent His only begotten Son to this world of sorrow, to “redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Let us seek to comply with the requirement of God, and fulfill His law. “Love is the fulfilling of the law,” and He who died that we might live has given us this commandment, that we should love one another as He has loved us; and the world will know that we are His disciples, if we have this love one for another. ■

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People We Love to Hate

It’s not only our enemies who give us grief. Sometimes we do it to ourselves.

BY JACK BOHANNON

IN SPITE OF THE WARM MUGGY NIGHT IN central Florida, Janie shivered as she lay down on the straw in the old barn. The Forest Lake Academy campus was quiet; we had apparently slipped out of the dorm undetected. Even so, we weren’t worried; the security officer was aware of our “arrangement” and had chosen to be in another part of the campus.

In the dim light of the loft I could make out the shadowy figures of the other two couples. As I lay down beside Janie, it soon became apparent that she wasn’t “that kind of girl.” We got up, climbed down from the loft, walked to the rendezvous point, and waited for the other couples before returning to the dorms.

A Confidence Betrayed

A few nights before, after a Friday night meeting, we had left the auditorium and walked the “students’ march” (during which we walked as slowly as possible) out to the sidewalk, where the sidewalk in front of the Administration Building intersected with the campus sidewalk. At the sundial that marked the intersection, the unwritten but stringently enforced maneuver had the boys walk on the left and the girls pass to the right as they walked to their respective dormitories.

That Friday night we three couples had walked straight ahead, past the sundial and onto the grass. We paused there and talked briefly. The other two boys did most of the talking. The idea was simple: we six would slip out at night, go down to the old barn, and spend a few hours together—unchaperoned. As the plan unfolded, I was astonished to realize that I was the key element in the scheme. Not only was I the senior class president (my graduation was only three weeks away), but I was the “head monitor” (student assistant dean) in the boys’ dormitory. The security officer and I were the only students who carried keys to the rear entrance of the boys’ dorm.

When I hesitated, the other boys took up the dorm students’ rallying cry: “Two, four, six, eight, who do we love to hate? Miss Stoneburner!” It was common in the dorm to despise the deans and accuse them (falsely) of all sorts of bizarre behavior. However, both Edna Stoneburner and Kenneth Davis had been good to me. Worst of all, the school, my graduating class, and the dean had placed a great deal of trust in me.

I found myself shaking with fright and guilt. However, peer pressure (and the girls’ consent) ruled the day—or at least that night.

As nearly always happens on an academy campus, we were found out and reported to the principal. As the story unfolded, the administration was horrified to find that the plot included the senior class president, the junior class president, the night watchman, the niece of the academy treasurer—plus five other students.

We spent hours in the principal’s office—singly and collectively—expecting the ax to fall. Except for the intervention of the two deans, Miss Stoneburner and Mr. Davis, and the senior class sponsor, Mrs. Kirstein, all of us would have been expelled from school and not allowed to take our final exams.

After several days of negotiations, I was allowed to march with my class and graduate. However, I could not participate in any public way. My role was to keep a low profile. The senior
class vice president, Lylyan Wynn, read my speech while I sat on the platform, looking for a knothole to slither through.

A Self-imposed Exile
Eager to leave the shame and disgrace of the campus, I wanted to rush back home as soon as possible. The problem was, I really didn’t have a home to return to. I had attended an evangelistic tent meeting at the age of 12 and been baptized. A few months later (at my insistence) my parents had dropped me off on the sidewalk in front of the boys’ dorm early one Sunday morning with a suitcase in my hand and about $8 in my pocket, and driven away.

Filled with resentment and bitterness, I went back to Grovania, Georgia (you may not find it on the map), and got a job. I immersed myself in worldly ways and tried to put Forest Lake Academy and Seventh-day Adventists as far from my mind as I could.

I was so successful that my stepmother, who practiced no religion at all, registered her disapproval of my behavior. She talked with me several times about the risks I was taking, to no avail.

After a year had gone by, Glen, one of my classmates, drove up to the house in a ’34 Ford hot rod he had restored. A letter a proper interval of time he proposed that we go back to Florida and sell books and Bibles that summer. The very idea was outrageous. As happy as I was to see him, I had no intentions of ever going back to Florida, ever picking up another Bible, ever being around Adventists again. And I told him so.

Glen hung his head and thought for a long time before saying, “Does your mother have a lot of food in the house?”

“Oh of course she does,” I replied.

“Good,” he answered quietly, “because I’m going to stay here until you agree to go canvassing with me.”

“Then you’re going to be a long-term guest in this house,” I retorted.

A Second Chance
The weather in Live Oak, Florida, seemed to be especially hot and humid that summer. Glen would drive me out to a county road and drop me off, then he’d go to another section of the county to work. I walked the country roads, house to house, farm to farm, showing my books, and hitchhiked back to town in the evening. For teenagers at the time, canvassing was the best way to make the most money in the least time.

One day I became so overwhelmed with my thoughts that I stepped off the road into the bushes and dropped to my knees. All that pent-up resentment, hate, and bitterness seemed to drip off me and mingle with the perspiration that poured from my body and soaked my clothing. “Jesus,” I begged, “save me in spite of myself. I rededicate my heart to You.”

Then I made a strange request: I prayed, “Lord, if You take me back, I still want to be a missionary!”

Beside my name in The Mirror, my academy yearbook, was printed my stated ambition: missionary. Adding to my eternal shame were the words printed in the front of the book: “We shall never forget. We shall always remember.” That fall I enrolled at Southern Missionary College (now Southern Adventist University).

Reminders of the Past
As fate would have it, Miss Stoneburner had transferred to the same college, and I had to face her again. Dean Davis also transferred to Collegedale. I felt abandoned by God, thinking that I wouldn’t have a chance to start over before my resolve was crushed by the guilt and embarrassment of my past mistakes.

I soon began dating a girl named Donna. Every time I visited her in the women’s dorm, I had to pass Miss Stoneburner’s office. I must have blushed every time I saw her, but I determined I’d do everything “by the book.” When I wanted to take Donna for a walk down by the railroad tracks (the rules were a bit more relaxed on a college campus), I asked the dean’s permission. When we wanted to climb up the hill to see the sunrise or sunset, I asked for permission. Much to our surprise, Miss Stoneburner usually gave it.
Other couples would see Donna and me off campus together. They often asked how we seemed to “get away” with so much. I simply replied, “We asked permission.”

One day Miss Stoneburner headed straight toward me as I walked on the sidewalk near the Administration Building. I tried to avoid her, but she changed course to meet me. She obviously wanted to speak to me privately. I racked my brain to think what I could have done to deserve this inquiry.

I steeled myself for the worst and waited again for the ax to fall. “Jack,” she said, “I want to go to my home place in Virginia to visit my mother this weekend. Would you be interested in driving me there?” Speechless, I stared at her in disbelief. She continued, “You may bring along someone else to keep you company.” I was sure that she meant my roommate, Larry.

But before I realized it, I blurted out, “May I bring Donna along?” There. The words were out of my mouth, and it was too late to recall them. Miss Stoneburner thought for a moment and then replied, “I think that would be all right.”

We had a marvelous time at the Stoneburner home in Virginia. It seemed impossible that the elderly Mrs. Stoneburner could be such a delight to two college kids. After supper one evening, Miss Stoneburner said rather casually, “You kids run along now; Mother and I want to talk for a while.” Donna and I went out into the moonlit night and walked, ran, and whirled in the heavy fall leaves.

Back on Track

Our visit over, we reluctantly left the home place and drove back to campus. A host of happy thoughts tumbled through my mind as I reflected on the relationship that was deepening between me and Donna, the renewed trust that Miss Stoneburner invested in me, and the excitement I felt when I tried to imagine the future that God had in store for me.

After our marriage Edna Stoneburner and Kenneth Davis continued to give guidance, counsel, and encouragement to Donna and me. And often over the years I’ve been reminded how their consistent Christian influence demonstrated God’s grace and kept me on track.

It’s strange how the people I “loved to hate” turned out to be two of the best friends I’ve been privileged to enjoy.

Jack Bohannon has been a pastor, teacher, administrator, and missionary in North America, the Middle East, and Africa. He and his wife, Donna, make their home in Glenwood Springs, Colorado.
On February 26 I wrote a column requesting that readers involved in the health-care field address the issue of medical ethics. In response I received e-mail messages and letters from doctors, nurses, medical students, and administrators from four countries. Readers discussed the principles that guide their daily decisions as Seventh-day Adventist health professionals, illustrated their points with stories, and provided further resources for investigation.

In determining how to perform their duties in light of their unique Adventist heritage, these health-care professionals consider the following issues:

- If Jesus were visibly standing next to me, what would He do?
- How can I look my children in the eye and explain this?
- Can I live with myself?
- What if there were TV cameras, the press, or a jury witnessing these activities—are they defensible?

The issue, I have found, is more intricate and complex than I had imagined. The term "medical ethics" has several usages, one reader told me, with the most common being based upon "social justice—the greatest good for the greatest number—and on the principle of patient autonomy: the patient's right to make choices regardless of the physician's recommendations."

The Alumni Postgraduate Convention at Loma Linda University sponsors an annual Provonsha Lectureship addressing an issue in ethics, which is included in the online library that can be accessed through the LLU Bioethics web page (http://www.llu.edu/llu/bioethics).

Another reader recommends the book Do We Still Need Doctors? written by medical ethicist John D. Lantos.

In relating stories to illustrate their concerns, writers described incidents involving abortion, Sabbath work, physician-assisted suicide, insurance and fiscal constraints, sharing news with families, and spiritual care. One writer even brought up the topic of churches that "air every sick person's diagnosis from the front." "Don't people realize that giving out some diagnoses is unethical, an invasion of privacy?" she asks.

While it isn't possible to share every story, I present a piece from a retired physician who remembers with clarity an incident that happened 38 years ago:

"In Africa as a mission doctor, I visited a small village in Botswana every month. A little girl about 5 years old always came with her parents to be near as I treated others. Often I would speak to her about Jesus and heaven. She would always say, 'I love you and I love Jesus.'"

"On one occasion her parents came, but she did not. Her parents asked if I would come to her hut to see her. I said, 'Yes, after clinic is finished.' At the hut I found she had died two weeks before and the parents had salted her body to preserve it until I could come and resurrect her."

"There I stood in awe, grief, and amazement. At the same time I wondered what do I do? What do I say? The text flashed to mind, 'He that believeth in me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father' (John 14:12)."

"The parents had faith in me and in my faith in God. How I wanted to say, 'Maiden, arise!' My whole life and Christian experience flashed before me. My faith at that moment in my life was not prepared for the experience I was then facing. What would Jesus do? What would I do?"

"I spoke calmly to those dear faith-filled parents of a time soon to come when Jesus Himself would call her back to life. But to this day I wonder if the faith of those dear parents should not have been rewarded as it was in the days of Jesus or His disciples. My greatest fear is that through my own neglect I have failed to meet the need of another."

Let's all remember to hold up our health-care professionals in prayer. The decisions they make today will not easily be forgotten, even with the passing of years.

Sandra Doran, Ed.D., is an educational consultant specializing in learning disabilities and attentional issues.
though barely worth the effort, I just finished plodding through Jean-Paul Sartre’s 800-some page tome Being and Nothingness, a “phenomenological essay on ontology”—essentially Sartre’s attempt to understand “what must man be and the world be in order for a relation between them to be possible.” Toward the end of the book (considered “the Bible of existentialism”) Sartre did write something incredibly profound. He said that ultimately “the best way to conceive of the fundamental project of human reality is to say that man is a being whose project is to be God. . . . Or if you prefer, man fundamentally has the desire to be God.”

How fascinating that the century’s most influential atheist would so cogently capture such a basic theological truth.

“You have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High’” (Isa. 14:13, 14, NKJV).

“Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, Thus saith the Lord God; Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God. . . . Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God” (Eze. 28:2-6).

This same desire brought Eve’s downfall as well. Lucifer didn’t tempt her with promises of riches, fame, or sensual pleasure; instead, he used the same thing that did him in: the desire, as Sartre said, to be like God. When the serpent told Eve that “you will be like God” (Gen. 3:5, NKJV), she took the bait, because apparently something inside her wanted to be “like God.”

It didn’t end in Eden, either. Paul described the essential characteristic of the antichrist in terms similar to Sartre’s: “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (2 Thess. 2:3, 4).

No wonder theologian Reinhold Niebuhr wrote, “The sin of man is that he seeks to make himself God.”

What is it about the creature, then, that wants to be the Creator? Though most of us don’t, at least consciously, think that we want to be God, the issue is manifested much more subtly than that. Satan, Eve, the “son of perdition”—all were seeking an authority other than the Lord, namely, themselves. Since God is the sovereign of the universe, and His role is to rule, to make oneself the final authority, to set oneself and one’s own particular views as the ultimate standard, is essentially to try to make oneself God.

Whenever we take prerogatives on ourselves that belong only to God—such as ignoring a day that God has set aside as holy and keeping instead one of human choosing—we are making ourselves out to be God. Though he came at it from a totally different perspective, Sartre’s philosophy led him to understand what is essentially the original sin.

The great controversy between Christ and antichrist in the last days will climax around this fundamental issue. Do we follow the Lord and let Him be God, or do we make ourselves the final authority, and thus become our own gods? Will we obey God’s commands or those of another one? No matter how big the universe might appear, there’s room for only one God, which means that sooner or later all the false gods—even those made of bone and wrapped in sinew and flesh and able to act rationally—must go. And though Sartre’s use of the terms was radically different, the choice we make here about who will ultimately be God will determine our fate, which will truly be either “being” or “nothingness.”

Clifford Goldstein is editor of Liberty, a magazine of religious freedom.
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BUILDING: The sure word. (C). Rodrigues, J. Apr 9, p.16-21/746-749.

BUILDING: The sure word. (C). Rodrigues, J. Apr 9, p.16-21/746-749.

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BUILDING: The sure word. (C). Rodrigues, J. Apr 9, p.16-21/746-749.

BUILDING: The sure word. (C). Rodrigues, J. Apr 9, p.16-21/746-749.

BUILDING: The sure word. (C). Rodrigues, J. Apr 9, p.16-21/746-749.

BUILDING: The sure word. (C). Rodrigues, J. Apr 9, p.16-21/746-749.
INDEX

A adventist delegation surveys Christianity in China, Feb 12, p(21246).
A first foreign A adventist leader preaches in Beijing Church in decades.
A pr 9, p(20-499-500).
G E R M A N Y: German A adventists voice regret at parliament’s failure to ban public smoking. Mar 12, p(23-209-246).
N E W Y O R K: GC employees reach out to community (Christmas). Feb 12, p(212-212).
S U D A N: First students to graduate from Sudan Seminary. Apr 9, p(20-499-500).
T E X A S: Former A adventist pastor held on war crimes charges now released. May 14, p(20-496).
W O M A N E N: GC employees reach out to community (Christmas). Feb 12, p(212-212).
A D V E N T I S T R E V I E W, JUNE 25, 1998
30 (878)
My dad has a saying that goes something like this: "I once had some chickens I fed sawdust. The hen laid eggs and sat on them to keep them warm. But as the chicks hatched, I discovered that they all had cedar chests and wooden legs!"

Well, I suppose because of my dad’s great love of woodworking, if they ever took an X-ray of him they’d find that he too has a cedar chest and wooden legs.

Lynwood E. Bayne, born the son of a carpenter, followed in his father’s footsteps from an early age. He began his career as a laborer and worked his way up the ranks to the position of construction superintendent.

Just as an artist with fine brushstrokes paints a landscape across the canvas, my dad, as overseer of construction, left his marks etched on the skyline of the Roanoke Valley in Virginia. Some of his more notable accomplishments include Towers Mall Shopping Center, the downtown Dominion Bank building (now called First Union), and the 1971 addition to the Roanoke Memorial Hospital.

Michelangelo once replied, when asked why he was dragging a piece of marble through town, "Because there's an angel in there trying to get out." My dad has the same love affair with woods. Give him a piece of warm pink oak, dark rich walnut, or smooth-grained birch, and he sees a piece of furniture or cabinetwork trying to escape.

Although his work has been noteworthy, I prefer to think of my dad for his devotion to God and family—for his unwavering loyalty and support (both financially and emotionally) to us his children, his grandchildren, and now his great-grandchildren.

My dad instilled in me the love of the written word, for which I will ever be grateful. My fondest childhood memory is that of snuggling on the couch beside him as he read stories to me from a set of tattered old encyclopedias, Ideals magazines, or a book of poetry.

When I announced my secret desire (almost a half century later) to become a writer, my dad took me seriously. He bolstered my sinking morale, and when I received one rejection slip after another, he encouraged me to keep writing. Then he rejoiced with me when at last I made my first sale.

More than that, however, I’m thankful for his quiet example of faith in God. He does not preach his religion; he lives it. My dad has never been a church elder; neither has he spoken from the pulpit. Other than his service as deacon, most of his contributions have been done quietly behind the scenes—janitorial work, mowing and trimming bushes, repair jobs, and carpentry for the Roanoke Memorial Avenue church, its Community Services, and its school.

My dad has been a regular volunteer in the fruit program at Roanoke Adventist Preparatory School. He’s helped unload the tractor trailers of fruit sold to help support the school. He’s painted lines for parking and directed traffic for pickup. He’s carried out the heavy cartons and loaded them into customers’ vehicles, and he’s delivered the fruit to the shut-ins and the elderly who were unable to pick up their orders.

Though he’s now 84 years old, my dad hasn’t retired from service. He’s a deacon in the North Valley church, where he is now a member. Our new congregation meets in a rented church, but my dad’s handiwork can be seen dotted around the church on any given Sabbath. He does work for our congregation, and has done carpentry for the denomination from which we rent. Dad is currently drawing potential building plans for our future church.

Cedar chest and wooden legs? Well, probably so. Not only was his earthly father a carpenter, but his heavenly Brother was one as well, for He worked in a carpenter shop in the little town of Nazareth almost 2,000 years ago. "He learned a trade, and with His own hands worked in the carpenter's shop with Joseph. . . . He was not willing to be defective, even in the handling of tools. He was perfect as a workman, as He was perfect in character."* So perhaps it’s the sawdust that runs through my dad’s veins that enables him to be, as Paul admonishes, "not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord" (Rom. 12:11).

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* The Desire of Ages, p. 72.

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