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## Though the Heavens Fall

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## **Abstract**

Adventist universities today are facing an exceptionally difficult challenge. No longer surrounded by a predominantly Christian culture, students enter Adventist universities having been exposed to the ever stronger tide of secularism and moral relativism. These ideologies teach them that there is no need to take a stand for truth since truth is subjective to an individual's preferences: what one person considers truth, another considers wrong, and nobody has the right to say otherwise. Many students wrestle with the questions that arise as they struggle to reconcile their Christianity with these philosophies.

As Adventist educators, we are called to provide a spiritual and moral education to our students. We are to demonstrate to our students what it means to live out our Christian beliefs, to speak the truth in love and not hatred. We are to have the personal touch that Christ had with those who came to Him for help and with those who rejected Him. In short, we are called to pass on the torch of our Seventh-day Adventist heritage to the next generation.

**Key Words:** faithfulness, secularism, moral relativism, inconsistent living, intellectual milieu, philosophical naturalism, materialistic ideology, challenging trends in Adventist Higher Education

## Introduction

Some of you may wonder about the title of my presentation which makes reference to the heavens falling. Has Greg King become a veritable doomsayer, declaring that the sky is falling? Is he trying to communicate to the group that we are at a dangerous time when the heavens will soon come crashing down on our heads? The answer is no, I have no connection with Chicken Little, or Henny Penny, as she is sometimes known, but I do think we are at a critical juncture in Adventist education at which we need to be very intentional about a challenge that we need to give our students. Simply stated, what the title is intended to do is to encapsulate my challenge to us as Seventh-day Adventist Christian educators to seize the opportunity to provide a spiritual and moral education for our students. I am convinced that our education at Southern Adventist University (Southern) is incomplete if we are not frequently calling our students to a deep spiritual commitment. I am persuaded that something important is missing from our instruction if we are not regularly challenging them to a way of life that is right and good, to actions that are based on principle rather than expediency, exhorting them to demonstrate moral courage, to be willing to, to use Ellen White's phrase, "stand for the right though the heavens fall."<sup>1</sup> And I am convicted that for many of our young people here, the college years are a window of opportunity to engage in just this type of education. Perhaps, for some students, the last window of opportunity before they make irrevocable choices with lasting consequences that lead them in another direction. Hence, the importance of seizing the opportunity that we have to reach our students.

Some years ago I had the opportunity of visiting *Yad Vashem*, the museum of the Holocaust, during a trip to Israel. If you have been either to *Yad Vashem* or to its sister museum in Washington, D.C., you know what a memorable experience it is. Perhaps a haunting experience would be more precise. I took a poignant walk through the unforgettable Hall of Children, where a voice intones name after name of the young ones whose lives were cut short during this madness. I saw the starkness of the engraved stones commemorating all the Jews who were gassed in Dachau, Treblinka, Sobibor, Auschwitz, and the other houses of horror that Hitler's henchmen constructed. I viewed other reminders of this dark epoch in the twentieth century which is painful, yet essential to remember.

If there was one positive note during my otherwise sad, reflective tour, it was my walk down the Avenue of the Righteous Gentiles. This walkway is surrounded by trees planted in honor of those who worked to rescue Jews from the jaws of death, sometimes at the cost of their own lives. Person after person is memorialized by a tree and by a plaque engraved with their names. For instance, John Weidner, the Seventh-day Adventist (Adventist) pastor who almost forfeited his own life as the head of the Dutch-Paris underground and whose sister did die in Nazi hands, is remembered here.

As I reflect on my time there, I wonder, would I have had the moral courage of a John Weidner or a Corrie Ten Boom? Would I have been willing to risk my life in order to save others whom I did not know and who were despised by the elite of my society? And an equally significant question for me as an Adventist Christian educator: Am I providing the type of education that would inspire my students to act in such a way, to manifest moral courage in the face of danger, to simply do what is right even though it seems to have a high cost?

There are other situations besides Nazi Germany in which this kind of question is applicable. Am I sharing principles that would prompt my students to wade into an angry mob and rescue someone not of their ethnic group as was done in the Los Angeles riots of some years ago? Are the values that I convey values that would lead them to refuse a lucrative employment offer if it required them to compromise the Sabbath hours? Am I encouraging a way of life that would influence them to forget about their own safety and hand the helicopter rescue rope to person after person, even while they were slipping to their death beneath the icy waters of the Potomac as was done by the brave individual on that doomed Air Florida flight some time back? Am I seizing the day, am I grasping the opportunity to provide this type of education to the students of Southern?



*Figure 1: John Weidner*

This is the type of education urged in Steven Garber’s helpful volume *The Fabric of Faithfulness*. Garber believes that Christian educators should attempt to instruct their students in “moral meaning.” By the term “moral meaning,” Garber is speaking of the interrelation, between one’s convictions about meaning and morality, about what one believes and how one lives.<sup>2</sup> As he states: “The years between adolescence and adulthood are a crucible in which moral meaning is being formed, and central to that formation is a vision of integrity which coherently connects belief to behavior. . . .”<sup>3</sup> To elaborate, the college years are the time when many of our young people are making decisions about their spirituality, morality, and ethics. If we desire to see a Christian commitment manifest in their lives, we must teach and model a way of life in which our conduct is consistent with our Christian profession, one in which our actions are congruent with and the natural result of the love for Christ which fills our heart.

### Challenges

I must confess, however, from my perspective, this type of education is easier advocated than accomplished. To call our task an easy one is like standing at the foot of Mt. Everest and saying it is a simple feat to climb such a diminutive hill. We must not underestimate the challenges involved in ascending our Everest and accomplishing our purpose, even at an Adventist university. And we should recognize that some of these challenges are unprecedented and unique in the history of Adventist education.

But just what are these challenges that we face? It is essential that we identify them accurately, just as the doctor must diagnose her patient correctly if she is to provide the proper treatment. It is clear to me that some of the greatest challenges we face in scaling this Everest are directly related to trends in contemporary society. In other words, some of the values regularly on display and promoted by the media and the thought and entertainment leaders of the world in which we live are inimical to spiritual commitment and moral instruction.

The first challenge to which I will refer is the challenge of secularism. Secularism is the trendy religion of our age. Author Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn put it this way in the Templeton Address, “If I were called upon to identify briefly the principal trait of the twentieth century, here too I would be unable to find anything more precise and pithy than to repeat once again: Men have forgotten God.”<sup>4</sup>

As Phil Johnson and others have capably documented, philosophical naturalism, with its concomitant materialist ideology which precludes the supernatural and therefore denies the reality of a transcendent God, dominates the leading institutions of modern society.<sup>5</sup> It is a fundamentalist religion in its own right, for it is a closed system and its adherents have a tendency to denigrate and demean anyone who questions the established orthodoxy.



Figure 2: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

The crown jewel plundered by those committed to this religion of secularism is the educational institutions of our country. It happened so gradually that one has to look at the vestiges of the past to be reminded of what once was. For example, it is hard to fathom that at the center of the campus of Duke University, famous today for its basketball championships, there is a plaque that reads, “The Aims of Duke University are to assert a faith in the eternal union of knowledge and religion set forth in the teachings and character of Jesus Christ, the son of God.” That was what Duke stood for at one time. Now, any assertion that Duke is a Christian university would be met with either a firestorm of protests or howls of laughter. Duke thus joins Harvard, Yale, and many other prestigious educational institutions that have traveled on this one-way street, It’s a one way street because no universities are going in the other direction from unbelief to faith, schools that have taken the primrose path downhill, journeying, as the title of church historian George Marsden’s influential book states, *From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief*.<sup>6</sup>

While there are numerous safeguards and obstacles that would hinder Southern from taking this same path, not the least of which is the spiritual commitment of people in this room today, let us not delude ourselves that our students are unaffected by the religion of secularism. I will give a specific example of this momentarily,

but suffice it to say now that instead of striving to understand the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament or to harmonize the life of Christ as presented in the four gospels, some students are struggling with whether to believe in a personal God, grappling with the validity of prayer, wondering if the Bible really is God's revelation to humanity.

Another challenge presented by the contemporary context is the challenge of moral relativism or what Robert Simon calls "absolutophobia," that is, the denial or denigration of moral absolutes.<sup>7</sup> Simon's article and a companion piece in the same issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, both published under the heading, "Suspending Moral Judgment: Students Who Refuse to Condemn the Unthinkable," underscore this unwillingness to make moral judgments that is prevalent in the current crop of college students. In "A Result of Too Much Tolerance," Kay Haugaard, who taught at Pasadena City College, recounted an experience in her creative writing class.<sup>8</sup> The students were required to read Shirley Jackson's short story titled "The Lottery" which describes an annual ritual in an American country village. The ritual is a grisly one for it is a lottery to determine a candidate for the yearly human sacrifice. The reason for this macabre ritual is to ensure the well-being of the crops. Any villager who questions the ritual is quickly hushed. In Jackson's story, a woman named Tess Hutchinson is the hapless victim. When her husband draws the unlucky ticket from a black box, she is set upon and stoned to death by all the people of her village, including her own four year old son.

According to Professor Haugaard, classes in previous years had always been impressed with insights and lessons the author intended. Students had typically pointed out the dangers inherent in an unthinking approach to rituals and habits, with no careful examination of their rationale. Also, students had regularly warned of the power of public pressure and the peril of succumbing to it. And the story had never failed to speak to their sense of right and wrong.

But this time the discussion on the story veered in a different direction. One student commented, "Well, I teach a course for our hospital personnel in multicultural understanding, and if it is a part of a person's culture, we are taught not to judge, and if it has worked for them and so forth." Another student suggested that perhaps human sacrifice was not to be condemned if it was a ritual that was part of a religion of long standing. Professor Haugaard writes, "I was stunned: This was the woman who wrote so passionately of saving the whales, of concern for the rain forests, of her rescue and tender care of a stray dog."<sup>9</sup>

Haugaard concludes her article by saying, "I gave up. No one in the whole class of more than 20 ostensibly intelligent individuals would go out on a limb and take a stand against human sacrifice. . . . I was shaken, and I thought that the author, whose story had shocked so many, would have been shaken as well. The class finally ended. It was a warm night when I walked to my car after class that evening, but I felt shivery, chilled to the bone."<sup>10</sup>

"Chilled to the bone," she said. Chilled to the bone is right when, according to survey results published in *The Day America Told the Truth*, for \$10 million, 23 percent of respondents said they would be willing to be a prostitute for a week, 16 percent said they would leave their spouses, and 7 percent said they would kill a stranger.<sup>11</sup> Chilled to the bone is right when one-third of the respondents to a 1997 Barna Research Group survey say that viewing pornographic material is a matter of taste, not of morality. By the way, 84 percent of respondents in the same survey claim to embrace the Christian faith.<sup>12</sup>

Of course, there is an obvious link between the challenge of moral relativism and the previous one of secularism. The religion of secularism with its denial of a transcendent God has eliminated the basis for ethics, leaving humans, as my friend Bill Johnsson opined in the title of an *Adventist Review* editorial, "Awash in a Sea of

Relativism.”<sup>13</sup> Yes, secularism has cut society loose from its moorings and left us drifting at sea with no moral compass. Dostoevsky got it right when he said, “If we don’t believe in God, anything is permissible.”<sup>13</sup>

Yet a third challenge we face in seizing the day is the prevalence of what could be called bifurcated or inconsistent living. Dichotomous lives, lives which present and sometimes flaunt profound contradictions between beliefs, even publicly held ones, and behavior, between doctrines and deeds. Examples of this abound. A common and easy target is the TV preachers who claim to be followers of the simple Jesus while they line their pockets and feather their nests with contributions their tears have wheedled out of their donors. There is the columnist Carl Rowan, who strongly urged gun control in his widely distributed column, only to be caught with an unregistered handgun when he took target practice at some intruders. I think of a friend, who has often spoken out against illegal immigration, though he himself engaged in a sham marriage to help a woman become a citizen because it earned him a tidy sum of money. And such a trend has infiltrated and infected the Christian church. As J. I. Packer stated in his classic *Knowing God*, “People say they believe in God, but they have no idea who it is they believe in, or what difference believing in him may make.”<sup>14</sup>

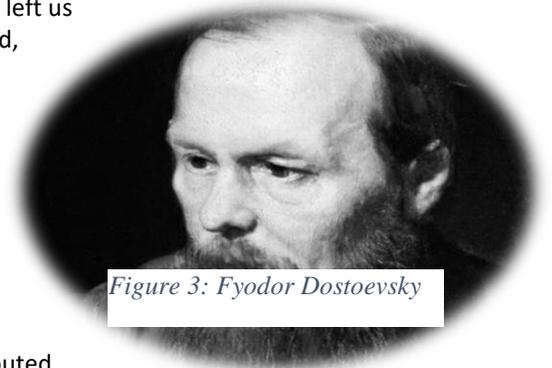


Figure 3: Fyodor Dostoevsky

We must recognize that our students are not immune to these trends. In my view, we make a great mistake if we assume that our students are unaffected by the contemporary context, that they are the same type of student that attended Southern thirty or forty years ago. No, they aren’t what they once were, or perhaps I should say since the history of Southern by Dennis Pettibone documents that even some of Southern’s past students were not quite ready for translation, they aren’t what they never were.<sup>15</sup>

I have met some colleagues teaching in the Adventist system who seem to think that our greatest challenge is unshackling and setting free all these students who have mindlessly embraced the religion of their parents, who are bound in a straitjacket by religious tradition, who are walking in lockstep conformity to indefensible taboos they do not understand. I have had a few students like that, very few. I believe it is a grave mistake to stereotype all our students in this way.

On the other hand, I have had a number of students who, to a greater or lesser extent, have bought into current trends that are inimical to their faith. They have breathed too deeply and some of them have nearly succumbed to the toxic vapors of secularism, relativism, and inconsistent living. If you think Southern’s students are unaffected by the contemporary context, notice items as obvious as the brand of sneakers they wear, the hairstyles they sport, where they pierce their bodies, and the lingo they use.

As the child in the home of the smoker is adversely affected simply by the surrounding atmosphere, so Adventist students are influenced by the intellectual milieu which pervades the late twentieth century. We have students who live dichotomous lives, who affirm the value of their bodies as God’s temple and the value of the Golden Rule even while they engage in substance abuse and score another notch in their belts by taking sexual advantage of the opposite gender. We have students who are moral relativists, who are so wary of being labeled judgmental that they refuse to label practices clearly condemned in Scripture as wrong and to forego the same. They are unwilling to, as the Bible urges, test all things and hold fast to that which is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21). We have students influenced by secularism, struggling to hold on to some belief in a personal God.

I had a specific example of this in one of my classes. On the first day of class I have each student fill out a student information sheet. I ask them for their e-mail addresses, their educational backgrounds, and relevant items of special interest they would like to discuss in class. One question on this sheet asks, “What would you like for me to know about your religious background or spiritual journey?”

Once when I picked up the student info sheet on top of the stack for one class, I saw where a student responded, “I was raised in a Seventh-day Adventist home. My parents are people of great faith, and I love them and am grateful to them for raising me as a Christian, but I no longer consider myself Christian. In academy, I became a real believer, but later I became a believer with a lot of doubts. Over the past few years I’ve seriously

questioned my beliefs and am currently in the process of doing so. My questions have become more basic right now. They're somewhere around, Am I prepared to believe in a God? If so, what kind of God?" It is clear that our students are affected by these trends that pervade our society, and these trends present challenges as we attempt to seize the day.

### Prescription

But how do we deal with these challenges? Can they be overcome? Can this challenging mountain be scaled? In short, the answer is yes. Several decades ago Edmund Hillary demonstrated that Everest-sized challenges can be surmounted. I would like to offer several suggestions on providing an education that would inspire spiritual commitment and moral courage.

The first suggestion is that we must frequently remind ourselves that one of our main purposes here, our *raison d'être*, is to provide a spiritual and moral education for our students. This is our responsibility and our privilege. There are many places one could go to document this fact. One could go to the Utt-Anderson history and cull quotes that make this point in a profound way. One of the most succinct statements of this I found was in an interview on Christian education in which now deceased Pacific Union College (PUC) president Malcolm Maxwell stated: "In accepting a position on the faculty of Pacific Union College, you are accepting pastoral and evangelistic obligations; part of your job at PUC means you will reach out and touch our students for Christ. This is the one thing that sets our schools apart. Many schools provide a good academic experience; we do, too, in a context of Christian commitment. That's what we're all about."<sup>16</sup>

Reading this quote regularly might help ensure that we do not lose the edge on our spiritual mission, on our vision. It has happened all too often in history. I heard of a lady who acted in a rather impertinent way while touring one of the majestic cathedrals in England. While strolling through Westminster Abbey with her group, it dawned upon her, and the same thing dawned on me, as I viewed those grand churches, that what once had been a church, a house of worship, was now basically a museum, a place for relics and a sightseeing stop. She interrupted while the tour guide was attempting to point out Poet's Corner. "Excuse me, excuse me," she said. "Yes, Madam," her guide replied. "Uh, well, what I want to know is has anyone been redeemed around here lately?"

And the same question is apropos for us: Has anyone been redeemed on the campus of Southern Adventist University lately? If we frequently remind ourselves of our spiritual responsibilities, we can help ensure that the answer is yes.

A second suggestion is that we must believe that what we do really matters, that it truly does make a difference in the spiritual lives of our students. One of the foremost examples of this I can think of is a man named Michael Wong, who came to the college at which I was teaching several years back with no firm commitment to Christ and no real understanding of the college's Adventist part through identity as an institution. But through mentoring faculty members, his Christianity blossomed and flourished and he was eventually baptized into the Adventist church. Yes,



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what we do to touch the lives and hearts of our students does make a difference.

Now, that difference is not always immediately apparent. There are times when I walk back to my office wondering if I accomplished anything useful in class that day, if anyone was there, so to speak, and even wondering if I belong in this profession. Teaching is an intense experience. But numerous conversations with students and letters and e-mails I have received from them underscore that God can use our lives to reach out to His children here.

A third suggestion is that we must demonstrate to our students a Christianity that lives out its beliefs. Our beliefs and our actions must be consistent. As we speak of the importance of integrity and moral courage, they must see the same exemplified in us. When we affirm the doctrine of the second coming of Jesus Christ, we must live and speak in such a way so that our students recognize that we eagerly anticipate that event.

The much admired Mother Teresa provided an example of how kind, loving actions spring out of right beliefs. Once she surprised a wealthy American who was amazed at her tenacious commitment to the dregs of Calcutta when she said, "We are a contemplative order. We meditate on Jesus Christ and then we go out and look for Him in the person of the poor and the suffering."<sup>17</sup> As her comment implies, right thinking and right actions are important. In fact, the latter flow out of the former.

Yet another suggestion to enable us to surmount our challenges and seize the day is that we must have a Christianity with a personal touch. As the agents of Jesus Christ we need to reveal something of our personal walk with God, and we need to reach out and touch our students' individually, treating their hurts and needs. What might the result be if we walked into class and remarked to our students, "Before I commence today's lecture, I just want to share a verse that I came across in my devotions this morning. The verse spoke to me with a freshness and vitality." A friend of mine who formerly taught in the area of mathematics, a department from which the Bible

might seem rather remote, shared with his students each quarter how he discovered the value of the Sabbath as he endured the rigors of a doctoral program. What might it mean to our students if we walked into a class in which we knew certain students were facing extreme stress, such as an upper division science class about the time of the MCAT or the interviews for med school and commented, "I just want to let you know that I am aware many of you are under a lot of pressure right now, so I prayed for each of you by name this morning." If you were the parent of one of those students, you would rise up and call that teacher blessed!

Yet another suggestion is that we must have a Christianity that exemplifies moral courage, that will stand up and be counted, that cares enough to confront, that will, as the Apostle Paul states, "Speak the truth in love" (Ephesians

4:15). I am convinced that our students expect no less of us, and if we are indifferent toward moral issues, they will be disappointed. In fact, if they confide in us regarding destructive habits, be it sexual practices or alcohol consumption, etc. , and we are unwilling to engage the issue, we are either sending the message that we don't care about the issue or we don't care about them. Neither message is a positive one.

A friend who taught in the English Department at Southern recounted in print his experience along these lines. A student happened by his office and told him that college was so expensive he had to work downtown as a bartender. "But it's really OK," he rationalized. "I can give my customers Christian counsel after all, and I really couldn't stay in school otherwise." "Have you thought much about the power of grace?" the teacher inquired. "Sure," he answered. "I know that God loves me and forgives me no matter what."

"No, I mean the other kind of power," the professor continued. "The power to do God's will His way." "What do you mean?" the student asked. After a few minutes looking up Bible texts and praying, the student departed, only to return the next day with a radiant face. He announced that he was quitting the job, and thereafter he got clean employment and experienced God in a fuller and richer way.<sup>18</sup> Students are looking for



this type of moral courage in their teachers. It may be that such courage will inspire them to be the next John Weidner, the next Rosa Parks, to demonstrate moral courage in a difficult time.

Another suggestion is that we need a commitment to the type of education that values our own faith heritage as Seventh-day Adventists and that earnestly seeks to transmit this deposit of truth to the next generation. When I look at our system of beliefs, including some of our fairly unique teachings, such as the Sabbath, the Great Controversy, Creation, and the sleep of the dead in Christ, I feel tremendously blessed and believe that I comprehend more of the character of God. Interestingly, several of our somewhat distinctive beliefs have received positive attention and attracted renewed interest in the Christian world at large over the last several years. I am thinking specifically of a thoughtful *Christianity Today* article about the Sabbath,<sup>19</sup> the current ferment about the subject of creation,<sup>20</sup> and the book *God at War* which develops the Great Controversy theme in Scripture.<sup>21</sup> Now I am not saying that it makes something true because some non-Adventists are moving in our direction. What I am saying is that God is opening the door for our graduates to share their Adventist faith with their non-SDA Christian friends and coworkers.

A final suggestion is that we need a commitment to spiritual and moral education that is willing to learn, that engages in self-evaluation, that constantly seeks improvement. I have a friend who taught in the natural sciences at an Adventist college. Once a student who had taken his class in the study of life's origins remarked, "I didn't really grasp where you stand on the matter of creation. It wasn't very clear." How did my friend respond? Instead of commenting on the obtuseness and density of today's students, he said, "I determined then and there to do better to express myself with clarity, to let the students know that I am committed to the biblical view of earth's origins, that though there are some unresolved questions, I approach Scripture from a standpoint of faith."

If you were to look at my personal copy of one of my old course outlines, you might find comments like this. "Perhaps use another article next time. This one was over the student's head." Or "show such-and-such a video during this class period." Or "mid-term exam should be moved to another date." And so forth. What am I doing? I am evaluating my class. I am writing my remarks in a place that they will be readily available the next time I prepare to teach the same class. I want to know what worked well and what didn't, and where improvement is needed. Such evaluation is vital if we are to improve and grow as teachers.

I hold that we should do the same for our spiritual ministry in the classroom. Such a process would prompt me to ask myself questions like, "What are my spiritual goals for this class? Did I accomplish said goals? What worked and what didn't? How might I be more effective in my ministry to my students?" What difference would it make if each of us engaged in such an evaluation at the end of every quarter?

### Conclusion

There is a story that brings together the main ingredients we have been talking about today. It is the story of the White Rose. Some of you have seen the video titled *The White Rose* or read one of the spate of books about it. The White Rose was the name chosen by the group of German students who, inspired by their commitment to Christ and galvanized by the moral courage of one of their professors, decided to protest against the moral evils of Nazism.<sup>22</sup>

Hans and Sophie Scholl, perhaps the two most famous of these students, were not particularly committed Christians during their childhood. But as they went off to school and met people like Carl Muth, a devout Christian and editor of a Nazi-banned journal, they began looking at Christianity in a new light. They began to explore the Christian worldview and to read great Christian books. The Spirit of God brought conviction to their hearts and on December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor Day, Hans wrote to a friend. "I'm thinking of you on this second Sunday of Advent, which I'm experiencing as a wholehearted Christian for the first time in my life."

For her part, Sophie recorded in her diary, "I pray for a compassionate heart, for how else could I love." She wrestled with the difficult questions that we all face at times, asking, "How is it possible that God is sovereign, that Christ is Lord, if there is so much injustice and pain?" But as time went on, the roots of both her and Hans' religious faith grew deeper and stronger, acquiring greater intensity and firmer definition. As their sister later described it, "The Christian Gospel became the criterion of their thoughts and actions."

As Hans and Sophie continued their university studies, they began to feel that they were responsible for

Germany. As Hans noted, the evils pervading German society and the minimal resistance offered to it, he asked pointedly, "Where are the Christians?" More softly, Sophie wrote, "I want to share the suffering of these days. Sympathy becomes hollow if one feels no pain."

A turning point was reached one evening when Hans was the only student invited to a social gathering in the home of one of the professors of the University of Munich. The conversation turned to the subject of politics. Since the group did not know one another well, it was a dangerous subject. Everyone agreed that German culture was decaying. One person suggested that the only way to cope with the Nazis was just to hang on, to tend to one's cultural obligations and tasks as scholars, and to just wait out the nightmare.

At that point Hans broke in with a caustic remark. "Why don't we rent ourselves an island in the Aegean and offer courses on worldviews?" The atmosphere must have turned glacial after such an impertinent comment. But philosophy professor Kurt Huber was galvanized by this impertinence. He exclaimed, "Something must be done, and it must be done now!" Professor Huber began to help the students of the White Rose, and over the next two years they produced and distributed a number of leaflets highlighting the evils of the National Socialist Party.

But the inevitable happened. On Thursday, February 18, 1943, Hans and Sophie took their latest pamphlet to the university campus to distribute it personally. They were apprehended. And though they divulged no names, their arrest was quickly followed by the arrest of other members of the White Rose. Professor Huber, who

to the end was the only professor at the university to openly support the White Rose, was one of those arrested. At his trial which shortly preceded his execution, he stated, "My actions and my intentions will be justified in the inevitable course of history; such is my firm faith. I hope to God that the inner strength that will vindicate my deeds will in good time spring forth from my own people. I have done as I had to do on the prompting of an inner voice. I take the consequences upon myself in the way expressed in the beautiful words of Johann Gottlieb Fichte: "And thou shalt act as if on thee and on thy deed depended the fate of all Germany and thou alone must answer for it."



Figure 4: The Graves of Hans and Sophie Scholl

Hans and Sophie were also summarily tried and convicted, and they were beheaded on the evening of their trials. But they had stood up for right. They had made a difference. Inspired by their commitment to Jesus Christ, influenced by a godly mentor and a courageous professor, they had made a statement in favor of truth. As Sophie had stated it simply, "Somebody, after all, had to make a start."

Hans and Sophie were buried in Perlach Cemetery in south Munich on February 24, 1943. In the city of Munich, graffiti appeared on the walls. It read, "Their spirit lives."

I wonder, "Does their spirit live?" Does it live in the hearts and minds of the faculty and students at Southern? Are we willing to manifest the courage of our convictions and to show what it means to be a Christian in our age? Their spirit can live, it will live, if we accept the challenge, "*Carpe diem!*" if we seize the day and grasp the opportunity to provide the spiritual education that our students so desperately need.



### Notes

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<sup>1</sup>E. G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Cal.: Pacific Press, 1952), 57.

<sup>2</sup>Steven Garber, *The Fabric of Faithfulness* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1996) 178, n. 1.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* 20.

<sup>4</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "Godlessness: the First Step to the Gulag". Templeton Prize Lecture, 10 May 1983 (London)

<sup>5</sup>See Phillip E. Johnson, *Reason in the Balance: The Case Against Naturalism in Science, Law and Education* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1995).

<sup>6</sup>George Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). I took the text of the plaque on the Duke campus from Phillip Johnson=s insightful interview of Marsden=s book which appeared in *First Things*, March, 1995, 51-56.

<sup>7</sup>Robert L. Simon, The Paralysis of Absolutophobia, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 27, 1997, B5-B6.

<sup>8</sup>Kay Haugaard, A Result of Too Much Tolerance *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 27, 1997, B4-B5.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.* B5.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>These and other disturbing survey results are reported in James Patterson and Peter Kim, *The Day America Told the Truth* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1991), 66.

<sup>12</sup>This and other distressing findings from the Barna Research Group are discussed in William G. Johnsson, Awash in a Sea of Relativism, *Adventist Review*, August, 1997, 5.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Dostoevsky, Fyodor *The Brothers Karamazov* (The Russian Messenger, 1880)

<sup>14</sup>J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1973), 159.

<sup>15</sup> Pettibone, Dennis, "A Century of Challenge" (1992). *Books and Pamphlets: Southern Adventist University History.3.*

<https://knowledge.e.southern.edu/booksandpamphlets/3>

<sup>16</sup>This quote is taken from an interview with D. Malcolm Maxwell published in "Our Distinctive Difference" *Seventh-day Adventist Higher Education*, @ *Pacific Union Recorder*, April 15, 1996, 5.

<sup>17</sup>This incident is recounted in Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 233.

<sup>18</sup>This story is told in Jan Charles Haluska, In Christ There Are No Moral Dilemmas, *Adventist Review*, July, 1997, 19.

<sup>19</sup>Dorothy Bass, The Gift of Sabbath, *Christianity Today*, September 1, 1997, 38-43, considers the Sabbath the most challenging and necessary spiritual discipline for Christians.

<sup>20</sup>For an up-to-date article describing this current ferment on the matter of life's origins, see Tim Stafford, The Making of a Revolution, *Christianity Today*, December 8, 1997, 16-22.

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<sup>21</sup>Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict*, Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1997.

<sup>22</sup>This retelling of the story of the White Rose is largely taken from and quotes from the account in Garber, *The Fabric of Faithfulness*, 162-171. It also gleans from Anton Gill, *An Honourable Defeat* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1994) 183-195. The latter is available on-line at: <http://www.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/Holocaust/gill-white-rose.html>