

ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER No. 135

“DISMANTLING THE AMERICAN DREAM: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ADVENTIST CHURCH”

Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.,

**Retired Professor of Theology and Church History,
Andrews University**

While researching on “The Roots of Terrorism” for this newsletter, I received from an Adventist sister in California, a compelling speech delivered by former Colorado Governor Richard D. Lamm, entitled “How to Destroy America.” The speech was given at an Immigration-Overpopulation Conference in Washington, DC.

The speech caught my attention because it mentions several significant factors which threaten the future of the American dream. Surprisingly some of the same factors threaten the future of our Adventist church. The timeliness of the speech caused me to postpone my essay on “The Roots of Terrorism” to the next newsletter, commenting instead this time on Lamm’s speech and its relevance for our Adventist church.

The procedure I will follow is simple. First, I will post a clean format of Lamm’s speech which is available in the internet in various awkward forms. Then, I will comment on some aspects of the speech. Finally, I will draw some lessons for the future of our Adventist church. We shall see that the challenges that America faces to preserve its moral, social, political vision in the face of an unlimited flood of people entering the country legally and illegally, is similar somewhat to the challenges faced in a smaller scale by fast growing denominations, like our own Seventh-day Adventist church.

NEWSLETTERS ACCESSIBLE AT THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES WEBSITE

An unusual number of subscribers wrote to me asking me to email them again the last newsletter, because they did not receive it, or in some cases they received a truncated version. I did my best to email the newsletter again to those who had problems receiving it. For the future, remember that you can access all my newsletters at my website:

<http://www.biblicalpherspectives.com/> At the top of my home page you can see the “NEWSLETTERS” box. Click on it and you will find all the 134 newsletters that I have posted so far. If you cannot surf the web, feel free to contact me. I will gladly help you.

AUGUST 20: CHICAGO - BURR RIDGE SDA CHURCH

In the last newsletter I failed to mention (old age?) that this coming Sabbath, August 20, I will speak near Chicago at the Burr Ridge SDA Church. The church meets at the Lord’s of Life Lutheran Church, which is located close to Hinsdale at 725 75th Street, Darien, Illinois 60559. This is the church of our son, Gianluca and his wife, Silvia, and their three children.

This will be a special Sabbath for my wife and I, since we will be able to see and enjoy for the first time our latest grandson, Enzo, who was born (9.5 pounds) three weeks ago. He is growing fast (one pound in two weeks) and promises to become a valuable addition to the Bacchiocchi’s tribe.

If you live in the Chicago area, you are welcomed to join us on Sabbath morning for a special experience of worship and fellowship. I plan to present my popular PowerPoint meditation on “HOW TO BUILD A HAPPY AND LASTING MARRIAGE.” The sermon consists of 10 biblical principles developed in my book *THE MARRIAGE COVENANT*. I shared this meditation with 100 PowerPoint slides last Sabbath at a rally in Los Angeles. The response was very encouraging. If you miss this sermon in Chicago, you can hear it the following Sabbath (August 28) in Hong Kong.

If you need directions to get at the Burr Ridge SDA church, feel free to call our son, Gianluca, who serves as an elder in the church. You can reach him at his cellular phone (630) 915-8746 or office (312)701 8776. He is a busy lawyer, but will be glad to talk with you.

UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the date and the location of the upcoming seminars for the month of August and September

2005. Every Sabbath it is a great pleasure for me to meet subscribers who travel considerable distances to attend the seminars.

AUGUST 5-6: NEW YORK CITY– SOUTH OZONE SDA CHURCH

Location: 120-20 140th Street, South Ozone park, NY 11436.

For information call Pastor Richard Bryant at (718) 622-4081.

I will also be speaking during Sabbath School at the Jamaica SDA Church located at 8828 163rd Street, Jamaica NY 11432.

AUGUST 12-13: LOS ANGELES CENTRAL FILIPINO SDA CHURCH

Location: 777 East Colorado Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90042.

For information call Pastor Simeon Rosete at (323) 255-7718 or (323) 255-7149

On Sabbath morning, August 13, I will also present a mini SABBATH SEMINAR at the **EAGLE ROCK SDA CHURCH**, located at 2322 Meron Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90041. For information call Pastor Donald Smith at (661) 298-1843 or (818) 415-0279.

AUGUST 20: CHICAGO - BURR RIDGE SDA CHURCH

Location: Lord's of Life Lutheran Church, located at 725 75th Street, Darien, Illinois 60559.

For information call Gianluca Bacchiocchi at (630) 915-8746 or (312)701 8776.

AUGUST 26-30: HONG KONG

For location and information, call THE CHINESE UNION MISSION at (852) 2838-3991 or (852) 2441-8333.

In Hong Kong, I will speak first at a rally of Adventist believers, and then at a Lutheran and Baptist seminaries.

SEPTEMBER 9-10: LONDON -MILTON KEYNES AND WEST BLETCHLEY SDA CHURCHES

Location of Milton Keynes SDA Church: 1 Veryan Place Fishermead, Milton Keynes, Bucks MK6 2SP, England.

Location of West Bletchley SDA Church: 3 Porchester Close, Whaddon Way Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK3 6BH, England.

For information about the meeting at both churches, call Pastor Colin Stewart at 01908 673 979 or 0795 693 1469.

SEPTEMBER 16-17: LONDON - LUTON SDA CHURCH

Location: Hightown Methodist Church, 100 Pomfret Avenue, Luton, LU2 OGL, England

For information call Pastor Andrew Leonce at 01582 413 948 or 0797 1218101

SEPTEMBER 23-24: LONDON-PECKHAM SDA CHURCH

Location: 149-159 Ivydale Road, Nunhead, Peckham, London SE15 3DX.

For information call Pastor Wilfred Blake at 020 8325 3794

TOSHIBA LAP TOP COMPUTERS AT 30% DISCOUNT!!!

In the last newsletter I mentioned that it was not my intention to become involved in offering lap top computers. Several subscribers, especially from overseas, did not take my “no” for an answer and asked me to help them to purchase a lap top at a discounted price as I have helped them with projectors.

In response to these pleas, I decided to contact TOSHIBA, because several sources told me that they produce the best lap tops in the market. My two sons have used DELL, HP, and TOSHIBA. They have found TOSHIBA to be much better.

I have had several pleasant conversations with the TOSHIBA Marketing Manager who has already submitted to me two quotes on two specific TECRA models. We are still fine tuning the final price, which will largely depend on the number of lap tops that I will buy each time for distribution to our Adventist members, pastors, and teachers.

To make matters simple and practical, TOSHIBA will configured for us two basic TECRA models, which are of a higher quality than their SATELLITE consumer models. The cheaper model is called TECRA A5, and will run about \$1000.00. The more expensive model is called TECRA S2 and will cost about \$1300.00. Both prices represent about 30% discount on their online prices. The price is based on a quantity purchase of 40 lap tops or more each time. I should receive the final price by tomorrow.

Both models will be configured with Microsoft Window, Intel Pentium processor 740, CD/DVD burners, wireless, etc. The major differences between the models are as follows:

The TECRA A5 has a 14" wide monitor while the TECRA SE has a 15" wide monitor.

The TECRA A5 has 512 MB internal memory while the TECRA SE has 768 MB memory.

The TECRA A5 has a 40GB hard drive while the TECRA SE has a 80GB hard drive

At this point I am trying to ascertain the degree of interest for purchasing an outstanding TOSHIBA lap top at 30% discount. The larger is the number of the requests I receive and the greater will be the discount TOSHIBA will grant.

If you are interested to purchase an outstanding TOSHIBA notebook at 30% discount, let me know by emailing me a message at <sbacciochi@biblicalperspectives.com>. As soon as TOSHIBA gives me the final price, I will email you the information.

EXTENSION OF GC OFFER ON HITACHI PROJECTORS

In occasion of the General Conference Session, the HITACHI Corporation of North America agreed to offer their lines of projectors at a special ONE TIME OFFER, to help especially our churches and schools in developing countries. I took advantage of the special offer and I bought over 200 projectors, most of which were sold at the GC.

At this time I do have a few remaining HITACHI projectors which I bought at the very special GC OFFER. They are as follows:

Three HITACHI CP-X328, High Resolution, 2000 lumens at \$1495.00

Five HITACHI CP-X430, High Resolution, 2500 lumens at \$1995.00

Two HITACHI CP-X445 High Resolution 3200 lumens, wireless, with 4 speakers, networking, etc. at \$2595.00

Two HITACHI CP-X1250, High Resolution, 4500 lumens, wireless, shift lens, 4 interchangeable lenses, etc., for only \$4200.00.

When these remaining projectors are sold, the special HITACHI prices for our Adventist churches/schools will be between \$300.00 to \$500.00 more. Feel free to take advantage of these special offers by contacting me by email or phone (269) 471-2915. We can ship you immediately any of the remaining models.

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR AN EXCELLENT REMOTE FOR YOUR POWER POINT PRESENTATIONS?

If you are looking for an outstanding Remote for your Power-Point presentations, you will be pleased to know HONEYWELL has just come out with the smallest and most powerful remote in the market. You can view it at <http://www.powerremote.com/>

The size of the transmitter is smaller than a credit card. You can stick it inside the palm of your hand and nobody can see it. The operating distance between the remote and the receiver is officially 150 feet. But I tested the remote in an open environment, and the radio signal can go up to 400 feet of distance. IT IS INCREDIBLE! The transmitter has three buttons: forward, backward, and laser.

The brand new model is hard to find in the market, but I signed a contract with HONEYWELL to distribute it to our churches and schools. By buying 50 units at a time, I can offer this incredible remote for only \$120.00, postage paid. To order a remote, call us at (269) 978-6878 or (269) 471-2915 or email us your order at sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com

DOES YOUR CHURCH OR SCHOOL NEED A SCREEN?

If your church/school is looking for a screen, the DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY, the largest manufacturer of screens in the world, has agreed to offer their line of screens at a about 30% discount price. To find the screen that you need, visit the DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY website at <http://www.da.lite.com>. You will see hundreds of models of

screens with their respective prices. Once you find the screen that you need, call me at (269) 471-2915 or email your request <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com> I can email your order immediately to DA-LITE at 30% discount. It is as simple as that.

“THE DISMANTLING OF THE AMERICAN DREAM: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ADVENTIST CHURCH”

Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.,

Retired Professor of Theology and Church History,

Andrews University

An “Immigration-Overpopulation Conference” was held in Washington, DC, on October 2003. The hall was filled to capacity with many American thinkers and political leaders. During the conference, speaker after speaker astounded the audience with facts on how fast the flood of legal and illegal immigrants are dismantling the American dream for average citizens.

A brilliant college Professor shared the highlights of his latest book, *MEXIFORNIA*, where he explains how immigration, both legal and illegal, is destroying the entire State of California. He said it would march across the country until it destroys all vestiges of the American Dream.

Moments later, former Colorado Governor Richard D. Lamm, stood up and gave a stunning speech on how to destroy America. The audience listened spellbound to the eight methods proposed by Lamm for the destruction of the United States. Richard Lamm has served for 12 years as Governor of Colorado and is currently the Director of the Center for Public Policy and Contemporary Issues at the University of Denver. I invite you to read this speech because some of the points are relevant to our own Adventist church. I am posting a clean format of the speech which appears in varying awkward forms on the internet.

“How To Destroy America”

Richard D. Lamm, Former Colorado Governor

I have a secret plan to destroy America. If you believe, as many do, that America is too smug, too white bread, too self-satisfied, too rich,

lets destroy America. It is not that hard to do. History shows that nations are more fragile than their citizens think. No nation in history has survived the ravages of time. Arnold Toynbee observed that all great civilizations rise and they all fall, and that “An autopsy of history would show that all great nations commit suicide.”

Here is my plan:

I. We must first make America a bilingual-bicultural country. History shows, in my opinion, that no nation can survive the tension, conflict, and antagonism of two competing languages and cultures. It is a blessing for an individual to be bilingual; it is a curse for a society to be bilingual. One scholar, Seymour Martin Lipset, put it this way:

“The histories of bilingual and bicultural societies that do not assimilate are histories of turmoil, tension, and tragedy. Canada, Belgium, Malaysia, Lebanon—all face crises of national existence in which minorities press for autonomy, if not independence. Pakistan and Cyprus have divided. Nigeria suppressed an ethnic rebellion. France faces difficulties with its Basques, Bretons, and Corsicans.” [We could add five million Muslim who pose a serious threat to the stability of the country].

II. I would then invent “multiculturalism” and encourage immigrants to maintain their own culture. I would make it an article of belief that all cultures are equal: that there are no cultural differences that are important. I would declare it an article of faith that the Black and Hispanic dropout rate is only due to prejudice and discrimination by the majority. Every other explanation is out-of-bounds.

III. We can make the United States a “Hispanic Quebec” without much effort. The key is to celebrate diversity rather than unity. As Benjamin Schwarz said in the *Atlantic Monthly* recently: “The apparent success of our own multiethnic and multicultural experiment might have been achieved not by tolerance but by hegemony. Without the dominance that once dictated ethnocentrically, and what it meant to be an American, we are left with only tolerance and pluralism to hold us together.”

I would encourage all immigrants to keep their own language and culture. I would replace the *melting pot* metaphor with a *salad bowl* metaphor. It is important to insure that we have various cultural sub-groups living in America reinforcing their differences rather than Americans, emphasizing their similarities.

IV. Having done all this, I would make our fastest growing demographic group the least educated – I would add a second underclass, unassimilated, undereducated, and antagonistic to our population. I would have this second underclass have a 50% drop out rate from school.

V. I would then get the big foundations and big business to give these efforts lots of money. I would invest in ethnic identity, and I would establish the cult of *Victimology*. I would get all minorities to think their lack of success was all the fault of the majority – I would start a grievance industry blaming all minority failure on the majority population.

VI. I would establish dual citizenship and promote divided loyalties. I would “celebrate diversity.” “Diversity” is a wonderfully seductive word. It stresses differences rather than commonalities. Diverse people worldwide are mostly engaged in hating each other — that is, when they are not killing each other. A diverse, peaceful, or stable society is against most historical precedent. People undervalue the unity it takes to keep a nation together, and we can take advantage of this myopia.

Look at the ancient Greeks. Dorf’s *World History* tells us: “The Greeks believed that they belonged to the same race; they possessed a common language and literature; and they worshiped the same gods. All Greece took part in the Olympic games in honor of Zeus and all Greeks venerated the shrine of Apollo at Delphi. A common enemy Persia threatened their liberty. Yet, all of these bonds together were not strong enough to overcome two factors . . . (local patriotism and geographical conditions that nurtured political divisions).”

If we can put the emphasis on the *Pluribus*, instead of the *Unum*, we can balkanize America as surely as Kosovo.

VII. Then I would place all these subjects off limits — make it taboo to talk about. I would find a word similar to “Heretic” in the 16th

century – that stopped discussion and paralyzed thinking. Words like “racist”, “xenophobe” that halts argument and conversation.

Having made America a bilingual-bicultural country, having established multiculturalism, having the large foundations fund the doctrine of “Victimology”, I would next make it impossible to enforce our immigration laws. I would develop a mantra— “that because immigration has been good for America, it must always be good.” I would make every individual immigrant sympatric [sympatric means living in the same area without becoming assimilated] and ignore the cumulative impact.

VIII. Lastly, I would censor Victor Hanson Davis’s book *Mexifornia*. This book is dangerous. It exposes my plan to destroy America. So please, please – if you feel that America deserves to be destroyed – Please, please – don’t buy this book! This guy is on to my plan.

The Basis of Governor Lamm’s Comments

The strong language of Governor Lamm’s speech reflects the mounting immigration problems he faced as Governor of Colorado. In an article entitled “Unlimited Flood of People Will Only Destroy America,” he writes: “Of course immigration has been good for America and, yes, we are all immigrants. But is that the extent and depth of the argument? I governed Colorado for 12 years and my experience was that mass immigration made virtually every problem I was trying to solve more difficult. I have been working all my political life trying to get low-income citizens health insurance. How can this ever be done when our Swiss cheese borders allow an endless stream of people needing medical care? A majority of the patients at our large Denver General Hospital are illegal immigrants.

“Our standard school scores go down rather than up partly because of the large numbers of immigrant children. In just more than a decade, Denver schools have gone from 13 percent Hispanic to more than 60 percent Hispanic. Housing? Our public housing is filled with both legal and illegal immigrants. Crime? Twenty percent of our prison space is filled with the foreign born. Sprawl and growth? Colorado is being flooded by Californians who move here because they don’t like what’s happening in California.

“Bottom line, ask yourself: What problem in America will be made better by continuing to add massive numbers of people? America before immigration ‘reform’ averaged about 250,000 immigrants a year. If we would return to those historic numbers, we would take a great step toward leaving our children a sustainable America.”

A Reaction to Lamm’s Speech

Lamm’s speech had a sobering effect on the audience. Frosty Wooldridge, an author of books and of hundreds of editorials published in national newspapers, reports on the audience’s reaction, saying: “There was no applause. A chilling fear quietly rose like an ominous cloud above every attendee at the conference. Every American in that room knew that everything Lamm enumerated was proceeding methodically, quietly, darkly, yet pervasively across the United States today. Every discussion is being suppressed. Over 100 languages are ripping the foundation of our educational system and national cohesiveness. Barbaric cultures that practice female genital mutilation are growing as we celebrate ‘diversity’.”

Wooldridge continues, saying: “I sat there as one of this country’s most patriotic Americans, Governor Lamm, walked back to his seat. It dawned on everyone at the conference that our nation and the future of this great democracy, are deeply in trouble and worsening fast. An invasion of diseases, clashing cultures, languages, balkinization, mounting environmental dilemmas accelerate by the day. If this immigration monster isn’t stopped, it will rage across the United States like a California wildfire and destroy everything in its path, especially the American Dream.”

A Needed Clarification

Much of Governor Lamm speech resonates with my personal concerns about the future of America, and by implication, of our Adventist church. But I must take issue with the following statement: “We must first make America a bilingual-bicultural country. History shows, in my opinion, that no nation can survive the tension, conflict, and antagonism of two competing languages and cultures. It is a blessing for an individual to be bilingual; it is a curse for a society to be bilingual.”

I find it difficult to reconcile the good-ex-governor statement with Switzerland, a long-established, peaceful country in which Swiss citizens speak German, French, or Italian, depending on which section of the country they happen to live. It is evident that Switzerland shows that it is NOT “a curse for a society to be bilingual.” On the contrary, it is a sign of a higher level of education when all the citizens speak several languages.

The issue is not the number of languages spoken in a country, but whether the languages divide the country culturally, politically, and religiously. In the case of Switzerland, languages are not a problem because all of its citizens are fluent in two or even three languages. The study of a second or third language begins already at the elementary school level. Swiss citizens are Swiss in their culture, whether they speak two or three languages. Restrictive immigration policies ensures that the few foreigners allowed to become Swiss citizens each year learn the languages and assimilate in their culture.

What is true for Switzerland was also true in the Roman Empire. Two languages were spoken throughout the empire. Latin was the common language of the people, while Greek was the official language used for documents, literature, and education. What caused the fall of the Roman Empire was not its bilingual situation, but the uncontrollable flood of immigrants, referred to as “Barbarians.”

Note that not all of the immigrants were barbarians. The Goths, for examples, were mostly Christians, gifted with artistic expression reflected in the Gothic Cathedrals. The problem was that these Germanic tribes overrun the Roman Empire like a flood, making impossible any normal assimilation into the Roman culture. The result was that eventually the various foreign tribes took over the empire and divided it among themselves, giving rise to the division of the European nations we have today.

The Situation in America

The situation in America resembles somewhat that of the Roman Empire. Most of the four million legal and illegal immigrants that enter the USA each year, hardly know how to speak correctly their own

language, let alone a second or third language like in Switzerland. More distressing still is the fact that many Hispanic immigrants have no desire to learn the English language and to become assimilated in the American society.

I often speak with Hispanic pastors who have lived in America for over 20 years, and yet they can hardly carry on a conversation in English. The reason is that they want to remain first and foremost, let us say, Cubans or Mexicans living in America, rather than becoming Americans who originally came from Cuba or Mexico. For them retaining their language and culture is more important than becoming assimilated in the American society, by embracing the social, moral, and democratic values of this country.

The European immigrants that came to America in the early part of the last century, were eager to embrace what America had to offer. For them it was more important to become an American than to remain an Italian, German, Polish, or Russian. They wanted their children to become integrated in the American society.

When we landed in America on July 4, 1974, we decided that we would speak English in our home as much as possible. We wanted our three children to become integrated in the American society, because we came to America as permanent residents, not as tourists. The result is that our children today speak like Yankees, without my broken Italian accent. They still speak some Italian, but we never considered retaining our Italian language and culture a priority.

The situation is much different today. Most of the four million immigrants that come to America each year, are eager to retain their language, culture, and national identity. The result is that America is becoming more of a SALAD BOWL than a MELTING POT. Cities like Los Angeles or Miami, can hardly be characterized as American cities. Other cities like Chicago, Houston, Dallas, New York, Atlanta, San Francisco, and others are not far behind. You feel unwelcomed and insulted if you speak English in the immigrant enclaves of these cities. If this problem remains unchecked, America could become fragmented like the Roman empire.

The Problem of Assimilation in Adventist Churches

The problem is present to a lesser degree in our Adventist churches. Some of our ethnic churches are gradually losing their national identity. Our Italian churches in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco have long disappeared. The same is true of German, French, Polish, Russian, and Yugoslavian churches. The reason is that as the old members passed away, their children have no desire to attend the church of their parents, whose native language they hardly understand.

In Asian Adventist churches such as Korean and Japanese, there are usually two church services, one in the native language for the old members and one in English for the young people who understand English better than their mother tongue. As the old members pass away and the new generation becomes assimilated in the American society, these Asian churches will become English-speaking churches, retaining only vestiges of their native culture.

The situation is different with Adventist Hispanic churches. The constant influx of Hispanic members from Latin America, coupled with the determination of many Latinos to preserve their Spanish language, exclude the possibility of Hispanic churches becoming English-speaking in the near future.

Contrary to Asian Adventist churches, there is no English service for young people in Hispanic churches. The reason is simple. They know Spanish much better than English. Their parents want their children to retain their language and culture. They may even be sending their children to schools that offer bilingual education, thus reducing the opportunities to learn English. The result is that scholastically many Hispanic students struggle to get good grades, partly because their English is poor. This is what I experienced in 26 years of teaching at Andrews University.

Adventist Church Must Encourage Integration of Ethnic churches

Part of the problem are the Hispanic pastors themselves, who do not encourage their members to learn English. On numerous occasions I have encouraged Hispanic pastors who invited me to preach in

their churches, to provide through their church, evening English class for their members. Such a proposal seem to fall on deaf ears, because most members live in Hispanic communities where English is hardly spoken. Moreover, Spanish is good enough to get a low-paying job.

Some conferences have leaders who direct and supervise what are known as “Hispanic” or “Asian” ministries. These leaders should be encouraged to develop plans that promote the teaching of English in the ethnic churches under their supervision. The goal should be for all the ethnic churches to become English speaking over a period of years, simply because America is an English speaking country.

This does not mean that ethnic churches should be abolished. As a student canvassing in Chicago in 1960-1, I used to attend and preach in the Italian church, though we all spoke English. I enjoyed fellowship and worshipping with Italo-American fellow believers. They spoke few words of Italian, but they could still cook some delicious Italian food. We enjoyed our common heritage.

To the extent that the Adventist church encourages ethnic churches to retain and use indefinitely only their native language, to the same degree it contributes to the fragmentation of America. No real assimilation can take place in the American society, without learning the English language and embracing its basic moral values and democratic principles.

What Makes America Great?

What makes America one of the most prosperous countries in the world? Why is America still regarded as the country of opportunities? Why are million of people still eager to come to the USA? The answer to these questions is to found not in its natural resources, but in its moral codes and ethical standards that influence its democratic system.

The founding father of the American Republic were people of profound religious convictions and high ethical standards. They founded a country with a similar moral code for every person and a similar ethical standard for all citizens. Even the President is expected to live by such

ethical standards, otherwise, like in the case of Nixon or Bill Clinton, they runs the risk to be impeached and removed from office.

The moral foundation of the American social and political life, is largely absent in many countries. In my own country of Italy, politicians are known for their corruption and immorality. Few years ago over 170 parliamentarians were indicted for accepting kick backs. What is true for Italy is also true for dominant Catholic countries of Latin America, where the Catholic church has failed miserably to teach the fundamental moral principle of the Bible. By making salvation a *dispensation* of the church, rather than a *disposition* of the believer, the Catholic church has fostered the mentality that no matter what sins you commit, the church can reduce the temporal punishment, if not in this present life, at least in Purgatory. The result is that corruption and immorality in the social and political life, has become an accepted way of life.

In Italy it is very difficult to find a well-paying job unless you know an influential person whom you are willing to bribe. What counts is not *who you are* (your training and skills), but *whom you know*. Unless a person is well-connected, he/she will never clime the executive ladder. What is true for Italy, is also true for dominant Catholic countries as well as developing countries in general.

This explains why America is so attractive to many foreigners. There is no need in America to bribe politicians or church leaders to get a job, because opportunities are equal for every person. I came to America carrying all my belonging in a suitcase, but I knew this country would offer me unparalleled opportunities, inside the church or outside in the business world. This has been true, not only for myself, but also for our three children, who are very successful in their respective professions. We thank God for America everyday because it is a country where dreams can still come true.

Implications of Richard Lamm's Speech for the Adventist Church

If I had time I would rewrite ex-Governor Lamm's speech on "How to Destroy America," I would entitle it "How to Destroy the Adventist Church." For lack of time, I will limit my comments to a few points of the speech which are applicable to the Adventist church.

The basic premise of Lamm’s speech is that the current flood of immigrants (about four million a year) can eventually destroy America because they cannot be gradually assimilated as in the past when the immigration quota was about 250,000. This premise is applicable to our Adventist church which is experiencing unprecedented growth in many developing countries.

In his keynote address at the GC Conference on “Christian Leadership,” President Paulsen mentioned that our Adventist church is expected to reach a 50 million membership by the year 2020. Adding 35 million to our current 15 million membership, sounds great. But we need to ask: Will our Adventist church be able to assimilate such a flood of new converts? Will our Adventist church be able to preserve its fundamental beliefs and practices? Will some of the new converts develop their own brand of Adventism, which incorporates some of their cultural beliefs and practices?

In his speech Richard Lamm warned that the flood of immigrants who wish to keep their own language and culture are changing America from a melting pot into a salad bowl. Could this be true also for the future of the Adventist church? To some extent this is already happening today. Adventism is no longer as homogeneous as it was in the past. Twenty years ago I could travel in different parts of the world always certain that I would participate in a typical Adventist worship service. Today, we do not need to go very far to find Adventist churches with different worship styles. Within the same district one can find Adventist worship services that range from ultra-conservative to ultra-contemporary.

Celebrating Diversity

Lamm also spoke of the danger of celebrating “diversity,” rather than emphasizing “unity.” The American motto: “*Ex pluribus unum*—from many one,” is being reversed into “from one into many.” This can result in the fragmentation of America like in the Balkans (Kosovo).

Our Adventist church is not exempted from the celebration of diversity. Though we are constantly reminded of our “unity in diversity,” the fact is that the concern for the unity of the church is not always

respected by all churches and institutions. For example, I have been in some churches where women are not even allowed on the platform to read Scripture or to pray. By contrast, in other churches women preach, baptize, celebrate marriages, and preside at the Lord's Supper. Such radically different roles of women in the Adventist church, undermine the unity of the church.

Our Adventist is divided today not only in worship styles, but also in doctrinal matters. Some Adventists believe in the verbal inspiration of Ellen White, while others no longer accept or use her prophetic guidance in preaching or personal devotion. Some Adventist teachers believe in a fiat creation that occurred about 6000 years ago, while others (mostly science teachers) espouse some forms of theistic evolution that occurred over million of years. Some Adventists tenaciously defend the traditional (Uriah Smith) interpretation of Daniel and Revelation, while others are advancing new fanciful interpretations. The result is that many Adventists are confused and disoriented like sheep without a shepherd. The celebration of diversity is fostering disunity, rather than unity.

There is no easy solution to the divisive forces that are undermining the unity of the Adventist church. We need to recognize in every culture those values and customs that can legitimately be used to proclaim the Adventist message. But, on the other hand, we need to resist the temptation to modify our message to make it more acceptable to our secularly-minded society. May God empower each Adventist believer and leader with His wisdom and grace to foster the unity of the faith while respecting cultural diversities.