The Long Shadows of DIVORCE
Cloning and the Christian

In “Cloning and the Christian” (June NAD Edition) George Javor writes, “The cloning of humans itself is not likely to precipitate divine intervention.” Ellen White writes, “But if there was one sin above another which called for the destruction of the race by the Flood, it was the base crime of amalgamation of man and beast which defaced the image of God, and caused confusion everywhere” (Spiritual Gifts, vol. 3, p. 64).

It would appear that genetic tampering can and will provoke “divine intervention.”

—Clyde Bagby
Fredericksburg, Texas

Javor states that what humanity inherited from Adam and Eve “is sometimes called ‘fallen human nature’ or ‘the propensity to sin.’” This implies that he believes those two phrases are synonymous. But clearly they are not, because Ellen White sometimes referred to Jesus as having “fallen human nature,” but was categorical in denying that He had any “propensity to sin.”

The author’s second error immediately follows when he approvingly declares that “Adventists are careful not to confuse a ‘tendency to sin’ with sin itself.” Of course, a tendency or propensity to sin is sin itself because it means that at least part of a person desires to sin. Jesus made it clear in Matthew 5 that a person was guilty of sin if he only wanted to do it, even though he did not externally commit the sin.

Clearly Jesus had the effects of 4,000 years of sin in Him (“fallen human nature”) but was not infected with sin—which is another way of stating that He took Adam’s physical human nature after the Fall, but His spiritual human nature before the Fall.

—Doug Baker, D.Min.
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Youth and Ownership

Thanks to Andy Nash for his perceptive ruminating on reaching young adults today in “A Letter to Myself (Open in 2011)” (June 12).

His letter reminded me of the first president’s youth cabinet. Because 20 percent of the NAD is under 30 years old, we recommended that one fifth of all committee members at the local, conference, union, and division levels be under 30 (see Adventist Review, June 6, 1991). One young adult member summarized, “We would enjoy a piece of the pie. However, we would also like to help make the pie.”

To my knowledge, this has not happened. Who will be the first to show the courage and farsightedness to do it?

—Chris Blake
Lincoln, Nebraska

The 6,000-Year Theory

I hear it in sermons, I see it in books—the view that earth’s events are winding down to the Revelation 20 millennium, with less than three years to go. It seems to be based upon Bible sevens and the Sabbath. Our critics will scoff, “The Adventists are time-setting again!”

There is no certainty about Ussher’s chronology. True, Ellen White stated that the earth is 6,000 years old, but that was a century ago, bringing the present tally to a meaningless 6,100. We must not get excited about uncertain calculations. The message will go, and Jesus will
come on His schedule, not ours.

—Adriel Chilson
College Place, Washington

We also reject the 6,000-year theory, which holds that the earth will experience a Sabbath-like rest for the seventh millennium. While pleasing in its “neatness,” it has no biblical basis. For more on this and related topics, see Roy Adams’ “Living in Crazy Times” (June 26).—Editors.

Goodbye, Evolution?
Readers of Michael J. Behe’s Darwin’s Black Box, reviewed by David Ekkens in the May 15 Cutting Edge Edition, might be pardoned for concluding that we are witnessing the beginning, at least, of the end of evolution. Thomas S. Kuhn, in the famous Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1970), would eventually call it a scientific crisis.

According to Kuhn, time-honored frameworks of scientific thought finally fail to explain things accounted for by new approaches, and older adherents give way, by default, to those who work within new theories. In the case of evolution, creationism is like the new covenant: really older, but now new and perhaps yet triumphant in the scientific realm.

Such works as Darwin’s Black Box, skeptical of Darwinism and written by people from the orthodox, secular scientific community, find strong evidence in living things for an intelligent Designer, although it is clear that to a degree the authors are still prisoners of the older beliefs.

However, as Kuhn pointed out, coming generations finally adopt the new views, and we may yet see the implosion of Darwinian evolution, particularly as it is challenged from the inside. Stay tuned.

—Richard Rimmer
Madison, Tennessee

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Sabbath School Quarterlies
On page 23 of the June 19 Review mention is made of the downward trend in Sabbath school attendance. To many of us the trend is easily explained.

Many of the recent lessons contained in the adult quarterlies are written by college professors for college students. They are just too difficult for many laypeople to understand. In one lesson the author asked the members to outline complete chapters of the Bible and to check how many times a word was used. Then we were supposed to tell how it was used and the point made. It appeared to me and many others that the writer used the outline of an upper division theological course.

Because of this, not only has Sabbath school attendance declined, but those who do attend faithfully no longer study the lesson. I would suggest that these lessons be used for college theological study and easier-to-understand lessons be used for the general population. My wife, a Sabbath school teacher, and I study together to try to make the material understandable, but often this is nearly impossible.

If the General Conference Sabbath School Department is really interested in increasing attendance, they must give us quarterlies that the average non-college-educated person can understand.

—Richard M. Norman
Reynoldsburg, Ohio
“Behold, I come quickly . . .”

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

The Adventist Review (ISSN 0161-1119), published since 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 by the Review and Herald Publishing Association, 55 West Oak Ridge Drive, Hagerstown, MD 21740-6600. The North American Edition of the Adventist Review is published 12 times a year on the first Thursday of each month. Copyright © 1997.

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E-mail: Internet: reviewmag@adventist.org
Comparative network: 760.7.15
Subscriptions: Twelve monthly issues: US$12.00 plus US$10.20 international postage; 40 issues of the weekly Adventist Review, US$89.97; full 52 issues (monthly and weekly), US$59.97

Subscription queries and changes of address for the monthly North American Division Edition: Contact your local union conference headquarters. For information regarding the weekly editions of the Adventist Review: Call 301-791-7000, ext. 2439, or toll-free 1-800-456-3991.

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


PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.
Vol. 174, No. 32
Awash in a Sea of Relativism

If you think America is a Christian nation, take a look at the latest findings of the Barna Research Group. Each year George Barna and his associates, based in Oxnard, California, conduct a nationwide telephone survey of adults. The 1997 survey shows that 84 percent of all adults claim to embrace the Christian faith. But what of the belief systems of the same people? Take a deep breath:

- Six out of 10 agree that “the Holy Spirit is a symbol of God’s presence or power, but is not a living entity” (italics supplied). Amazingly, 55 percent of those who meet Barna’s criterion of “born-again Christians” reject the existence of the Holy Spirit—and thereby the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.
- Nearly two out of three adults agree that Satan “is not a living being but is only a symbol of evil.” A majority of born-again Christians (52 percent) concur. But if the devil is out, angels are in: more than three fourths of respondents believe that angels exist and have an effect on people’s lives. No wonder the prime-time TV show Touched by an Angel is garnering strong ratings.
- Forty percent of the populace believe that when Jesus was on earth He committed sins—with 28 percent of born-again Christians assent.
- Thirty-nine percent say that Jesus was crucified, but that He did not have a physical resurrection. Here 35 percent of born-again Christians assent.
- And 53 percent say that if a person is good enough or does enough good things for other people, they will earn their way to heaven. One third of all born-again Christians accept this notion.

Christians the respondents may claim to be, but Christians of what sort? Not of the biblical, apostolic mode—not with denial of the Godhead, the person of Jesus, and His resurrection. Not with the substitution of salvation by good works for salvation by grace alone, through faith alone.

Barna also quizzed respondents on lifestyle views and choices. Some findings:

- One third of all adults accept the proposition that “the way things are these days, lying is sometimes necessary.”
- One third say the acceptability of viewing pornographic material is a matter of taste, not morality.

- Forty-six percent state that “Christian churches should accept gay people as church leaders.”

George Barna seemed overwhelmed by what his research revealed. His conclusions deserve Adventists’ careful notice:

“America appears to be drowning in a sea of relativistic, nonbiblical theology. We are living amid the dilution of traditional, Bible-based Christian faith. Millions of Americans are comfortable calling themselves Christian even though their beliefs suggest otherwise.

“At the same time, our rejection of orthodox Christian beliefs, coupled with a relativistic culture, has led millions of adults to embrace a worldview totally at odds with the faith they allegedly embrace. The irony is that most of the individuals who are caught up in their own contradictions are completely unaware of those conflicts. Meanwhile, those who are aware of the conflicts seem to possess no sense of urgency to reconcile these competing perspectives or to arrive at a [wholistic], coherent point-of-view. But when a people who claim to be Christian deny the existence of the Holy Spirit—the very existence of whom is crucial to the existence and nature of the Christian faith—then we have a people whose Christianity is superficial, compromised, and inconsistent. Perhaps you can say that Americans are religious, but the profile painted by these statistics suggests that most adults cannot be described as informed about the Christian faith they claim.”


Against this backdrop, the Bible portrays a people who know who and what they believe: “Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12). Ellen White gives us our marching orders: “But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines, and the basis of all reforms” (The Great Controversy, p. 595).

No relativism here—only the solid Rock.
Peppermint Patty Christians

It's just a newspaper cartoon, but it's profound. It shows one of the Peanuts characters, Peppermint Patty, talking with the school principal. Someone else has just been named “Best Student.”

Regular readers of this strip know that Peppermint Patty is the girl who sleeps through class most of the time and offers incorrect or inappropriate answers to questions when she's awake. She's anything but the best student.

But Peppermint Patty asks, “Was I second, or maybe third?” When she hears that she was about 400th on the list, she rationalizes, “Probably a lot closer than it sounds, isn’t it?”

As usual, Charles Shulz gives us an important insight into human nature. Peppermint Patty wants to be recognized, to be perfect. Her life and her desires do not match, but she still desires to be told she is good.

Likewise, we long to be told we are good—whether we are or not. We ask to graduate from high school even if we can’t read a job application blank, much less fill it out. We ask to be found not guilty in traffic court even if the radar caught us speeding.

We look for someone else to shoulder the blame.

The good news is that there is Someone else to shoulder the blame, Someone else who took our blame and shame on His lacerated shoulders. Jesus carried a great deal more than a cross on His way to Golgotha; He carried humanity’s guilt as well. When Jesus died at Calvary, He paid the penalty for all our sins.

That’s what Paul meant when he wrote to the Christians in Rome: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1, NRSV). Paul doesn’t mean we haven’t done anything wrong. He means that we can count on Jesus to have paid the penalty.

It’s kind of like getting a traffic ticket for speeding. You can go to court and say the police officer had a grudge against you. You can argue that the state trooper was trying to reach some quota of tickets for the month. You can say you were in a hurry because you had to get to a wedding on time.

In all those excuses, you’re saying that you were speeding.

You have another option. You can ask the judge for mercy. You can say, “I was wrong. By speeding I was endangering my life and the lives of others on the road. I am sorry.”

That’s the only way to enter the celestial court. Ask the Judge’s forgiveness. We have the promise that He’ll say, “You are forgiven. My Son already has paid the penalty for your wrongdoing.”

No condemnation.

But that’s not the end of the story. If you continue to speed, you’ll be back in traffic court soon. The judge hopes that by showing you mercy you will be a better driver, more considerate of others on the highway, more prone to follow the rules.

So it is in the celestial court. My Judge wants me to live a forgiven life. The special genius of the Seventh-day Adventist message is that we understand both the grace to be forgiven and the grace to live victoriously.

I listened to a presentation by an astute speaker at a banquet several years ago. I’m sure he had something important to say. I’m certain I could have gained a lot from paying attention to his message.

But I was too distracted by a piece of asparagus stuck in his teeth—right between the incisor and the bicuspid. My attention focused on that little green blob, and I didn’t hear what he said.

Some Christians talk about Jesus in glowing terms. They say they love Him. But their lives deny His power. They may be proud of a new car or an academic degree. But they may not accept people of all races as genuine brothers and sisters in Christ. They may have lifestyle habits that are incompatible with Christianity. They’ve got a blob of asparagus in their witness.

The world is full of Peppermint Patty Christians. They compare themselves with others instead of with Jesus. They say their lives are close to the perfect standard, but they can’t say that they are close to Jesus.

I don’t mind if I rank 400th—or even 400,000,000th—in the kingdom of heaven. I just want to be there.

Kermit Netteburg is assistant to the president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, with special assignments in communication.
GIVE & TAKE

SUMMER CAMP PHOTOS
Got any great snapshots of summer camp? Send prints/slides, captions, and Social Security number to Summer Camp Photos at the Give & Take address below. The winning photo (voted by the Review editorial staff) will receive $100. Then this winter we’ll print the winning photo (and others) in Give & Take—because winter’s the best time to think about summer camp!

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ADVENTIST LIFE
Our daughter Laura always surveys our evening meal and usually voices her opinion of the various vegetables.
During one dinner and after pre-meal prayer, she politely bowed her head and prayed, “Dear Jesus, please help my trip through this asparagus. Amen.”
—Nancy Gervais, Milford, Michigan

One Sabbath my friend took her 4-year-old neighbor girl to church with her. Unaccustomed to attending, the child viewed the activities around her with wide-eyed excitement.
When the baptismry curtain opened and a few seconds lapsed before the pastor and candidate appeared, the little girl clapped her hands and exclaimed, “Oh, when do the puppets come out?”
—Marybeth Gessele, Gaston, Oregon

ADVENTIST QUOTES
“If you don’t know where you are going, any road will get you there.”
—Bert Connell, Ph.D., R.D., at the Vegetarian Nutrition Conference, Loma Linda, California

“Stop worrying about the gifts you don’t have and use the ones God has given you.”
—Elder Charles Bradford, retired NAD president, to attendees at the Bay Area Adventist Convocation, St. Petersburg, Florida

“What earthly reason would there be for Jesus to come the first time if He wasn’t going to come the second time?”
—Elder Robert Spangler, at the Kentucky-Tennessee camp meeting

“Goodbye, goodbye, be always kind of true . . .”
—a cradle roller singing “Sabbath School Is Over” at the Battle Ground, Washington, church

IMAGES OF CAMBODIA
SIGHT TO SEE: Thirty people from the College-dale, Ten-nessee, church spent four days last Christmas building a church in the Svay Rieng Province in Cambodia. On Sabbath a couple dozen curious village children crowded into the room or peered through windows to watch Cambodia Attached District director Dan Walter baptize 12 people.

REFLECTING ON THE MEKONG:
While ferrying across the Mekong River, Sherrie Platt photographed this Cambodian sitting on a van. Reflected in his glasses is the College-dale church mission team.
I’ll grant that it’s an unusual courtroom here on the great paving stones, here beneath an open sky lit up by golden shafts of early sunlight. Sparrows and pigeons wheel in and out, troubled by things we can’t see. Children clutch their parents and stare at the proceedings, sad beyond belief.

We expect something so momentous as a trial, especially a capital trial, to happen in some enclosed space—some richly appointed room paneled with oak or cherry, complete with gates and doors and flags and high benches. We expect a court reporter at the front dispassionately recording every syllable of testimony. Somewhere there should be a jury, eyes averted, listening to evidence. Somewhere there should be a Bible on which witnesses swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

But not today—not in this place. Soldiers stand at the ready, half hoping for some disturbance that will give them an excuse to use their truncheons. Dogs are worrying some meaty bone to death at the edge of the crowd, eager to crack the marrow of what once was a life. Religious people and leading citizens scream and yell like frenzied madmen when it seems the case will not go as they wish.

I’ll grant you that it’s an unusual courtroom. But not everything is unexpected mind you. For even here—outdoors in a great stone courtyard, in the middle of the Antonia Fortress—we still have a prisoner and a judge. We still have one who is accused and one who will mete out justice. We still have one who stands on trial for his life and one who holds the power of life and death in his very hands.

The question is—which is which? Who is prisoner and who is judge? Who is accused and who will decide? Be careful, now; it may be more complex than it appears. This case is one that bears watching.

Well, you say, it’s very apparent who is prisoner and who is judge. The prisoner is there—the one without the shirt, the one with his hands tied behind his back. He’s the one with the blood dripping from his mouth and with the eye that’s swollen shut and blue. He’s the one whose back is lacerated beyond recognition. He’s the one whose one good eye is nonetheless taking in every detail of his trial.

And that one over there—he has to be the judge. Clean-shaven, toga pressed, immaculately fresh in a sea of unwashed overnight faces and sooty hands. He looks the part of a judge, for sure—a striking chin, a handsome face, an aura about him that says he is used to being a leader. He walks across the pavement with the confident stride of a man who knows that the world will bend to his whim.

A look from him and the centurions flinch. A motion of his hand and servants scurry to bring pillows for a back he

**Who Is Prisoner, Who Is Judge?**

The trial of Jesus has a deeper message.

BY BILL KNOTT
injured in some far-off military adventure. He is business—all business—for he wears the ring once given him by Tiberius Caesar himself. Here in this far-off corner of the empire, here in the midst of scheming priests and wild-eyed revolutionaries, he seems an island of civilization and culture. You can’t get tobas that white and pressed in the laundries of Jerusalem.

So which is prisoner and which is judge? A foolish question, you say. Can there be any doubt? That one, over there. He’s the prisoner—the bleeding, half-naked one.

Stories have it that he’s a sometime carpenter turned preacher from Galilee. Of late he’s created quite a stir in Judea, rumors swirling at every step. Some claim he has miraculous powers, that blind people see and lame people leap when he touches them. Lepers insist he healed them of their disease, and grudgingly the priests agree that the disease appears to have vanished. Thousands claim that once he fed them from the bread and fish in a little boy’s lunch.

One incredible rumor even has it that he raised the dead to life: a little girl up north, a young man from the village of Nain, a friend named Bethany. He certainly doesn’t look the part, not now anyway, not having been whipped and beaten, sagging under the weight of some monstrous something that seems to be pushing him toward the pavement. Whatever people claim he was, whatever stories they spin to give this rustic wood-carver some mythic reputation, now he is just a prisoner at the bar, a wounded, weary prisoner at the bar.

And that one over there, he’s undoubtedly the judge. He’s governor of Judea, after all—or more correctly, prefect of the province of Judea. He lives in a sun-splashed palace on the coast in Caesarea and makes no secret of the fact that he hates these semi-annual trips to Jerusalem to decide the capital cases. A crucifixion here, hard labor in the mines there, a sentence of 10 years in the galleys—he hands out blessings after the synagogue service on Sabbath.

He seems to take a special pleasure in the cruelty he can fashion, as if he has some dark, nefarious gift for picking the punishment that will most torture the one he sentences. He sends the wild, roaming revolutionaries to the static, agonizing, six-day death upon a cross. He sends the poets and the dreamers down to mines beneath the surface, where they will never hear a birdsong or feel the play of wind. He takes the family man and sends him a half world away, under lash and whip, to a galleon hauling wine and leather. He knows what only some men know—he knows what will break a man and crush his spirit and reduce his self-esteem to nothing or next to nothing. That one there, he’s the judge.

Jesus, they call him, the prisoner there. Jesus of Nazareth—a mild-mannered type who looks as though the world could never be good enough for him. From stories that we hear, the world will never be good enough for him. What impossible things he expects of us—that we should turn the other cheek, that we should walk the extra mile, that we should bless those who curse us, and pray for every enemy. He’s hardly a man of his times, you know. The times are anything but gentle and peaceable.

Zealots swarm over back roads, slit throats and stealing weapons. Tax collectors swarm over the citizenry, blackmailing little people into exorbitant payments. Soldiers take what they want—in women, in wine, in land, in lust—and anger starts the violent cycle all over again.

And yet he persists, this carpenter from Galilee, this idealistic dreamer on trial for his life. Somewhere on the edges of the crowd you see his followers, half-hidden behind their hands, turbans taken down to cover faces. What will it mean to them when he is taken, as he will certainly be taken, and crucified? Will all this popular enthusiasm subside? Will fishermen go back to cleaning nets and carpenters return to sawing wood? Will housewives leave these strange new notions of salvation and resume baking bread and mending clothes? Will children pick up games of “roll the hoop” and “chase the dog” and stop their cry for “stories, please—tell me more stories, please”?

Pontius Pilate, they call him, prefect of the province of Judea. An ambitious man for sure, not particularly noble by birth, but useful to the people born his betters. He knew how to make them indebted to him, how to do the little favors that made them look good to the emperor, how to arrange for the finest marble when they built their country homes.

And they had rewarded him handsomely. They had said a good word for him to Tiberius himself. And one day, wonder of wonders, he awoke to read an imperial proclamation that gave him absolute authority in Judea, this darkened little corner of the empire. Not that he wasn’t grateful, mind you, but he would have chosen something closer to Rome—someplace where the culture was advanced, where athletes played at sport and men and women played at love.

But then, he had to start somewhere, and straightening out a troubled land like Judea was just the thing to get the attention of a grateful emperor. What was it that the carpenter had said at the end of one of his stories? “You have been faithful over a few things. I will make you ruler over many things.” That was a motto even Pilate could live by.

Prisoner and judge. Two neatly balanced roles. Two roles that take on meaning only in the presence of the other. Without a judge, the prisoner would be only a captive, waiting for something, but certainly not for justice. Without a prisoner the judge would be a man without a function, a useless symbol of the state. Are we sure now which is which? Are we sure that we have not been deceived?

Stories have it that the carpenter calls himself a king, but not in the usual sense of the word. “My kingdom is not from this world,” he says. “If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews”
(John 18:36, NRSV). It’s a piece of logic no one can gainsay, for who would ever build a kingdom on the vacillating ones who call themselves his followers? Oh, there was a bold one in the group who swung a sword, and there was one who thought himself clever with money, but hardly the type of men on which to build a government. His kingdom, if it exists at all, must be a different sort of place.

He calls himself amazing things, and he does so with a quiet confidence that unnerves all his opponents. “I am the Way,” he says. “I am the Truth, the Life.” “I am the Good Shepherd,” he declares. “I am the Living Water. I am the Bread of heaven. I am the Light of all the world.” These aren’t little titles, whatever they mean. He clearly thinks that he is more than just a 33-year-old ex-tradesman from the north.

He dares to call the God of heaven his Father—and not just Father, but even “Daddy”—as though the two were on the closest terms. He calls himself God’s Son and regularly asserts that he is the chosen one of God. His claims about himself are absolutely breathtaking—for who but a madman, or God’s Son, would ever claim to be God’s Son?

And Pilate here, perhaps he too deserves a second look. The freedom that we see in him may not be all it seems. True enough, he holds the power of life and death—a minute or two from now he’ll send this carpenter outside the walls to die the most horrible of deaths. But is Pilate judge or is he prisoner? Is he the independent man of action, or is he the captive of the special interests, the little pressure groups, the people in high places who know where all the bodies are buried?

We’ve watched how skillfully the priests have handled him here in his court, where he is supposedly the sole authority. They tell him what he must do, and he complains that it is not his jurisdiction. He prepares to set the prisoner free, but recants when they cry for blood. He offers them a choice between this Jesus and a despicable murderer, and so completely have they outfoxed him that he ends up having to let the murderer go free. He orders Jesus beaten and abused, hoping to incite some pity in those stony hearts, but all his strategies backfire.

He declares he finds no fault in Jesus, but they will not accept that verdict. He says he is the friend of Caesar, but all they have to do is threaten to report him to Tiberius, and he crumbles like a man of action, or is he the captive of greed. Though today we see Pilate in his glory, in his dark, conniving power, on that day we will see him as the prisoner he always was—a prisoner of pride, a prisoner of self, a prisoner of doubt, a prisoner of greed.

Though today we see Jesus in His humiliation, in His shame, in His blood and sweat and tears, on that day we will see Him as the God He has always been—King of kings, Lord of lords, Judge of judges, the One in whom all things hold together.

“So that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10, 11, NIV).

In Pilate we see how pathetic a man can be when he loses claim to his own soul.

The carpenter here, should he be right, will one day judge the living and the dead. If he is who he says he is, the day will come when all the people who have ever lived will come to him for judgment. Little people, common like him, will come to him and hold out callused hands and ask him for his justice and for fairness. Children—beaten, starved, abused, mistreated—will call out to the one who has already said that their victimizers deserve the bottom of the sea. Women, relegated to second status, will ask him to restore them to the equality for which he made them, and he will gladly do it. Aged ones, their eyes dimmed but not their hope, will plead with him to give them back their dignity. Refugees will turn to him, and he will give them a home and a country. Martyrs, faithful to the last, will cry out from beneath the altar, “How long, O Lord, how long?” And the Lord of all eternal justice will answer them, “Soon and very soon.”

And those like Pilate will go running on that day, praying that the hills will fall on them and save them from the wrath of the Lamb. Every oppressor who has ever lived, every tyrant who has ever ruled, every judge who has ever perverted justice or given a false verdict or sold out for money will be weighed in the balances and found wanting.

On that day judges like Pilate will go pleading for the mercy they never gave. They’ll go begging for the kindness they never merited. On that day Pilate and his friends will answer to a greater Judge than they have yet imagined—one who can’t be turned away, One who can’t be bought off, One who can’t be influenced, One who can’t be obstructed.

Though today we see one in his power and the other in his passion, on that day it will be seen who really is the prisoner and who really is the judge. Though today we see Pilate in his glory, in his dark, conniving power, on that day we will see him as the prisoner he always was—a prisoner of pride, a prisoner of self, a prisoner of doubt, a prisoner of greed.

Though today we see Jesus in His humiliation, in His shame, in His blood and sweat and tears, on that day we will see Him as the God He has always been—King of kings, Lord of lords, Judge of judges, the One in whom all things hold together.

Bill Knott is an associate editor of the Adventist Review.
GINA: It’s time to reevaluate the role of the pastor’s wife.

Much talk has been brewing lately over the role of the minister’s wife. This subject is not new, for Ellen White had much to say about it. Throughout her writings she spoke of the wife’s strong influence for both good and evil. She further stated that the pastor’s wife should be a “colaborer” with her husband in assisting with the winning of souls. She specifically mentioned that there are some people only the wife can reach for God’s kingdom (see Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, pp. 449-454).

Though I love and respect Ellen White dearly, I think it’s time to reevaluate the role of the pastor’s wife.

In today’s world most ministers’ wives are highly educated—some even more than the minister himself. Is she supposed to give up her “calling” as a nurse, a doctor, a secretary, a teacher, or even her nonprofessional career to be a colaborer with her spouse? And what about those who become pastors after they are married? Does the wife have to “give up” her life because her husband has decided to change his career?

Why can’t the wife witness as successfully within her own field? More important, who’s supposed to pay the bills—as the salaries of pastors are often so low that they cannot support the family on his salary alone and still have a decent house, kids in church school, a car, and decent clothes?

Granted, there are some who are not self-sacrificing and who prefer to have “the best of everything,” but they are few and far between. If we believe that wives are to “take up their crosses” and give up their careers to be “colaborers” with their spouses, shouldn’t the conference pay them to do so?

Ellen White set aside a portion of her tithe for women who were actively spreading the gospel but whom the conference didn’t have the funds to pay (see “Wages for Women Doing Gospel Work,” Manuscript Releases, vol. 12, pp. 160-167). And the Bible states, “The labourer is worthy of his hire” (Luke 10:7).

I’m not advocating that anyone else do this, for the tithe is sacred. But the record speaks for itself. Maybe if the salaries of the pastors were increased, some of the wives would be free to work as colaborers (another discussion for another time and place).

LORETTA: What’s to reevaluate?

Gina, your first paragraph fully supports my point. Thank you! Now let me address your other arguments point by point.

Who are you to evaluate the role of the preacher’s wife? I don’t mean this in a mean or malicious way; I’m just curious as to how you select which areas you’ll agree with Ellen White and which you won’t. I can see the letters already . . . but her counsel is pretty clear on this matter: wives of ministers are called to be colaborers with their husbands in ministry. Not separate ministries, but the same ministry (see Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, pp. 449-454).

As for your next point, we spent an entire quarter discussing spiritual gifts in Sabbath school, so there’s no question that pastors’ wives have their own gifts, talents, and abilities—as we all do. The issue is that Ellen White’s counsel on the role of the minister’s wife states that the wife’s major role is to support her husband’s ministry—which is really her ministry.

Truth be told, if wives and husbands (pastors and non-pastors alike) worked more closely together, instead of carving out individual lives and ministries, there would be fewer failed marriages.

As to your fourth paragraph; yes, pastors’ wives who are truly colaborers should certainly be paid full salaries.

Having said all that, I know I’m opening a can of worms—but in many ways this issue is all about priorities. For all the pastors’ families who are just “getting by,” I know just as many who drive the best and most expensive cars, wear the latest styles, and live in the biggest and nicest houses.

Pastors must depend on God to provide for them and give them what they need. They mustn’t ignore their very high calling in order to heed the call of the boss or, worse, the mall.

* This terminology is not meant as a slight to female pastors. It simply allows us to focus exclusively on a single part of the issue.

What do you believe? And why? Gina and Loretta challenge you to read your Bible, know what you believe, and Take a Stand . . . for Jesus.
When I get together with friends from high school and college, one question almost always arises as we reminisce: Are so and so still married? Like it or not, divorce is a very real part of our society and our church. The United States has the highest rate of divorce of any major industrialized nation. Fifty percent of all first marriages end in divorce, as do 50 percent of all second marriages. But the problem isn't limited to North America. In 1993 Great Britain saw 299,197 couples marry and 165,000 couples divorce.

Since the statistics for Seventh-day Adventists aren't dramatically different, divorce presents an ever-increasing dilemma for the church. Much as we would like to be able to say that every bride and groom “live happily ever after,” it just doesn't happen that way.

While the church's stated policy concerning divorce and remarriage has been clear, the application of that policy has been far from uniform. And of recent times the policy has been increasingly ignored altogether—largely because pastors and church boards often feel it oversimplifies an extremely complex problem.

What's the Problem?

The Adventist Church's long-held position on divorce and remarriage is based primarily on the response of Jesus to a question by the Pharisees: “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?” (Matt. 19:3). Jesus took a hard line: “I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery” (verse 9).

Based on Christ's words, Seventh-day Adventists teach that sexual misbehavior is the only justifiable reason for divorce and remarriage. No other misconduct, however grievous, provides "biblical" grounds. But is it that simple?

Typically at a Christian wedding the bride and groom commit to a vow that states: Do you solemnly promise before God and those gathered here that you will have and hold, love, honor, and cherish [name of bride/groom] in sickness and in health, in prosperity or in adversity, and, forsaking all others, keep yourself only unto her/him so long as you both shall live?"

Note that the marriage vow has two aspects. First is the solemn promise, made with God Himself as a witness, to do something—to have, to hold, to love, to honor, to cherish—as long as life lasts. This is the active part of the vow.

But the vow has a passive component; there's a don't do clause as well. That clause promises to refrain from all others. It requires no specific action, but rather a lack of action. The marriage vow is a promise, a contract, a covenant. And the Bible teaches clearly that contracts are to be honored. Speaking honestly is of such major importance that when...
God listed His 10 most important behavioral expectations for humans, truthfulness made the list (Ex. 20:16).

Ironically, in practice we as Adventists focus almost exclusively on the latter, passive part of the marriage vow: the abstaining from all others. We don’t make an issue of the promise to do something actively. In fact, the passive clause and the expression “marriage vow” have become interchangeable.

Thus a man or woman can blatantly neglect, cruelly demean, or even physically brutalize his or her spouse, and the likelihood of church disciplinary action is minimal because the “marriage vow” hasn’t been violated.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual states: “It is recognized that sometimes marriage relations deteriorate to the point where it is better for husband and wife to separate. . . . In many such cases the custody of the children, the adjustment of property rights, or even personal protection may make necessary a change in marriage status. In such cases it may be permissible to secure what is known in some countries as a legal separation. Unfortunately, Adventist theology and policy focus almost exclusively on Christ’s remarriage prohibition and not enough on Paul’s obligations-within-marriage admonition. In practice, we’re far more anti-remarriage than anti-divorce. Yet was that what Christ intended by His comment in Matthew 19?

The Real Question

In Christ’s day a debate was raging between two schools of ethical/theological thought. One group, the school of Hillel, argued that the laws of Moses gave a man the right to divorce his wife for virtually any reason whatsoever. The opposition group, the school of Shammai, argued that only sexual infidelity constituted valid grounds for divorce. Not content with merely debating among themselves, they went to see what Jesus would say.

Of the options before Him, Jesus chose the more spiritually demanding. But was He laying down comprehensive guidelines for divorce and remarriage? I believe He was merely trying to drive home to His listeners the far-reaching obligations of marriage, and He succeeded. His position was so demanding that it stunned His disciples into saying, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry” (Matt. 19:10).

I would suggest that in reading Jesus’ response to the Pharisees, we have, in essence, added italics that shouldn’t be there. Jesus didn’t say “He who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery.” Rather He said, “He who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery.”

Jesus wasn’t saying that divorce was acceptable as long as there was no remarriage. A Jewish man wasn’t likely to divorce a woman and remain single. He was going to divorce because he planned to find a better wife. In Matthew 19 Christ addresses divorce and remarriage as a single package. Yet we have tried to separate the two and give each a relative weight.

I would suggest that if there is biblical justification for divorce, there is also justification for remarriage. Conversely, if the remarriage isn’t justified, neither is the divorce. Jesus wasn’t as anti-remarriage as He was anti-divorce. And He wasn’t as anti-divorce as He was pro-marriage. His concern is that each couple experience the joy, fulfillment, and unflagging commitment that God designed for marriage.

Unfortunately, our emphasis has been too much on divorce rights (“Do I have biblical grounds to end this
marriage and remarry?"
and not enough on marital responsibilities
("Am I working to honor the vow of
doing—and not just the vow of
abstaining—that I made on my wed-
day?"). Our emphasis has been
too much on ascertaining guilt after
the fact rather than on upholding the
high standard God has for marriage
while the union still exists.

I don't wish to downplay the
importance of sexual intimacy
between a husband and wife. Nor do
I want to soft-pedal the absolute
need for sexual fidelity. However,
sex is but one aspect of the union
we call marriage. Our traditional
approach has, unintentionally to be
sure, made sex the "be all" and "end
all." Actually, it isn't even just sex.
It's abstinence from illicit sex: if
you've abstained, you're OK, irre-
respective of how you've deported
yourself within the marriage in
other ways.

Because of this emphasis, we
label the nonadulterous spouse the
"innocent party" and the adulterous
spouse the "guilty party" when mar-
riages break up over sexual infidel-
ity. But we imply there's no question
of innocence and guilt in marriages
that break up where there was no
sexual infidelity as long as there's no
remarriage, even though one spouse
may actually be in ongoing danger
from the other! I'm not calling for
more finger-pointing and labeling. I'm
simply saying there are ways other
than sexual infidelity to violate the
marriage vow.

This Is Reality
As a pastor I've encountered
numerous situations in which a man
was physically and emotionally abusive
to his family (though men aren't the
only ones capable of such behavior).
Not only did his wife and children
cower from fear of his brutal physical
assaults; they cowered because their
self-esteem was in tatters as a result of
his equally cruel verbal assaults. And
no amount of pastoral intervention
seemed to make any difference. But
granted the man's personality, the like-
lihood of his committing adultery was
all but nil. That wasn't the realm
where his temptations lay.

Must the woman in such a situa-
tion daily subject herself to abusive
treatment or forever remain celibate if
she is going to enjoy a good relation-
ship with the church? Must children

in their formative years be deprived of
a stepfather who could help provide
for their sustenance and be a positive
role model?

In the situation in which a man has
committed every evil imaginable
except adultery, are there only three
options for his spouse: to live with the
incertant pain of staying in the mar-
riage; to face the long-term loneliness
and hardship of separation or divorce
without remarriage; or to risk being dis-
fellowshipped for divorce and remar-
riage without "biblical" grounds?

Our all-but-total focus on the sexual-
 fidelity component of marriage has led
to another sad scenario. In cases in
which divorce is for reasons other than
adultery, church policy says that each

partner's right to remarry is based solely
on the marital/sexual-behavior status of
the other.

What results is a pitiful game of
"Let's see who can refrain from mar-
riage/sex the longest." The one who
gives in first automatically becomes the
"guilty party," and the other person is
free to marry without fear of ecclesi-
astical retribution. The divorced
couple's relative contribution to the
original marital breakup is no longer
even a part of the equation.

It makes no difference that the
man beat his wife daily—at least he
never committed adultery! Now, by
virtue of the wife's being the first
to remarry, she has become an
adulterer, giving him biblical
grounds to remarry, making her a
candidate for being disfellow-
shipped, and making his new wife a
potential recipient of the same bru-
tality inflicted upon the first wife!

My intention is not to open
the door for easy divorce; rather it is to highlight the
practical problems in administering
our current policy. I hope we would
all take far more seriously the
covenant to which we commit our-
selves at marriage. Just being against
remarriage isn't enough. Just being
against divorce isn't enough. We
need to be decidedly pro-marriage
in all its aspects.

We must realize that simply abstain-
ing from sexual relationships with oth-
ers doesn't fulfill the marriage covenant.
And we also must recognize that at
some point, ignoring our promise to
have, hold, love, honor, and cherish
must be considered as much a violation
of the marriage vow as ignoring our
obligation to sexual fidelity.

* Scripture references in this article are from
the New International Version.

James Coffin is pastor of the
Markham Woods Seventh-
day Adventist Church in
Orlando, Florida.
READY, AIM, . . . MISFIRE?

Have we put Western Christianity on a leash so it sits quietly in a corner of the church like a well-behaved pet, giving no offense?

Where are the lions' dens and the energy of Pentecost and the prophetic calls for justice and the apostles shaking up cities? Are our churches so comfortable, our potlucks so filling, our Sabbath afternoon naps so relaxing, that we've lost the fire?

Søren Kierkegaard describes a mock battle in which the troops march onto the field. The battle cry sounds, the muskets fire, the cannons thunder. It's just like war, except for one thing. There's no danger.

So it is, says Kierkegaard, with merely "playing" Christianity. There's beautiful music, sweet fellowship, dynamic sermons. But one thing's missing—the danger.

Global Mission throws danger back into our mission. It confronts us with the unreached millions. It pulls our focus onto the "dangerous" unknown—outside our areas of comfort. For most of us it's the danger of trying something new, sacrificing precious time, or giving more than we've budgeted. For others, it's literally life or death.

Is it time to let our Christian experience "off the leash"?

—Gary Krause, Global Mission communication director

TELL ME STRAIGHT

Some 4,000 languages are still without a single word of Scripture. More than a billion people are unable to read the Scriptures that do exist in their languages.


HOPE AMONG THE BOMBS

DANGER ON THE FRONT LINE: Antony Alexander, his wife, Saratha, and their five children daily risk danger from the civil war between government and Tamil forces in northern Sri Lanka. Formerly a Global Mission pioneer, Antony is now a pastor in Vavuniya, in the danger zone. He wouldn't choose anywhere else. This is the time, he says, when the people need spiritual help.

The Alexanders are no strangers to war. A few years ago during a mortar attack they slept around the piano in the church in Jaffna, northern Sri Lanka, where they felt they would be safer. Suddenly feeling impressed to leave, Antony rushed his family out. Five minutes later a bomb fell on the church, crushing the piano.

Antony first began work as a Global Mission pioneer in Hatton, in the Sri Lankan Hill country, where there was only one Seventh-day Adventist. He started five churches in the area and baptized 175 people. More than half of the Global Mission pioneers in Sri Lanka today first became Adventists through Antony's ministry as a pioneer.

UNDERSTANDING OUR MUSLIM FRIENDS

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HOW WAS I TO KNOW?" JILL SOBBED.

I kept handing her dry tissues to replace the wet ones piling up in my office trash can. "I thought Philosophy of Religion would be a great class for a Christian to take," she sniffled. "When the teacher asked us to raise our hands if we believed in God, I raised mine. Now every class period he makes fun of me and other Christians. He says that humans invented religion to explain natural phenomena. He even tests us on these 'proofs' that God doesn't exist."

I knew the teacher—an atheist whose avowed purpose for 25 years had been to strip his students of their faith in God. I encouraged Jill, helped her recognize proof of God's existence in her own life, helped her develop responses to her professor's arguments, prayed with her, and sent her back into the lion's den.

My wife, Margaret, and I both teach English and Bible at state schools, she at the Allentown campus of Penn State and I at 7,000-student Kutztown University, two hours west of Philadelphia. Among our job benefits is free college tuition for our three children. It's a valuable benefit, but we won't be using it. We'll be sending our children to an Adventist college or university. Here's why.

The Price Is Right

A frequent argument in favor of sending students to state schools is that state schools are cheaper. In fact, they're not very much cheaper. At Kutztown fees for tuition, room and board, and other costs for state residents are nearly $8,000 a year. And for out-of-state students these fees are around $11,000. At Penn State they're even higher.

Most students who want to attend an Adventist school will be able to find one that offers enough student aid to match or beat those prices. A state school is significantly cheaper only for those students who commute—especially if they attend community colleges.

Life in the Majors

Another argument is that state schools offer a larger number of majors. It's true that there are some academic majors not available in Adventist colleges—though of course your local state college may not offer them either. It's also true that laboratory facilities in Adventist schools may be somewhat inferior to those at major universities.

But many of these more specialized fields are better studied on the graduate level. For example, a major in physics, biology, or chemistry, available at most Adventist colleges, may be better preparation for graduate school than would be an undergraduate degree in particle physics or genetics. As for the lab equipment at major universities, much of it is reserved for professors or graduate students.
Quality, Not Quantity

Another argument is that state universities have better teachers. It’s definitely true that they are chosen from a larger pool of applicants, but that’s no guarantee of quality teaching. Most of the elite universities aim to hire great researchers, regardless of whether they can teach.

Professors at major universities tend to publish more books and articles and be more famous for their research. These famous researchers, though, rarely teach undergraduate courses and are seldom available in their offices.

Many undergraduates at major universities complain that most of their classes are either huge—with hundreds of students—or taught by graduate students or temporary teachers.

Students learn more from a teacher who will spend time with them and encourage and care for them than from famous but unapproachable professors. And it’s easier to find a sympathetic mentor on an Adventist campus.

The Spiritual Dimension

What about the student uninterested in spiritual things? I’ve heard parents say, “My son doesn’t care about God or the church. Why should I waste my money sending him to an Adventist college?”

Well, when I attended an Adventist college, I didn’t go to church if I could help it. I was an atheist for several years, “enjoying” the pleasures of sin for a rather long season. But I attended required Week of Prayer meetings, hearing the likes of Morris Venden, Tony Campolo, and William Loveless. I was surrounded by Christians, even though I scoffed at them. I avoided Bible classes as much as possible, yet I learned from the Bible classes I was required to take. Even in my other classes, the Adventist worldview was omnipresent.

Statistics show that those who have the benefit of an Adventist education are more likely to become productive members of the church as adults.

“Train up a child in the way he should go,” says the Bible promise, “and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). It may take 20 years for that promise to be fulfilled, but don’t give up. God doesn’t.

Worldview matters. On the secular campus, Darwin rules. Naturalism is not only assumed; it’s taught as if it were a religious faith.

A couple years ago the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at my university, a biologist and an active Roman Catholic, called me to his office because a student group I sponsor had invited noted microbiologist and Creation scientist

Scholarship Alert!

BY KIM A. JOHNSON

I dialed very deliberately, then held my breath. A gentle, upbeat voice answered, “Hello, this is the National Merit Scholarship Corporation. May we help you?”

Could they help me? In about six months our daughter would be entering college, and her mother and I would be entering Penny Pincher City. Tuition, dorm, meals, books, fees, transportation; our bank account shuddered at the thought. There are various college grants and loans available, but it nonetheless seemed inevitable that we’d have to dig pretty deep.

In our planning, we thought wistfully about some type of National Merit Scholarship. They’re hard to come by, but they hold the promise of more financial help than most people only dare to imagine: up to four years of free tuition.

Our phone conversation continued. “My daughter has entered your scholarship program, and I was just wondering where the selection process stood,” I said.

“Well,” the woman replied perkily, “our committee made up the list of finalists and sent it out to the schools just a short time ago. Hang on; I’ll go see if your daughter made it.”

Our family had originally heard about the National Merit Scholarship from my daughter’s eighth-grade teacher, Mr. Forrester. At parent-teacher conferences Mr. Forrester took the time to clue us, and others, in. “This can be a great opportunity, and I want to be sure you know what to expect,” he counseled earnestly. “In the fall of your son or daughter’s junior year, the high school will usually adminis-
Duane Gish to speak on campus.

“No real scientists believe in Creation,” the dean told me.

“I think I could name a few,” I answered.

“Well, none of the science teachers here believe in Creation,” he stated. “In fact, we would never hire a scientist who believes in Creation.”

Professors are paid to profess, to teach what they believe. There is often an attempt at or a pretense of objectivity, but if there are no underlying beliefs, there is no passion in the teaching. Professors assume that college students are able to weigh evidence and decide for themselves.

There’s a substantial difference between taking a class from a professor who believes that not only life but economics, politics, and human relations are evolving and purposeless, and taking a class from a professor who believes that we are created in the image of God, that there is a great controversy between Christ and Satan going on, and that Jesus is coming again.

**Pros and Cons**

It’s possible to find Christ and draw close to Him on a secular campus, but it’s not likely—even if one is searching. Likewise, it’s possible to attend an Adventist campus without finding Christ. But if one is searching with an open heart, God is easier to find there.

It’s possible to find alcohol, drugs, promiscuous sex, or disbelief on an Adventist campus. But you have to know where to look. On a secular campus it is self-control and chastity that are hard to find.

It’s possible to find a wonderful Christian spouse on the secular campus. But it’s hard to find an Adventist spouse. Do you want your children or your grandchildren to attend Sabbath school, or Sunday school?

Students everywhere face peer pressure. But only at an Adventist college do peers reinforce the Holy Spirit’s influence to turn students to Jesus.

My wife and I both have doctoral degrees from noted universities. We appreciate the value of a good education. But what could our children possibly gain from a great secular university that could outweigh the possibility of our not spending eternity with them in heaven?

That’s why, God permitting, our children will someday attend the best colleges our money can buy—Adventist colleges.

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_Ed Christian teaches at Kutztown University in Pennsylvania. His last article for the Adventist Review was “Surviving on a Secular Campus,” Jan. 16, 1997._
Why Secularism Attracts Christians, Part 2

Last month we saw that a direct conflict exists between the biblical cosmic perspective that holds God to be the center of all things and the secular perspective that argues for a successful life built around human efforts alone.

Just how does secularism go about attracting Christians?

First let’s notice the distinctives. The Scriptures tell us that the God who formed the universe brought into existence the world we know, forming Adam and Eve in His image through a personal act. That very act distinguishes them from all other forms of life. To humankind alone is given the capacity to understand its origin and to communicate directly with the Creator, an ability made possible by God-given intellect rather than instinct.

God’s plan is to deal personally with His creatures, teaching them who He is and how they relate both to Him and to their environment. They understand their specialness, the unique gifts conferred upon them, and their total dependence on Him. He is the Master Creator, sovereign Lord; they are the stewards placed over a world made totally His by Creation. The picture is one of joy-filled, harmonious dependence.

But with sin’s entrance, Satan launches humans into a trajectory away from God. Privileged talents are turned to selfish purposes. The human race soon severs itself from God to follow a course independent of Him. The foundations of secularism are in place.

When Mussolini was strutting across much of the Mediterranean world, he was asked to explain his swift rise to power. He answered, “I found Europe full of empty throne rooms and simply walked in and took one of them.”

Almost 20 centuries ago the Creator Himself came into this disastrous setting. “When the time had fully come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” (Gal. 4:4, 5, RSV). Taking upon Himself human flesh, He provided the only escape from the cycle of rebellion and death as He assumed the consequences of sin—our revolt that ends in death.

Today He stands at the crossroads to extend a passionate appeal. Sadly, many of us foolishly pass by, charmed with our own intellectual and material achievements, dreaming of yet higher towers we will build on the Plain of Babel, of other gods to place on our thrones.

How can it be that people with Christian backgrounds make such a choice?

Everywhere around us is the constant whirl of human activities. We see, hear, smell, feel, and taste them. But we do not witness the feverish activity at the second level, where the contest between good and evil rages. We know about these activities beyond our senses only through revelation.

Five centuries ago Renaissance thinkers came upon the idea that nature could be captured and manipulated to yield benefits; thus began the age of science, and the age of faith began its steady decline.

By the 1800s science had become an enterprise of human observation, hypothesis, testing, weighing, and measuring, followed by a growing technology. Theory and method rested entirely on the natural and material; the supernatural was systematically excluded.

This kind of modernity underlies the whole of life today: rational, successful—and God-free.

The multiple and undeniable successes of this modern, secular approach exert a magnetic appeal. Often our youth are introduced to exciting new developments within an aggressively secular educational system and media. Denied the cautious insight gained by years of life, they slip—in mind and values—into the secular world. Little wonder such youth may regard religion as irrelevant, for to their naturalistic secular world it is irrelevant.

How can we help? The first line of defense must be an alert membership. Seventh-day Adventist education, whether classroom or pulpit, must offer more than a secular curriculum with attached Bible instruction. The Bible stands diametrically opposed to popular, mainstream secularism. Every believer must distinguish between prevailing secular options and Bible truth. Eternity is at stake.

(Concluded)

Robert S. Folkenberg is president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
Students Claim the Streets for Christ

BY JACK STENGER, Andrews University public information officer

Every Sabbath about 60 to 80 students leave the Andrews University campus in Berrien Springs, Michigan, and head for the streets of Benton Harbor, some 15 miles down the highway.

Amid parking lots strewn with shards of glass, abandoned houses marked with graffiti, and evidence of drug trafficking, the students go door-to-door ministering to the needs of the community. Their activities include health screening services, nursing home visits, and a popular children’s ministry that attracts up to 75 children each week.

“A lot of these kids have never been to church, so we have really seen how God led us to do this,” says Heidi Tower, a sophomore social work major from Grand Ledge, Michigan.

From the very beginning the street ministry has been student led. “All year long we had so many people come up and say, ‘Hey, I want to get involved,’” says William Hurtado, one of the main organizers of the ministry.

Hurtado, a senior communications major from Berrien Springs, Tower, and four other students began the program last September. He says the spark came from a sermon by Dwight Nelson, senior pastor of the Pioneer Memorial church on campus. Nelson had challenged comfortable, middle-class Adventists to do something for their less-fortunate neighbors.

Handing out copies of Steps to Christ was the first activity. From that unrehearsed beginning the ministry soon had a structured, multidimensional approach. Students now work out of a community center, from which they fan out into teams, going door-to-door.

Hurtado gives God all the glory for the way He has blessed their humble efforts. “God has blessed more than we ever imagined, and there’s been so much accomplished, but there’s still so much more that we can do.”

Three Florida Members Share Christ on Radio

BY WALTER MAIER, pastor of the Lake View and Lake Wales Adventist churches in Florida

Three years ago Ocala church members Whalley Leach, Mike Goetz, and Jack Copeland joined forces to bring Christ to the airwaves of Florida.

With sponsorship from the Ocala, Silver Springs Shores, and Lady Lake Adventist churches, the daily half-hour broadcast on radio station WHOF combines the Voice of Prophecy and Quiet Hour programming with Copeland’s friendly, light style.

On the airwaves, Copeland, better
Former GC Vice President Dies

W. Duncan Eva, a retired general vice president of the General Conference, died on July 2 in Clarksville, Maryland.

Born in 1914 in Indwe, South Africa, Eva pursued his education at South Africa’s Helderberg College, Walla Walla College in Washington, and the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, Michigan. He was ordained to the gospel ministry in Bulawayo, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), in 1940.

Eva began his denominational employment as a teacher in South Africa in 1934, but most of his church life was connected with administration in southern Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and Europe. From 1973 until his retirement in 1980 Eva served as general vice president of the General Conference in Washington, D.C.

Eva has been described as “a man with a generous mind,” a “true Christian gentleman,” and as someone who “was humble and willing to admit when the organization made mistakes.”

“I never saw him compromise principle, but I saw him often exercise great compassion,” said Jean Thomas, who knew Eva for more than 50 years. She and her husband served as young missionaries under Eva. After his retirement Eva served his church as ambassador and mediator in a number of sensitive assignments.

Eva is survived by his wife of 60 years, Gloria; his daughter, Marilyn Eva; his son and daughter-in-law, Willmore and Claire Eva; and two grandchildren, Amy Eva-Wood and Jonathan Eva. —Adventist News Network.

Georgia-Cumberland LEs Lead North America

For the past three years Georgia-Cumberland Conference literature evangelists have led the North American Division in conference literature sales, reports Robert Smith, North American Division publishing director.

In the first six months of this year the LEs sold $636,000 worth of literature. The figure is $60,000, or almost 10 percent,
Congregationalism: The Wrong Shaking

BY ANDY NASH, Adventist Review assistant editor

It's simply sad. A couple of our congregations are ducking out from the Adventist umbrella; others threaten the same. They don't seem to leave over truth. This isn't the "shaking" of God's people that Ezekiel and Ellen White wrote about. Most are still God's people—still claiming His grace, still keeping His Sabbaths, still mining His Word.

They leave primarily over money, over a growing frustration with tithe checks sent to who knows where. They look longingly at the wealthy—Willow Creek, Saddleback, the corner nondenominational—and, dreaming dreams, they bolt.

Their behavior, of course, isn't the least bit original. It's 1997: everyone's ditching leadership. The cry of church leadership merely echoes that of national leadership: "We're still relevant."

Further, what's happening to this 150-year-old church is exactly what's supposed to happen to 150-year-old churches. Century after century churches our age have floundered. An identity lost, the fire dies.

No, these congregations and their pastors aren't radical. If they really want to do something radical, they'll stick around . . . not quietly, though. Loudly. We need them to stick around loudly.

Why? Because they're right: Today's Adventist Church must be trimmed. Too much money never finds its way to the front. Too many pastors spend their afternoons licking the stamps that hired help could be licking—

if help could be hired.

The call must be twofold:

Congregationalists: Chill. The grass isn't as green as it looks. Don't repeat history; make history. Swallow your sarcasm. Bring forward your questions. Talk . . . then listen.

Administrators: Listen . . . then talk. Answer the questions. Show why each layer, each position (including, um, mine), is—or isn't—needed, why perceptions are—or aren't—worse than reality. Reach out. Your children are leaving. Reach out.

Can't we work through this? Can't we all just . . . get along?

more than the amount sold during the same period last year.

One important feature of the conference literature program is the 10-week student LE thrust. Last year students sold $72,000 worth of literature in 10 weeks. Though sales figures are not yet available for 1997, students contacted 50,000 homes in the first five weeks of the program, says Georgia-Cumberland publishing director Eugene Juhl.

California Members Open Parole Shelter

Touch of Love Prison Ministries, based in the Southeastern California Conference, recently established the New Beginnings halfway house in Rialto. Founded with Adventist parents in mind, the home is believed to be the first shelter of its type for Adventist parolees on the West Coast of the United States.

The 6- to 12-month live-in program is a safe Christian environment for family members returning from prison. Referrals come from prison volunteers, chaplains, parole officials, and parents.

"We accept only parolees with a spiritual bent," says Michael Ashley, shelter director. "Parolees are told up front that we are affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Smoking and drinking are not allowed. There are daily devotions and Bible study, and residents are expected to attend Sabbath services. Security is tight."

Adventists Go on the Air in Nicaragua

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a new broadcast presence in Nicaragua. Based in Managua, the radio station began airing programs on May 14. The broadcast signal beams to a potential audience of 750,000 people.

The Adventist Church in Nicaragua plans to increase the power of the 20-watt station and move the transmitter to a mountain overlooking the city. "This has been a dream for quite some time," said station manager David Murillo. "The station is supported by local church members and leaders."

Nicaragua becomes the fourth country in Central America to have an Adventist radio station. Stations have already been established in Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Honduras.—AW Recorder.

NAD Sponsors Prayer Conference in Maryland

North American Division Prayer Ministries invites all Adventists to participate in a two-day prayer conference at Sligo Adventist Church in Takoma Park, Maryland, August 15 and 16.

Featured speakers include Ron Halvorsen, author of Prayer Warriors and director of church growth for the Southern Union; Terry Johnsson, Sligo church youth pastor; and Ruthie Jacobsen, NAD prayer ministries coordinator.
**For Your Good Health**

**Yes, Personality Does Count**

Men who dominate conversations and frequently interrupt others are about 60 percent more likely to die of any cause than men with a more relaxed style. A 22-year study identified the behavioral characteristics of verbal competitiveness, loudness, and self-aggrandizement as more prevalent in these “socially dominant” men. Researchers speculate that adopting a more low-key approach to life might reduce potentially damaging stress hormones in the body.—HealthNews.

**Onion Eaters**

Americans are eating an average of 50 percent more onions than 15 years ago, thanks to the increased popularity of ethnic cuisines. While onions and their relatives (garlic, scallions, chives, leeks, and shallots) are only modest sources of vitamins and minerals, they contain many potentially healthful phytochemicals while adding flavor to foods.—UC Berkeley Wellness Letter.

—Compiled by Larry Becker, editor of Vibrant Life, the church’s health outreach journal. To subscribe, contact your ABC or call 1-800-765-6955.

**Adventist Communication Network Broadcasts**

Many programs are planned. Here’s the September lineup. (Call 1-800-ACN-1119 for program, time, and channel information. All times shown are Eastern time.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Program</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 2</td>
<td>ADRA’s World, a news feature highlighting the work of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, is uplinked each Tuesday evening (Sept. 2, 9, 16, 23, 30), 8:00-9:30 p.m., Galaxy 3, channel 23.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 3</td>
<td>First Wednesday, church news, 7:30-9:00 p.m., satellite to be announced.</td>
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**NEWSBREAK**

Attendees will gain new insights that will help improve personal prayer, corporate prayer, Bible study, and witnessing techniques. Sligo Adventist Church is located at 7700 Carroll Avenue in Takoma Park, Maryland.

**News Notes**

✔ **Reaching North America’s 5 million Muslims** will be the focus of the Chai Kanah workshop to be held September 12-16 on Long Island, New York. Workshop participants will learn how to form Chai Kanah (tearooms)—small groups in which “seekers of Allah” study the Koran and the Bible and discover truths of the gospel and the three angels’ messages.

The workshop is sponsored by the North American Division Muslim-Adventist Relations Committee. For more information contact Richard Marker at 516-627-2210.—North American Division.

✔ **Vernon Parmenter**, South Pacific Division associate secretary, was recently elected an associate secretary of the General Conference and director of the Center for Volunteerism. Parmenter replaces D. Ronald Watts, who became Southern Asia Division president.

✔ **Larry Caviness**, Nevada-Utah Conference president, was recently elected president of the Southern California Conference. Caviness replaces Bjarne Christensen, who became an administrative assistant to the North American Division president.

**What’s Upcoming**

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<tr>
<td>Aug. 1</td>
<td>Monthly Emphasis—Spiritual Gifts</td>
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<td>Aug. 9</td>
<td>Oakwood College Offering</td>
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<td>Sept. 6</td>
<td>Men’s Day of Prayer</td>
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<td>Sept. 6-13</td>
<td>Adventist Review emphasis</td>
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<td>Sept. 13-20</td>
<td>Family Togetherness Week</td>
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They Don't Come Anymore

Why were my prayers for my children unanswered?

BY CLAUDETTE TANG-KWOK

FOR MORE than 10 years I've prayed that my two adult children would return to church,” I said to a friend one day, “Why is it that my prayers remain so long unanswered?”

“Why is it that my prayers remain so long unanswered?”

“God has given us all a free will,” she said. “He'll not violate that freedom.”

A true but not very comforting response. I kept on praying, hoping that eventually God would find a way around that free will.

Then I began noticing other parents with the same concern for their children. It was somewhat comforting to learn that others were similarly burdened. But the knowledge that there were so many of us was not comforting. The more pain I heard expressed over these children, the more I felt that something needed to be done. But what?

After praying for some time for guidance about what I could do, I felt impressed to start a prayer group with other willing, concerned parents, with our sole focus to pray that the Holy Spirit would lead our children back into a relationship with Jesus.

Struggling in prayer one night for clarity about how to start such a prayer group, I heard the Holy Spirit whisper, “Why do you want your children to return to church?” The question surprised me. Well, I... h'mmm. Why did I really want them to come back to church? After some soul searching, I made a list of my reasons:

- I wanted them to have eternal life with Jesus.
- If they had a relationship with God, they'd be better equipped to face life's problems.
- I felt that I had failed in raising them because they rejected my religion, and therefore to some extent rejected what I stood for.
- I had failed God by not being as good a parent as I should have been.
- It was uncomfortable admitting to others that my children did not attend church.
- I'd be among those blessed parents whose children remained in the fold.

After considering my list, I saw clearly that my focus was skewed. No wonder my prayers remained unanswered. Most of my reasons had to do with what I wanted or how I felt. The “I” was being worshiped rather than the great I AM.

Obviously, before I could effectively pray for my children, I needed to pray for myself. I needed to restructure my prayers according to His character. Sure, He has given each one of us a free will, but He knows how to work with that free will to bring about our salvation. He’ll not accept my prayers to vio-
Can you think of a way in which you are like a tree?
Are you very tall? Are you green? Do you breathe?

There you go—you breathe, and so do trees. You don't breathe the same way; you have lungs, whereas trees breathe through tiny holes in their leaves and branches.

But you breathe the same thing as trees—air. Well, not exactly the same. Air is made up of two main parts—oxygen and carbon dioxide. Humans breathe the oxygen part, and trees breathe carbon dioxide, which works out perfectly and shows how much plants and animals need each other.

Trees breathe, but they don't think about it, because they don't have brains. You, however, can think about breathing. You can choose to hold your breath when you jump into the swimming pool. You can take a big breath to blow out the candles on your birthday cake.

You can think about breathing if you want to, but you don't have to. There is a part of your brain that lets your breathing be automatic so you don't have to think about it all the time.

So sometimes you think about breathing and sometimes you don't. It's the same with the way you act. Sometimes you think about the things you do and sometimes you don't.

You might think about playing the piano—"Should I practice or not, because if I don't, then I'll do a terrible job at my piano lesson. But I really don't feel like it now . . . blah, blah, blah." Or you might just be walking by the piano and sit down and start playing for fun.

You can also think about being good, or you can just be good. It is very hard to try to be good. You know that.

The apostle Paul knew it too. He wrote in the Bible, "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out" (Rom. 7:18, NIV). It is not our nature to be good. But Jesus will help us. And as we keep trying (and Jesus keeps helping), being good starts to become a part of us so that we don't have to think about it so much. It becomes automatic.

When people do something so much that it seems to be automatic, we say that it is second nature to them. Goodness can become second nature to you. As you learn to be like Jesus, you can go through your life being kind and loving and thoughtful. That will be the kind of person you are. It will be your second nature.

Second Nature

ROSY TETZ

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Flying High

Adventists lead the religious world in global satellite communication.

BY WILLIAM G. JOHNSSON

When John the Revelator saw an angel flying in midheaven with the everlasting gospel just before the second coming of Jesus, how high up was the angel?

Maybe 26,000 miles?

Developments during the past decade have given new meaning to Revelation 14:6, 7—that passage significant to Adventists from our origins. The pace of technological advance in communication and the Seventh-day Adventist Church's appropriation of the new possibilities stretch our imagination. In only 10 years Adventists have emerged as leaders in global religious communication.

Take a deep breath and join me in peering into the future. Not way down the pike—only about 900 days ahead.

It's Friday evening. Sabbath is coming on. Except that this Sabbath will mark a moment that is unique in your experience and mine. Glance at the calendar and you will read:

Friday, December 31, 1999.

That Sabbath marks the dawning of the year 2000. The world will go berserk in celebration, fear and frenzy, dissipation and apprehension.

But Adventists are a people of hope. What if, on that wild Friday night when the numbers on Earth's odometer roll up to the line of zeroes, Adventists organize celebrations of hope and faith, calling all our members and inviting thinking men and women of the world to prayer, worship, and spiritual commitment?

What if around the circle of the globe 10 million Adventists gather in thousands of centers, bringing friends, loved ones, and former members? What if these centers are linked by satellite so that we share the same images, joining in singing together and worshiping as one people to the glory of the Creator?

Yes, the year 2000 will begin with a Sabbath. And yes, the scenario I just described will be possible. (Whether we should plan such an event is another matter.) What makes it more than a dream is satellite technology—and the pizza-sized digital dish in particular.

See what just 10 years have wrought:
Learn the Lingo

The fast-moving developments in Adventist satellite communication have spawned a new lingo. Here’s a quick guide to the main terms:

**ACN:** Adventist Communication Network, a service to Adventist churches in North America, provides programs such as First Wednesday and training events.

**AGCN:** Adventist Global Communication Network. This service of the General Conference takes event programming from one part of the world to any other parts that are interested in receiving it.

**GCTV:** The General Conference does not produce programming, except for special events such as an Annual Council or a General Conference session. When it does, GCTV coordinates the event.

**NET ‘95, ‘96:** The first Adventist evangelistic campaigns using satellites. Their success confounded the critics and launched the church into a new era.

**WHAST:** Western Hemisphere Adventist Satellite Television provides 24-hour-a-day programming in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French to South America, Inter-America, and most of North America.

**3ABN:** Three Angels Broadcasting Network, a lay-owned and -operated satellite network and the pioneer in Adventist satellite communication.

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1987—the Three Angels Broadcasting Network, 3ABN, went on the air. This lay ministry provided the first Adventist satellite programming.

1990—the General Conference session was broadcast live from Indianapolis to North America, using 3ABN.

1994—ACN, the Adventist Communication Network, was launched by the North American Division.

1995—the General Conference session, held in Utrecht, Netherlands, came live to viewers in North and Inter-America via satellite.

1995—North America conducted the first Adventist evangelistic campaign via satellite. Nearly 700 churches downlinked Mark Finley’s messages originating in Chattanooga, Tennessee. NET ‘95 galvanized congregations and confounded critics.

1996—NET ‘96, organized by the North American Division, originated in Forest Lake, Florida, with Mark Finley again the speaker. But five other divisions downloaded the signal; the program went from California to Eastern Europe, from Canada to Argentina, in 12 different languages. Hundreds of thousands viewed the program; churches came back to life; converts flowed in.

What about Adventists’ readiness to grasp this new technology—does it mean we are a people quick to pick up a gimmick?

No. Look at our past and you will see that from our earliest days we have utilized any technology that can help us in our mission to take the everlasting gospel to all the world.

Small wonder, then, that we have leaped to the head of the pack in utilizing global satellite technology.

Why not? Adventists think globally—the good news of our mission is to go to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

Communication via satellite costs plenty. If you plan to have your own network, the equipment to send the signal 26,000 miles into space to bounce off the satellite will cost you a bundle; if you pay someone else to do the job, you will still have to pay handsomely. You must pay for use of the satellite. On the other end, you need receivers to downlink the system.

All this gives you only the hardware. You still need the programming—and quality material comes at a price.

How have Adventists handled the costs of satellite communications thus far?

The answer may surprise you: to a large extent laypeople have made it possible. Generous Adventist businesspeople helped fund NET ‘95 and NET ‘96—we’re talking hundreds of thousands of dollars in satellite time bought. Churches bought their own dishes and receivers. Just like the church, all along 3ABN has run on donations from church members (although it also earns income by charging programs such as It Is Written for airtime).

The General Conference funds special events such as the broadcast of the Utrecht session or the Costa Rica Annual Council. North America funds ACN, much of the expense going toward programming.

In terms of the General Conference and North American Division budgets, the percentage of funds expended on satellite programming has been very small thus far. But the returns—especially through the NET campaigns—have been huge. Satellite communication has quickly established itself as a major, cost-effective method of advancing our mission.

Recent developments in the technology make this approach even more effective. The early systems worked on an analogue signal and required large receivers, but now digital technology is sweeping the field. Sales of the pizza-sized receivers are skyrocketing as prices tumble. Further, digital technology enables one to carry several programs (e.g., in different languages) on the same narrow band.

When ACN was born three years ago, I was an unbeliever. At that time satellite communication was locked in a race with cable and fiber optics, and I considered it too early to opt for the satellite.

And I was wrong.

A year later, when I heard about plans for NET ‘95, I was skeptical. Who would come out to look at a picture of Mark Finley on a big screen?

Answer: scores of thousands. This is a new day. For better or worse, we’re in the television age. The big screen grabs and focuses attention like nothing else—not even a live speaker.
We have only just begun. Expect satellite communication to play an ever-increasing role in Adventism’s future. In nurturing churches. In bringing programs to schools. In training laity. And especially in evangelism, which will explode to a scale we can hardly imagine.

Example: How about an all-Africa effort? General Conference president Robert S. Folkenberg, who proposed the use of a satellite system in 1991, is talking about one for next February. That is next February. Nineteen ninety-eight. Not five years away—six months away.

Folkenberg and leaders in South Africa want to launch the campaign from Soweto and send it via satellite to hundreds, maybe thousands, of sites on the continent. The speaker will be an African, and the program will be African. Church leaders across the continent are excited at the prospect.

The planning is well along, but as we go to press, one big factor remains to be handled—financing. Elder Folkenberg is looking for a source for the $500,000 for the campaign, said Folkenberg in a recent interview with the Adventist Review. “We don’t have the money, but we are proceeding as if we did, like Israel at the Jordan. The priests carried the ark into the river, got their feet wet, and trusted in God. We must do the same.”

Now let me introduce you to the newest child of Adventist satellite communication—WHAST, Western Hemisphere Adventist Satellite Television, born only in May of this year. WHAST came about this way: a Brazilian layperson last year bought time on a satellite for a full year of programming, 24 hours per day. In fact, he has guaranteed funding for 10 years. The South American Division enthusiastically launched the new network, but soon ran into a problem—programming! How do you come up with quality material for every hour of every day and night? The result: most of the time the channel was dark, unused.

The “footprint” (area covered) of this satellite takes in all of South and Central America and most of North America—it is a Western Hemisphere footprint. And the signal is digital: it can carry programs in four languages simultaneously.

So what if? What if the three American divisions—North America, Inter-America, and South America—got together to coordinate programming in the major languages of the hemisphere—English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese? The equipment is in place; the satellite is available at all times. Adventists would have a church-owned and -operated channel 24 hours a day in the major languages of the people.

Think of the possibilities for the large cities of North America with their various languages. Local churches can pull down the signal and send it to their neighborhoods over local cable facilities at low or no cost.

Somebody has to coordinate all this international sharing of programming, whether it’s WHAST, an all-Africa evangelistic campaign, NET ’98, or whatever. That is where the General Conference comes in—not as controller or provider of programs (except for special events), but as the glue to bring all the parts together.

Philip Follett, a General Conference vice president whose job description includes oversight of global communication, is bullish on global satellite communication. “Our most effective evangelists can reach audiences in large centers as well as small villages,” he says.

“Instead of establishing new colleges and universities, we can provide education via satellite. Remote clinics can receive information and training from world-class medical teachers and practitioners.”

Exciting! Flying high indeed!

Now a longstanding dream of Elder Folkenberg’s takes shape. “WHAST is the first segment of a global satellite system that will deliver television programming 24 hours a day, in up to 40 languages,” he says. “It’s thrilling that the potential for continuous, global, evangelistic, member consolidation and leadership training may be within sight! We simply must work toward this objective. Our mission demands it.”

I’d like to sign off right here, but honest reporting mandates that I share a troubling item with the church. What will be the role of 3ABN in this global satellite outreach of the church?

NET ’96, with all its success, brought
this issue into sharp focus. Although the NAD originated the campaign, the two European divisions got involved through the efforts of 3ABN, which bounced the signal across the Atlantic. Our European leaders, while greatly appreciating NET '96, raised a concern for the future: Would they have a corrective voice if the material that 3ABN supplies proves to be detrimental to their mission? We don’t believe current leadership would do this, but considering the unknown future, what if, for instance, the programming included Catholic-bashing material that could set back or close up our work in some European countries? Since television programming essentially defines (for both the members and the general public) what it means to be a Seventh-day Adventist, the division committees asked the General Conference to work out an agreement with 3ABN to ensure that the interests of Europe’s constituents were safeguarded.

Several months of negotiations between the General Conference and 3ABN followed. Folkenberg put himself on the line and did his best to document a relationship, and it appeared that an agreement would be signed. The draft agreement proposed that conflicts be resolved through a five-step process that would culminate with a final decision made by a three-person panel composed of one individual from 3ABN, one individual representing the division involved, and a third party selected by the first two. But with 3ABN personnel arguing that the plan would bring them under church control, talks collapsed.

Thus at this writing 3ABN is not part of the church’s planning for coverage of NET ‘98 or any other international satellite communication. When I wrote the story of 3ABN last year (“3ABN: a Dream, a Decade, and a Dish,” Nov. 21, 1996), I noted that relationships with the church have been bumpy over the years. While this latest disagreement is in keeping with past patterns, General Conference leadership is still hopeful that a cooperative relationship can be put into place.

Whether or not 3ABN and church leaders eventually sign an agreement, one thing is clear: there is a satellite in the Adventist Church’s future. Before our eyes the Scriptures have taken on a startling new fulfillment: “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (Rev. 14:6, 7).

William G. Johnson in editor of the Adventist Review.
Drive carefully” were my daughter’s parting words as I started for the Central California Women’s Retreat at Soquel. A foggy haze hung over the valley, but it was patchy, and I could stop if necessary. As I drove along, I sang my fog song: “My Lord knows the way through the wilderness, all I have to do is follow.”

My thoughts were happy. Friend Martha, who is deaf and lives near Soquel, was waiting for me to pick her up. I’d invited her many times to deaf camp meeting, and she’d been unable to go because of the distance and her health. But the retreat was only a half hour from her apartment in Watsonville, and I knew I could get her back to her doctor if necessary.

As I drove along, I thought of my son’s last fax—five pages of his SJJ (spiritual journey journal). One line especially struck me: “I pray each day I will be a tool in God’s hands—in ways I may not even be aware of. And that I be ready for the task…” That echoed a deep-felt longing of my heart. I found myself wondering what kind of tool I was, because I also want to be a channel. Maybe a hose? But a hose couldn’t transport Martha to the retreat. I decided that the most effective tool would have to be a multipurpose tool with human awareness.

I knew the devil was doing all in his power to keep Martha isolated from fellow believers, so I was not surprised she wasn’t feeling well when I arrived at her home. But she was packed, and I hurried us into my car “to avoid the traffic.” I tried not to think of the difficulty I have in large groups of hearing people. Or of the challenge she would face with signing her only means of communication besides pen and paper. I thanked God for the two interpreters who would be there.

When we got to the campground, we were directed to our cabin—M9. My heart sank when I realized it was up two short flights of steps from the outside bathrooms. Martha signed to me, “What if I’m sick at night?”

I advised the Lord, “You must keep her here for the blessing I know she will receive.”

To Martha I signed, “I’ll see if it’s possible for us to stay somewhere else.”

With an outer calm I wasn’t feeling within me, I ran from the cabins. And then I saw Julie.” I’d met her only briefly, but from all accounts knew that she was effective in prayer. “Please, Julie, pray that Martha will stay. She needs a room with an inside toilet.”

“Let’s pray right now. You can keep your eyes open so you can lip-read,” Julie said as she took my hands. I can’t remember her words, but I do remember the calming effect they had on me. Slowly I walked away, for I had put my weight on the Lord. Now I only needed to wait.

Then I felt a tap on my shoulder and turned to see Julie. “You can have my inside room and I will move to the cabin.”

I remonstrated, for after all, she had reserved an indoor room and I had not. She insisted, saying, “While we were praying, the Lord told me to give you my room.” The immediacy and efficacy of the answer to my problem overwhelmed me, and I started to cry.

She knew what the cabins were like and was choosing to leave a carpeted room only a few steps from bathroom facilities. How like the Lord, who chose to leave heaven for earth, knowing what it was like down here.

Later Julie shared her conversation with the Lord.

Lord: “Give them your room.”

Julie: “I don’t know how my roommate, who is coming, will feel about moving into the cabins. I’m not thrilled with the idea myself.” (Just then Eve interrupted: “Julie, your roommate just canceled.”)

Julie: “Very funny, Lord. Are You pushing me?”

She gave up her room and wrote in a letter to me, “I was the one most richly blessed, because I chose to obey God.”

I realize that I too can be a tool in God’s hands. To do this I must, as Julie did, do my part in answering prayers—even when I don’t want to act on His prompting. ■

*Not their real names.

Joyce Rigsby is a former missionary who now writes from Hanford, California.
The Adventist Review on-line is made available free through the sponsorship of the North American Division Health and Temperance department—coordinators for “The Year of Health and Healing.”

During this year, the health and temperance department invites each Adventist congregation to reaffirm the church’s health principles and share them throughout their communities.

For information and materials on the Year of Health and Healing, call the Adventist PlusLine at (800) SDA-PLUS.