Baby Boomers and the Church: a Seminar Towards Understanding

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ABSTRACT

BABY BOOMERS AND THE CHURCH: A SEMINAR TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING

by

Gary E. Russell

Adviser: Douglas R. Kilcher
Problem

As one looks at the membership of the Seventh-day Adventist church today, it is apparent that a large segment of the baby-boom generation, those people born from 1946 to 1964 inclusively, is missing. This study was done to determine what can be done by the church to reclaim and/or evangelize baby boomers.

Method

A study of the literature provided material used to gain a general understanding of the baby-boom generation. A survey was conducted of the graduating classes of Adelphian and Cedar Lake academies for the years 1967 and
1968. The results of this survey provided insights into an understanding of Adventist baby boomers in particular.

Based on the material available in the literature and the results of the survey of Adelphian and Cedar Lake graduates, a seminar--"Baby Boomers and the Church: A Seminar Towards Understanding"--was conducted at two locations. Participants in the seminar completed two questionnaires--one at the beginning of the seminar and one after its completion. These questionnaires were designed to ascertain any increase in understanding of the baby-boom generation as a result of the seminar.

Results

A comparison of the entrance and exit questionnaires showed a definite increase in the understanding on the part of the participants of both baby boomers themselves as well as the need of a specialized ministry to this generation.

Conclusions

Baby boomers constitute a unique generation with distinctive needs. These needs require that the Seventh-day Adventist church take this generation seriously and begin to adopt an intentional, specialized form of ministry to this generation.
Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

BABY BOOMERS AND THE CHURCH: A
SEMINAR TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING

A Project Report
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Gary E. Russell
May 1993
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is, in reality, the product of many people. When I first began the Doctor of Ministry program I am not sure I was even aware of the term "baby boomer." In fact, I had originally conceived of my project as having to do with youth ministry.

In light of this, I took several classes from Dr. Steve Case, Associate Professor for Youth Ministries, at the SDA Theological Seminary, Andrews University. It was during one of those classes that Steve gave me a brochure advertising a new newsletter--Adventist Baby Boomer Awareness (ABBA). This newsletter introduced me to Paul Richardson, an Adventist baby boomer in Portland, Oregon, and began a friendship that continues to deepen. It was Paul and my work with ABBA that crystallized my desire to do something to help my church reach out to my generation.

There are others who have encouraged me in this project: Dr. Doug Kilcher, my committee chairman; Dr. Bruce Bauer and Dr. Randal Wisbey, both members of my committee; several of my church members, and many close, baby-boomer friends.

However, there is one other person without whom this project would never have seen completion. That person is my

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wife, Diane. She encouraged me to enter the program. She became excited with me as we began receiving completed surveys from our former schoolmates. She helped me keep going when I was ready to quit. And she insisted that I finish before we moved to California.

For her love, her encouragement, and her help, I am truly grateful. It is to her that I dedicate this project.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Purpose of this Project

The purpose of this project was to design and conduct a seminar applicable to the Seventh-day Adventist church for helping its members better understand, and thus better minister to, that generation of Americans born during the years 1946-1964, commonly known as the baby-boom generation.

Justification for the Project

I am a baby boomer. My personal interaction with current and former Adventist baby boomers suggests that a more intentional and accepting support system offered by the Seventh-day Adventist church toward this age group might considerably slow the boomers' exit from the church. This system might also provide ways to reclaim many of these who have already left its membership.

An investigation of the literature indicates a strong need for the Adventist church to come to terms with the baby boom generation and to minister to it in an understanding and intentional way. Most of the literature deals with demographic information on the generation's

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tastes and trends for use in marketing various products to this generation. In the past two years, several books have been written on how to reach baby boomers with the gospel based on this research. This project did not focus on the programs and marketing strategies shared in these books, but rather it attempted to paint an understandable portrait of a very important generation. Chapter 7 discusses some of the marketing strategies (or evangelistic methods) suggested in these books. This is done to give those who attend the seminar some idea of how to use their newly acquired understanding of the generation in reaching it for Christ. In working with this generation it is important to have an understanding of its mindset prior to attempting to minister to it. One cannot simply take a pre-packaged program and make it fit.

Ministering to baby boomers is important to the Seventh-day Adventist church because nearly 50 percent of those who leave the Seventh-day Adventist church are 20-35 years of age. Another 25 percent of those who leave are 36-50 years of age. Thus, most of our apostasies but few of our converts are baby boomers. Yet, the Seventh-day Adventist church, with the exception of a few local

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2Ibid.
churches, has not intentionally or systematically carried out a biblical, balanced ministry to them.

Seventh-day Adventist theology understands that Christians have a two-fold obligation in ministry. One is to proclaim the gospel to those who have not heard it. The other is to disciple those who are members of the church. This obligation is often fulfilled in specialized ministries to specific groups. During His earthly ministry Jesus often varied His approach to sharing the gospel according to the culture, age, or situation of the person or persons to whom He spoke. Historically, the Seventh-day Adventist church has developed specialized ministries to target audiences, for example, the blind and deaf, children, youth, retirees, divorcees, etc.

According to the most current statistics available, membership growth in the Seventh-day Adventist church (outside of biological growth produced by the baptism of members' children) comes from lower socio-economic groups.¹ According to Dudley's study, out of forty-seven socio-economic clusters, the five clusters the Adventist church is penetrating most deeply are all near the bottom of the economic scale. And the church's best success comes from the cluster that is second from the bottom.²

²Ibid., 5.
Although there are baby boomers in each of the forty-seven economic clusters, the generation tends to be in the middle to upper socio-economic groups. Perhaps, as the church learns how to minister to its own baby boomers, it may find attractive ways to offer the gospel to those who have either rejected or not yet responded to it.

Definition of Terms

In this project there are several technical terms that need to be understood. These include the following:

**Baby boomer(s), boomers:** These terms are defined as all those people born in the United States of America during the years 1946-1964.

**SDA, Adventist:** These terms refer to the Seventh-day Adventist denomination whose world headquarters is located in Silver Spring, Maryland.

**Celebration:** Refers to a participatory worship-style currently being used in a number of Adventist churches to attract secular people, especially baby boomers. This style usually includes such items as praise choruses projected on a screen for congregational singing, a garden of prayer, Christian drama, etc.

**Yuppie:** This term refers to young, upwardly mobile, professional baby boomers in income brackets exceeding $100,000 annually.
Limitations of the Project

There were two major limitations to this project. Various approaches could be taken in studying baby boomers. I chose to study the generation in terms of how it came to be, those factors contributing to its generational psyche, and its relationship to religion, particularly the Christian religion. In chapter 9 I focus on Adventist baby boomers and their relationship to the Seventh-day Adventist church. I look at several areas of boomer life and thought in an attempt to understand the baby-boomer mindset in order to discern avenues the church might use to penetrate this generation with the gospel.

The second major limitation concerns the survey sample. The sample I chose is not a random one. It is a specific one. It consisted of graduates of Adelphian and Cedar Lake academies of the years 1967 and 1968. In addition, surveys completed by several baby-boomer pastors who took a Doctor of Ministry class from Dr. Steve Case are included. Although this group has a strong homogenous make-up, it is diverse enough to provide a wide base of thought, perception, and experience. I believe it sufficient for use in this project.

Method

This document forms the basis for the seminar I will conduct at two locations. Participants will complete a form at the beginning of the seminar to assess their
understanding of the baby-boom generation prior to the presentation of this material. They will also complete a survey at the end of the seminar to determine whether or not their understanding has been deepened as a result of their participation.
CHAPTER II
THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF A SPECIALIZED
MINISTRY TO BABY BOOMERS

The Need of a Specialized Ministry
to Baby Boomers

The question is asked, Why do we need a specialized ministry to the baby-boom generation? After all, they are no different than any other generation, except that they appear to be more self-centered and self-absorbed. Why should we, the Seventh-day Adventist church, expend our energy in an intentional ministry to this generation?

Three Responses to the Question of Need

Because They Are There

The first response to these questions is simply, because they, the baby boomers, are there. In the United States of America, there are between 75 and 77 million of them. Researchers estimate that between two-thirds and three-quarters of them are unchurched, that is, individuals without a church home of any kind. This constitutes a tremendous mission field.

Currently (1993) there is a great movement to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ under the umbrella of the three
angels' message to the people of Eastern Europe. Thousands of dollars, perhaps even millions, are being spent in an attempt to bring the "Adventist Message" to those who for decades have been denied access to the Scriptures under atheistic Communist regimes. Evangelists appear to see it as a mark of accomplishment to be able to include a series of meetings in a former Communist country in their resume. Appeals are made from Adventist pulpits and in Adventist literature for money to fund these efforts as well as to provide Adventist literature, churches, seminaries, publishing houses, and leaders in these countries. This is good. The miraculous opening we have in Eastern Europe is unprecedented in this century. We need to do all we can to reach these people while the doors are open and the reception is warm.

Because of the Lack of a Ministry to Them

Yet the question arises, what about those closer to home? What are we doing to reach the 75-77 million adults who were born from 1946 to 1964? What special effort is the Seventh-day Adventist church making to present the gospel to them in a way that speaks to their hearts and minds and draws them to Jesus? The answer is, very little. There are several local churches which are reaching out specifically to baby boomers (the Tierrasante SDA Church in southeastern California, and the Boston Temple SDA Church in Boston,
Massachusetts, are two). In 1988, Paul Richardson, an Adventist layman in Portland, Oregon, conceived of a regional newsletter as a means for Adventist baby boomers in the Portland area to communicate with each other. That newsletter, *Adventist Baby Boomer Awareness (ABBA)*, now has subscribers in most of the United States and Canada. Paul and several of his colleagues have since formed the "Baby Boomer Ministries Resource Center." This center is independent of the Adventist church even though it uses some church entities (the Adventist Book Centers and the North American Division Distribution Center primarily) to market its products. The denomination itself has yet to focus in any major way on evangelizing the baby-boom generation. This is the second response to the question. We need an intentional ministry to this generation because presently we do not have one.

True, the church continues its round of traditional evangelistic efforts. Several years ago, Revelation Seminars were initiated in an attempt to reach a clientele different from that reached by traditional evangelism. And there are always the perennial personal Bible study programs. Yet, all of these are simply a shotgun approach. The church fires its gospel double-barrel, and hopes some of the shot hits the target, even though it is not sure what target it is aiming at. And it converts a few.
Because God Would Have Us Minister to Them

The third response to the question is another question. Is it possible that God would have us raise our sights? Is it possible that, even in secularized America, God has thousands, even millions, of people who are waiting to hear the gospel presented in such a winsome way that they are drawn to it? Is it possible that baby boomers, brought up in a time of affluence, independent in their thinking, and non-aligned in their religious preferences, could be attracted to the gospel through the Seventh-day Adventist church? I believe it is.

I believe that though many of the previous generation have written off the baby boomers, God has not. I believe God has not rejected the 75-77 million people who range in age from 29-47, whose interests vary from family issues to social issues, and whose values still include equality, inclusiveness, and openness. And if God has not rejected this generation, I believe the Seventh-day Adventist Church dare not reject it.

Special Needs of Baby Boomers

To return to my original question--Why do we need a specialized ministry to the baby boom generation?--I would point out that this generation has special needs that require it.
Social and Political Events that Created Needs

This generation was the first to grow up under the cloud of potential nuclear annihilation. It was the first to grow up under the influence of television. It was the first to be largely college educated, and nearly the entire generation graduated from high school. It was a crowded generation and developed a keen sense of individuality because of those conditions. It cultivated a deep sense of the equality of all races and both genders. Its adolescence was marked by the assassinations of not one, but three, of its highly respected and beloved leaders. It felt betrayed by other leaders in a war this country chose not to win and a president whose insecurities besmirched the reputation of his office. And it rejected a church it saw as racist, sexist, and out of touch with reality. When offered an opportunity to "tune in, turn on, and drop out," it did.

That was then. This is now. Is there hope that the generation that brought us LSD, marijuana, the Woodstock Rock Festival, protest marches, and hippies can be reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ? The answer is emphatic and unequivocal--yes!

Needs Created by the Church

In spite of beads, the Beatles, and fear of "the bomb," baby boomers are a spiritual generation. It is true

\[\text{\textsuperscript{1}}\text{This was the slogan developed by Dr. Timothy O'Leary, an early and vocal proponent of the use of LSD.}\]

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they have largely rejected traditional Christianity, but that does not mean they are unspiritual. Many of them saw the Christian church as "selling out" to the "establishment" and thus becoming indistinct from it. As they fought for equality and justice, they saw "the church" as being so "heavenly-minded it was no earthly good." Much of the rejection was not so much theological as it was that the church appeared to be irrelevant. The church was more concerned with "saving souls" than it was feeding the hungry, liberating the captives, and bringing sight to the blind.

Baby boomers are idealistic, visionary, and activity-oriented. Believing everyone has a right to proper shelter, they join Habitat for Humanity and build homes rather than study the problem of homelessness. Concerned about people going hungry, they will pack lunches or serve in soup kitchens and feed the hungry, rather than form a committee to ascertain what to do about the problem of hunger. Since the church appeared not to be interested in these activities, baby boomers went elsewhere. They joined the Peace Corps by the thousands. The first Adventist Student Missionaries were baby boomers. Adventist Frontier Missions is largely staffed by baby boomers. To meet their spiritual needs they turned to Transcendental Meditation, Hinduism, or so-called New Age religions.
Why the Ministry Is Needed Now

The generation has a spiritual emptiness it is desperately trying to fill. With the onset of parenthood, many baby boomers are returning to Christianity, the faith of their childhood, because they sense that their children need spiritual moorings. Others are sensing the emptiness of a life without spiritual expression and are looking to see if Christianity offers an opportunity to express their spirituality.

As never before, the church has an opportunity to win this generation for Christ. Is it as willing to spend for them as it is for the millions of Eastern Europe? The current answer appears to be no.

Traditional forms of evangelism and worship appear to be successful in reaching Eastern Europeans. It is not with baby boomers. Traditional church music appeals to former communists. It does not to baby boomers. The authority of the church is not questioned by people long used to obeying orders from Communist party leaders. It is by baby boomers.

What Is Needed Now

In order to reach this generation for Christ, the Adventist church must be willing to examine itself. The church must be willing to separate the essential elements of the gospel from traditional cultural elements encapsulating it. It must be willing to share the gospel in new ways, in
new forms of expression. And it must be willing to bear the pain and the discomfort these new methods and expressions may bring.

A Biblical Example of Evangelistic Adaptation

This concept is not new. It is nearly as old as Christianity itself. In 1 Cor 9:19-23, the apostle Paul wrote:

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

In commenting on this passage, the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary says,

[Paul] was willing to comply with the habits, customs, and opinions of others as far as possible, without compromising principle. God's ministers must be ready at all times to adapt themselves and their ministry to the nature of those for whom they labor.

All things in Paul's life were made subject to his great objective of preaching the gospel and winning souls for Christ. . . .

[His] knowledge of Judaism was put to good use by Paul, both in his evangelizing efforts among his countrymen and in his own defense. . . . He complied with their practices and prejudices as far as he could with a good conscience. He did not needlessly offend them, but endeavored to use his familiarity with their beliefs and customs in a way that made it easier for him to present the gospel to them. His whole purpose in conforming to their philosophy as much as possible was to lead them to the Saviour.
Paul did not believe that conformity with ceremonial laws and ritual observances was necessary for Christians, but he was anxious to do everything possible to create a favorable impression and so be in a better position to convince those "under the law" of the truth of the gospel . . . and thus "gain" them. [emphasis supplied]

In dealing with such [the "weak"], Paul did not deliberately behave in a manner that would arouse their prejudices and confuse their limited comprehensions of truth. He did not shock them by nonconformity with their customs in dress, food, and even religious services . . . This condescension to the viewpoint of the weaker brethren . . . was in reality a sign that he possessed great moral strength. Secure in his experimental knowledge of the love of Jesus, and sure of the supremacy of the one great truth of salvation by faith in Christ, he could well afford to please the weak ones by complying with their peculiarities in things that were not of major importance, such as refraining from the use of food offered to idols . . .

Paul's versatility enabled him to practice an all-sided adaptation of himself to all kinds of conditions of men in those things that were not of themselves involving questions of right principles. [emphasis supplied]. However, Paul never compromised on matters of principle.

Everything that Paul did, his ready adaptation to the particular society in which he found himself and his willingness to be tolerant and patient toward all men, had but one objective—the saving of those who would believe his message. . . . By his course of adjustment to the customs, habits, and opinions of all classes of men in order that he might save some, Paul followed closely the pattern set by the Saviour, of whom the prophet wrote: "A bruised reed shall he not break" (Isa 42:1-3). Adaptability is one of the most useful qualities that a minister can cultivate. It helps him to work as Jesus worked: in the homes of the poor and ignorant, in the market place among the merchants and financiers, at the feasts and entertainments of the wealthy, and in conversation with the wise. He will be willing to go anywhere and use whatever method is most suitable in order to win men for God's eternal kingdom of glory and peace."

The Church and Paul's Example

Following Paul's example would help the church minister to and evangelize members of the baby boom generation. Generally, traditional methods of evangelism are not reaching this generation with the gospel. New methods must be devised that will speak to baby boomers in language they will understand. Traditional proof-text, question/answer Bible lessons must give way to the development of new patterns of Bible study. Spectator forms of worship must give way to new styles of participatory worship. Traditional forms of music, classical as well as "grand old hymns," must give way to new forms of music that allow it to be experienced rather than just listened to.

This frightens many Seventh-day Adventists because they tend to find a security in that which is familiar. They sense a continuity with the past as its forms are continued into the present and carried on into the future. Yet, most baby boomers do not have this tie to the past of the church. Even of those who experienced some religious training in their childhood, many have rejected the church and its ties to a past they see as patronizing, colonial, and discriminatory.

To reach baby boomers, the church needs to create a new past. It does this, not by denying the truth of its misconduct in the past, but by accepting its mistakes and focusing on its successes. It must share with baby boomers...
its vision of a church where inclusivity, freedom, and equality are not only cherished ideals, but visible realities. It must celebrate those times in the past where these ideals were victorious. Just as people must come to grips with their own imperfections and still be able to live with themselves, the church must come to grips with its own imperfections and be able to live with itself. And in so doing, invite this generation to help it. In short, it must place the wine of the gospel in new wineskins.

And as the church does this, it needs to understand that these new wineskins may look different than the old ones. They may be of different sizes, shapes, and textures, but their purpose is the same—to hold wine.

The problem with the church has been that too often it is like the people Jesus spoke to about new wine and new wineskins. They do not want the new wine, saying "The old is better" (Luke 5:38).

If the Adventist church is interested in reaching the baby-boomer generation (and how could it conscientiously say it is not), it must be willing to intentionally and specifically develop and implement new methods of attracting its members to the gospel and the Lord it points to.

This speaks of change. Someone once wrote: "Change is seldom easy, often painful, and always inevitable." It is difficult for any institution, especially a conservative church, to change in major, meaningful ways. Change in the
church often takes decades, perhaps even centuries. But we do not have that kind of time. The oldest baby boomers will begin dying off en masse in about forty years, the youngest in about sixty. Research and experience tells us that as people get older, it is harder to persuade them to make life-changing decisions, especially when it comes to religious matters. Now is the key time to reach this generation. There will never be a better opportunity. Why do we hesitate? Are the necessary changes too great?

Is the traditional Adventist form of worship inspired of God? Can there be no allowance for contemporary forms that might speak to this generation? Is the music found in the Church Hymnal or the classical composers the only music that delights the ear of God? Is it possible that God might enjoy lively, energetic, perhaps even entertaining styles of Christian music, even if they mimic current secular styles? Must we continue to "prove" our doctrinal statement by culling texts from their contexts and convincing people's minds by the weight of evidence, regardless of whether their heart is convinced? Or can we find ways to introduce people to Jesus so they will fall in love with Him first, and on the basis of that relationship find examples in Scripture and church history of how to live as Christians in this world? Must the church continue to have Black and White conferences, or only males as ordained clergy who fill most top leadership positions? Is the
church willing to exemplify the ideals of equality, inclusiveness, and freedom as part of its intentional ministry to attract baby boomers?

Some of the ideas presented in this chapter may appear to be radical, perhaps even "liberal." Some may even ask, "Do we want to include a generation in our church that asks so much of us?" I believe the answer to that question must be yes.

The church must never be satisfied with maintaining the status quo. It must continually reassess its methodology to make sure it is reaching the greatest number of people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. It must be willing to change current methodologies, lay aside old inefficient ones, and develop new ones as it seeks to bring people into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Counsel from Ellen White

In the book Evangelism, Ellen White asserts, "We . . . must learn to adapt our labors to the condition of the people--to meet men where they are."¹ And beginning on page 103 of the same book there is an entire section entitled "Allowing for more than one man's method." Some of the cogent statements follow:

The various talents that the Lord has entrusted to His servants are essential in His work. The different parts of the work are to be brought

together, piece by piece, to make the complete whole. The parts of a building are not all the same; neither are they made by the same process. The lines of God's work are not all the same, and neither are they to be carried forward in exactly the same way. ¹

In order for the work to be built up strong and symmetrical, there is need of varied gifts and different agencies, all under the Lord's direction. He will instruct the workers according to their several abilities. ²

The Lord moves upon ministers who have varied capabilities that they may feed the flock of His heritage with food convenient for them [emphasis supplied]. ³

There are some minds which do not grow with the work but allow the work to grow far beyond them. . . . Those who do not discern and adapt themselves to the increasing demands of the work, should not stand blocking the wheels and thus hindering the advancement of others [emphasis supplied]. ⁴

There must be no fixed rules; our work is a progressive work, and there must be room left for methods to be improved upon. But under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, unity must and will be preserved. ⁵

Means will be devised to reach hearts. Some of the methods used in this work will be different from the methods used in the work in the past; but let no one, because of this, block the way by criticism [emphasis supplied]. ⁶

Men are needed who pray to God for wisdom, and who, under the guidance of God, can put new life into the old methods of labor and can invent new plans and new methods of awakening the interest of church members and reaching the men and women of the world. ⁷

God's workmen must labor to be many-sided men; that is, to have a breadth of character, not to be one-

¹Ibid., 103.
²Ibid., 104.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid., 105.
⁵Ibid.
⁶Ibid.
⁷Ibid.
idea men, stereotyped in one manner of working, getting into a groove, and unable to see and sense that their words and their advocacy of truth must vary with the class of people they are among, and the circumstances that they have to meet.¹

Let us not forget that different methods are to be employed to save different ones. . . . The classes of people you meet with decide for you the way in which the work should be handled.²

The Example of Jesus

The principles inherent in these quotations were exemplified in the ministry of Jesus Himself. As He met with people, He varied His approach in order to build a rapport with them before presenting the gospel. Ellen White comments:

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour (sic) mingled with men as One who desired their good. He sympathized with them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then, He bade them, "Follow Me."³

He approached Nicodemus differently than He approached Andrew. He spoke of theological differences with the woman of Samaria and of family privileges with the Syro-phoenicean woman. His approach to the scribes and Pharisees was radically different from that which he used for the publican and sinners.

Each of these people represented different groups of people and Christ dealt with them differently. He followed

¹Ibid., 106.
²Ibid., 106.
a "specialized approach" to ministry. His purpose was constant and unchanging. But His methods differed from person to person, group to group.

Several Examples of Specialized Ministries in the Seventh-day Adventist Church

James Edson White

The church has not been without its attempts to follow Christ in specialized ministries. Early in our history, James Edson White began a specialized ministry for former slaves in the southern states. His mother, Ellen, commended him for his innovative methods in bringing the gospel to them, methods which even included "Sunday Schools" for the children. This small beginning led to a specialized ministry for African-Americans which now includes Oakwood College in Hunstville, Alabama, and regional conferences across the country.

As it has grown, the church has specialized ministries to other ethnic groups as well. Many conferences in the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists have a director of Hispanic ministries to coordinate evangelism among people of Hispanic backgrounds. In areas where there are large numbers of other ethnic groups, specialized ministries to them are in place or are beginning. For example, in the Southern California Conference there are directors for Asian/South Pacific ministries, Black ministries, and Spanish ministries. In
the Michigan Conference there is a growing Korean population and efforts toward a specialized ministry to them are moving forward.

Youth Ministries

The Adventist church has developed a specialized youth ministry. Although there are those who claim it needs to be brought up to date, this ministry has attempted to bring the gospel to young people of the Adventist church. Such organizations as Junior Missionary Volunteer societies, Missionary Volunteer societies, Pathfinder clubs, Master Guide clubs, Adventist Junior Youth societies and Adventist Youth societies, have formed a specialized ministry to the church's young people. Recently, the president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists set up a "Youth Cabinet" to evaluate the church's ministry to youth and to make recommendations to the world church on how better to reach this group. He encourages each local conference and church to do the same. Steve Case, a former youth pastor in Northern California, has incorporated a non-profit organization called "Piece of the Pie Ministries" to provide consultation, training, and expertise for any church entity that wants help in developing a viable youth ministry. Dr. Randal Wisbey, Professor of Youth Ministries at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan, has reopened the "Youth and Young Adult Resource Center" and organized the "Giraffe Society" for those...
willing to "stick their necks out for youth." The "John Hancock Center for Youth Ministry," another youth ministry resource center, recently opened at La Sierra University in Riverside, California.

Christian Record Society

The Christian Record Society was formed as a specialized ministry to those members of our society who are handicapped in the areas of hearing and sight. Thousands of records, tapes, Braille books, and Bibles have brought the gospel of Jesus Christ to them.

Women's Ministries

Perhaps the most recent specialized ministry in the denomination is that of women's ministries. Ironically, for a church who had as a "founding father" a mother, it has only been very recently that a specialized ministry for women has been set up. Conferences and churches are encouraged to elect a director of women's ministries to focus on the special needs of the women of the church.

Some Observations

It should be obvious by now that both biblically and historically, specialized ministries are necessary and vital to the growth and health of the church.

One may argue, however, that as a group, baby boomers do not qualify as needing a specialized ministry. The examples given above can be easily defined by age,
ethnicity, gender, or disability. Baby boomers, on the other hand, include nearly two decades of births, every ethnic group, both genders, and disabilities of every type. Their numbers encompass such a wide spectrum of diversity, one may question the validity of defining them as a group needing and deserving a specialized ministry.

Part of the purpose of this project was to demonstrate that the generation does have defining qualities that qualify it as a group needing a specialized ministry. Books have been written on how to reach baby boomers with the Christian gospel. Other denominations have developed seminars on evangelizing the baby-boom generation. Few have spent much time in attempting to come to an understanding of its psyche before trying to develop methodologies of reaching it.

Even the training seminar I recently participated in under the auspices of the Baby Boomer Ministries Resource Center (non-aligned with the Seventh-day Adventist church, but currently staffed by Adventists and working in harmony with the denomination), dealt primarily with the pragmatics of methodology and not with attempting to help people understand the mind-set of the generation. This may have occurred because most of the participants of the seminar were baby boomers who already understand who they are and why the church needs to address their issues.
This project was an attempt to help non-baby-boomers begin to understand the generation itself, its values and needs, why it is the way it is, and what, I believe, makes it cohesive enough to qualify for a specialized ministry.

There are those who wish the generation would just go away. Two senior consultants to the Baby Boomer Ministries Resource Center presented this need to a convention of conference officers in one of the Union Conferences of North America. At the beginning of one meeting, an older conference officer exclaimed loudly, "I'm tired of hearing about baby boomers! Can't we talk about something else."

A baby-boomer pastor in southeastern California shared (in a training seminar on reaching baby boomers) that an officer of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists told her that the church is waiting for the next generation to become old enough to take over its leadership because baby boomers are too selfish and self-centered to be entrusted with it.

Jesus tells a story in Matt 18:12-14. He says:

What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, I tell you

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1This was shared with me by Butch Nelson, one of the consultants at the meeting where this incident occurred.

2Margo Pitrone, an associate pastor in the Southeastern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, related this incident during a training seminar held in that conference under the auspices of the Baby Boomer Ministries Resource Center.
the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost. (NIV)

Baby boomers now constitute at least one-half of the adult population of the United States of America. According to the Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopedia 1992 Yearbook, the population of the United States, as reported by the Census Bureau for the 1990 census, was 249,632,690.¹ Twenty-six percent of that figure (64,904,500) are under the age of eighteen. Those age sixty-five and older constitute 13 percent of the population, or 32,452,250 people. This leaves 152,275,940 people. Of this number, 75-77 million are baby boomers and 50-70% percent of them are unchurched, without Christ, without hope.

If the shepherd was concerned with 1 percent, should not the church be concerned with 50 percent or more. In the sheepfold of North America, is the Seventh-day Adventist church willing to ignore this vast multitude of lost sheep? If Christ would have been willing to die for one lost person, cannot the church be willing to develop a ministry that will reach not one but millions? Can it not be willing to lay aside tradition if necessary, outmoded methods when necessary, and do what is necessary to reach the millions of baby boomers within its reach?

The Adventist church is a conservative one. Many Adventists are proud of that fact. Yet, in Selected Messages, book 1, Ellen White decries that conservatism that hinders the spread of the gospel.

The Son of the infinite God, the Lord of life and glory, descended in humiliation to the life of the lowliest, that no one might feel himself excluded from his presence. He made Himself accessible to all. He did not select a favored few with whom to associate and ignore all others. It grieves the Spirit of God when conservatism shuts man away from his fellow man, especially when it is found among those who profess to be His children.¹

It is my prayer that this project will be one of the building blocks making up the specialized ministry to a generation that needs it so desperately.

Summary

Both Scripture and Adventist history have shown the need for intentional, specialized ministries to target groups. Because of the special needs of baby boomers, it is my belief that a specialized ministry to this generation is theologically sound, historically based, and immediately necessary.

CHAPTER III

DEFINING THE BABY BOOM GENERATION

One second after midnight, January 1, 1946, Kathleen Casey Wilkins was born—the first of a generation that spanned nearly twenty years. From 1946 to 1964 somewhere between 76 and 77 million babies were born in the United States of America. These babies collectively make up what sociologists and others call the "baby-boom generation."

Some General Observations

This boom in the number of births was unexpected. In 1930, the birth rate in the United States averaged 2.1 children per family. It peaked in the 1950s at 3.7, and by the 1970s had fallen to 1.8. Demographers were clearly unprepared for the increased number of births following World War II. Most population forecasters expected a slight rise in the number of births immediately after the war,


2Ibid.

followed by a decline soon after to Depression-era levels. No one foresaw a twenty-year surge.¹

In the 1990s, the oldest members of the baby boom generation are turning forty-something, while the youngest are just reaching their late twenties. As one might imagine, the members of the generation are not monolithic. Baby boomers include those who came of age with Sputnik and the Civil Rights movement, those who grew up with Vietnam and Earth Day, and those who awoke to Watergate and the OPEC oil embargo. Some baby boomers were on the front lines in Vietnam or in the protest marches at home in the U.S., others merely watched it on television, and the rest have yet to rent a video that portrays it.²

Some Generational Commonalities

Family

However, in spite of its differences, the baby boom generation began with a remarkable homogeneity. It was as if every American couple had pledged at the marriage altar to

love, honor, and obey the national average of two children per family. Members of the baby boom were more likely than those in the generation before it to grow up in roughly the same sized family--two married natural parents, (and) one or two brothers or sisters.³

¹Ibid., 22-23.
²Ibid., 19.
³Ibid., 23.
Even construction codes became part of the standard baby boomer childhood. Along with the norm of two children, two natural, married parents, a brand name appliance, and an American-made car, the standard baby boom family and home gave the generation a sense of sameness.¹

A Common Time Frame

The generation shares a common time frame, 1946-1964. It shares a common history—the Civil Rights movement, Vietnam, Watergate, Carter, and Reagan. It shares common ideas about tolerance and the rejection of social and political traditions.² At a minimum, baby boomers share a fairly standardized childhood. From family size to school plans, television habits to personal fears, baby boomers were raised as anything but individuals.³ Yet, perhaps more important than their great expectations, television, and crowding, they shared a sense of fear about nuclear war. The question for many of them was not whether they could get to the head of the class tomorrow, but whether there would be any tomorrow.⁴

¹Ibid., 111.
²Ibid., 22.
³Ibid., 110.
⁴Ibid., 137.
Baby Boomers Perceive Themselves as Different

Baby boomers have a perception of themselves as being very different from other generations—a perception that has existed from childhood. This comes in part because children naturally want to be different from their parents. However, this natural urge does not explain all of it.¹

The results of a typical study showed that 1960s college students were twice as likely as their parents to say there was a generation gap between them and to define it in more permanent terms. Students defined it in terms of values and tolerance. Parents defined it in terms of immaturity and age. As for differences within families, students talked about values while parents were concerned with habits and personal styles. The authors of the study summarized their findings this way:

It is as if the parents were saying, "Yes, there are differences between the generations, but these are not intrinsic. They are simply due to differences in life status and maturity." The students, by contrast, are saying, "The contrasts we see are in values and basic orientations to life. There are differences; and they are important."²

Unfortunately for the parents of boomers, these perceptions are based on very real differences. Baby boomers may love their parents, but when it comes to politics, marriage, drugs, or sex, they respectfully

¹Ibid., 27.
²Ibid.
disagree. For example, in issues ranging from government's role in creating jobs to religion in school, war and peace, political trust, race relations, AIDS, homosexuality, drugs, pornography, and women's rights, baby boomers maintain their distance from their parents and their grandparents.

Unifying Experiences

In addition to these shared beliefs about the generation gap, boomers share several experiences that unite them as a generation. They were part of the silent revolution in social values that continues even today. They were raised with great expectations about their future. They witnessed history through the unifying image of television. They experienced social crowding which fueled their desire for individual distinction, and they shared the fears brought on by a new generation of cold-war weapons capable of ending their lives in a moment's notice.

Several Generational Differences

On the other hand, in spite of these unifying generational factors, there are several areas of difference within the generation.

\(^1\)Ibid., 28.
\(^2\)Ibid.
\(^3\)Ibid., 111-2.
Generational Categories

In the *Midterm Report*, David Wallechinsky defines three generational categories among baby boomers. First, he says, there is a sizeable minority that is virtually unaffected by the events and social movements of the 1960s. Second, there is a sizeable minority whose lives were radically and permanently altered by those events and movements. Finally, he sees a plurality who were touched and moved by it all, but who went on to "normal" lives, although they would never forget what they saw, heard, and felt.¹

Old Wave and New Wave Baby Boomers

Other researchers speak of the generation as "Old Wave," those born from 1946-1954, and "New Wave," those born from 1955-1964.²

Old Wave boomers are old enough to remember atomic bomb drills, freedom marches, and President John F. Kennedy's assassination. By the mid-80s they were likely to have married, had children, gotten a mortgage, and divorced. On the other hand, at this same time New Wave boomers were just beginning their first careers, were one to two years from their first marriages, wore MIA bracelets, and


²Light, 77, although some researchers place the dividing date at 1957.
celebrated Earth Day. Their memories of assassination were of Robert Kennedy, not John Kennedy. They were less likely to have children and mortgages, and some were still living at home.¹

Older boomers entered college ready to explore the philosophy of life, while their younger siblings were more interested in just getting through the day. Old Wave baby boomers became adults hoping to change the world for the better. New Wave ones entered adulthood with few illusions about the way life is.²

New Wave boomers are less likely to watch network news than their older siblings. They are less confident about their ability to influence government. They are less likely to be Republican and are less likely to support what President Lyndon Johnson once called the "Great Society." They find themselves with lower incomes, higher mortgages (when they finally buy a home), and in greater personal debt than Old Wave boomers.³

Educational Differences

Another divisive element in the generation is education. Not only was the baby-boom generation the first to be pushed through high school, it was given unprecedented

¹Ibid.
²Ibid., 83.
³Ibid., 77-8.
encouragement to go on to college. Half of all baby boomers started college, and almost half of those finished.\(^1\)

Generally, high school boomers tend to be more conservative on defense and social issues and more liberal on governmental intervention in the economy. College-educated boomers tend to be liberal on defense, much more liberal on social issues, and mixed on economic intervention by the government.\(^2\) It is difficult to categorize this generation in terms of easily definable labels like conservative and liberal. They appear to be multi-dimensional rather than single-dimensional.\(^3\)

**Political Ideologies**

According to the Washington Cato Institute, a self-described baby-boomer think-tank, by 1980 there were four distinct boomer ideologies:

1. Liberals who support government economic intervention and the expansion of personal freedoms (This approach is generally supported by younger Democrats, and is held by roughly one-third of boomers.)

2. Conservatives who oppose both intervention and expanding freedoms (They hold a set of attitudes more

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\(^1\)Ibid., 122.

\(^2\)Ibid., 92.

\(^3\)Ibid., 237.

\(^4\)Ibid., 224-5.
typical of many older Republicans. This view still attracts roughly one in seven baby boomers.)

3. Populists who oppose expansion of individual freedoms but support governmental economic intervention (This view, typically held by New Deal Democrats, is supported by about 25 percent of the generation.)

4. Libertarians who oppose economic intervention by the government, but support the expansion of personal freedom. (This view, a kind of "every person for him or herself" approach, is usually held by young Republicans and is supported by about one in five baby boomers.)

Other areas of difference are feelings about the Vietnam War and the fact they were born in different regions of the country. One observer of the generation explained the differences this way. He said there are three classes of baby boomers. The first class is inner-directed. They are the ones who seek the out-of-the-ordinary. For example, they will drink Dr. Pepper rather than Pepsi or Coca Cola. The second class is outer-directed. They want to "be a Pepper." The third class are those need-directed ones who cannot afford Dr. Pepper.¹

The point here is not that baby boomers are an infinitely indivisible group, but that the generation does have potential for polarization along a number of distinct

¹Ibid., 37-8.
social, political, and demographic lines. It is hardly a monolith of political and social opinion.¹

Yet in spite of the differences, boomers share considerable common ground. They share the simple fact that they are baby boomers. They will always be reminded of their numbers and their great potential. They will always be congratulated at each major birthday.² They reflect a shared sense of time, a shared feeling for an era. German sociologist Karl Marnheim called this sense of shared feeling a *zeitgeist*—"a spirit of the times."

Boomers experience this zeitgeist differently, but they all share in it. As time fades and changes come, there remains this continuity. Baby boomers are still more liberal on social issues than both older and younger generations. "The zeitgeist may be fading with time, but it still exists at some level of political consciousness, and such differences [between the generations] may last a lifetime."³

**Two Distinct Crises Also Helped Define the Baby-Boom Generation**

According to Light, two distinct crises permanently imprinted baby boomers. The first was political crisis, particularly during the summer of 1965 with events ranging

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¹Ibid., 109.
²Ibid., 110.
³Ibid., 37-8.

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from murders in Selma, Alabama, to riots in the Watts section of Los Angeles. The "war" in Vietnam destroyed any remaining myth or innocence the generation had about war and the warrior. From Selma to Vietnam to Cambodia, from Watergate to OPEC, from Iran to Beirut, political crisis marked the generation.

Second, there was a crisis in the family. The divorce wave began in the 1950s. By the early 1960s the exploding divorce rate struck at the heart of the nineteenth-century sex-role system. Divorce broke into the central bargain of marriage by which a woman traded her services as wife and mother for the financial support of the husband.¹

Cheryl Merser, author of *Grown-Ups* says,

My generation has not followed an orderly path into adulthood, either by our "mood and manners" or by accepting without question the roles and values proscribed by the culture into which we were born—but then, the world to which we were born wasn't the same world that greeted us as adults. Our life cycle is unfolding differently from those of the generations who came before us. We haven't chosen careers, married, bought houses, had children and then stumbled into mid-life crisis in a specific linear order, the way our parents seem to have done with such atypical regularity.²

This, then, is the generation I seek to expose to our understanding. If the generation seems a bit convoluted

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¹Ibid., 38-42.

while at the same time holding onto a tenacious homogeneity, we are in the right frame of mind to begin to understand it.

Summary

Baby boomers are those people born from 1946-1964 inclusively. Besides sharing a common time frame, they share a common history and common ideas about tolerance and the rejection of social and political traditions.

In spite of these commonalities, the generation can be divided by age--Old Wave (1946-1955) and New Wave (1956-1964). In terms of their history, they may also be divided into three groups: (1) those unaffected by the events of the 1960s, (2) those extremely involved in the events of the 1960s, and (3) those who were touched and moved by the events of the 1960s but who went on to live "normal" lives.
CHAPTER IV

FACTORS THAT LED TO THE BABY BOOM

The Baby Boom Was Unexpected

No one predicted the baby boom that followed the end of World War II. In fact, no one expected it. During the 1930s, the marriage rate in the United States had plummeted to an all-time low. Because of the Depression, men were reluctant to marry for fear they would not be able to provide for their families. Authority figures such as clergy and educators feared this delay of marriage would lead to "sexual transgression" and a large increase of out-of-wedlock pregnancies. To combat this threat, authorities strongly encouraged sexual abstinence by young people or parents' help in order to get them married at an earlier age.¹

When the United States entered World War II, thousands of men were called into active military duty. As they left their jobs, women began leaving their homes by the thousands to fill the jobs the men had left. This influx of women into the workforce not only revived fears of sexual

promiscuity, but also of "race suicide"—a concern many observers expressed due to an anticipated decline in the birthrate. A study reported in the American Journal of Sociology concluded that the increase in women's employment "is related to the secular decline in the birth rate," and predicted (wrongly) that since the proportion of women in the paid labor force was likely to increase even more, the birthrate would continue to decline.

Postwar Sexuality

During the postwar years, sexual values as well as sexual behaviors were in flux. These years marked the widespread acceptance of "sexual liberalism"—non-coital forms of pre-marital sex, "intimacy with affection," a heightened expectation for erotic fulfillment in marriage, and an explosion of sexual images in the media. At the same time, the taboos against pre-marital intercourse, homosexuality, and other forms of non-procreative sex remained central tenets for sexual morality. From private industry to the military, the sexual behavior of an employee was considered to be a legitimate focus of investigation. And sexual deviants were considered security risks.

1Ibid., 100.
2Ibid., 139.
3Ibid., 116.
4Ibid., 95.
Controlling sexual behavior became an important homefront battle. According to Tyler:

Wartime had caused such an unleashing of sex in all its forms that postwar experts realized that repression was no longer possible. . . . The goal [now] was to teach young people already indulging in "petting" how to keep it under control.¹

One of the best ways to control sexual behavior, according to the experts, was to return to a young age for marriage.² According to a 1937 Roper poll, so wide-spread was concern about delayed marriage that over one-third of Americans favored the extraordinary idea of governmental subsidies to help young people get married. Youthful marriage with dependence on family or government was considered preferable to sexual involvement prior to marriage.³

The postwar generation was more than willing to settle into married life. The adults of the 1950s were eager to establish secure families with traditional gender roles that had been so seriously threatened during their own childhoods in the 1930s.⁴ By 1940 only 15 percent of married women were employed outside the home. Even the government reinforced the idea that the best way to

¹Ibid., 100.
²Ibid., 101.
³Ibid., 40.
⁴Ibid., 53.
strengthen the family was to keep women home and give the men work.¹

According to the Kelly Longitudinal Study,² the effort to legitimize sex within marriage was a major factor in the drop in the marriage age during the postwar years.³

A new phenomenon made its presence known at this juncture—dating. Relatively unknown in the pre-war years, dating became commonplace following the war. It was a mixed blessing at best. With the highly charged youth culture and sex permeating the media, it caused little wonder to find that many American youth engaged in sexual intercourse prior to marriage. Ideology and conduct were at odds in their minds and bodies.⁴ However, that very tension placed a downward pressure on the age of marriage.⁵

Postwar Marriage and Conformity

During the postwar years Americans behaved with remarkable conformity. They married young and had an

¹Ibid., 48.

²The Kelly Longitudinal Study was a long-term study done on 600 White middle-class men and women from the late 1930s to the mid-1950s. According to Tyler, who quotes from this study, although the KLS sample was all White and mostly Protestant, Black fertility and divorce rates paralleled that of Whites.

³Ibid., 122.

⁴Ibid., 120.

⁵Ibid., 122.
average of three children.\textsuperscript{1} This was not a tremendous increase from previous history. What made the baby boom was not just the return to peace. Nor was it caused by births to older couples who had postponed parenthood due to the war. Demographers have shown that the baby boom did not result from women suddenly having huge numbers of children. What made the baby boom happen was that everyone was having children at the same time.\textsuperscript{2} Most couples who married in the 1940s and 1950s had completed their families by the time they were in their late twenties.\textsuperscript{3} Although these parents of baby boomers probably did not consciously speak of repopulating the country, the devastation caused by thousands of deaths could not have been far below the surface of their minds.\textsuperscript{4}

In postwar families an intense and widespread endorsement of pronatalism settled in. This is the belief in the positive value of having children.\textsuperscript{5} In a study conducted in 1957, most Americans indicated they believed that parenthood was the route to happiness. Childlessness was considered deviant, selfish, and pitiable.\textsuperscript{6} This

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., 137.
\textsuperscript{2}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., 23.
\textsuperscript{5}Ibid., 137.
\textsuperscript{6}Ibid.
ideology favored large families and was reflected in everything from media images and medical theories to public policies. Parenthood was practically deified in the popular press, while such measures as exemptions for dependent children and financial incentives for suburban home ownership encouraged postwar couples to have large families.¹ Large families were an indicator of a man's potency and ability to provide and a woman's success as a professional homemaker.² The "nuclear family" had become the American ideal.³ The rising birthrate and the resultant baby boom was not just a demographic phenomenon. It was the result of a fully articulated ideology that found expression in Hollywood, in the political culture, in the prescriptive literature, and in the thought and aspirations of women and men at the time.

Marriage, Babies, and Patriotism

Postwar Americans wholeheartedly endorsed this reproductive consensus. It fit their belief in abundance, progress, and productivity.⁴ Children provided tangible results of a successful marriage and family life; they gave

¹Ibid., 158.
²Ibid., 159.
³Ibid., 25.
⁴Ibid., 160.
evidence of responsibility, patriotism, and achievement.\textsuperscript{1} Americans now opted for early marriage, traditional gender roles, domestic sexuality, and a home life centered on security.\textsuperscript{2}

To this end, childbearing was not just a domestic thing. It was one way of exerting influence in the world. Domesticity was not so much a retreat from public affairs as an expression of one's citizenship. Postwar men and women were endorsing and affirming, through their families, the goals expressed by major political leaders and experts. Rather than retreating from public life, baby-boom parents joined forces with government officials and professionals who called for bigger and better successful American families.\textsuperscript{3} The young suburbanites who were the parents of baby boomers were great joiners. They saw themselves as forging new ties and creating new institutions to replace the old.\textsuperscript{4}

America was on the move. The economy flourished in the postwar expansion, and except for the fear of "the bomb," American citizens looked forward to providing an abundant life for their children. The American dream appeared possible to anyone willing to work for it. Parents

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., 108.
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., 160.
\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., 25.
looked forward to the future with confidence. The baby boom was on!

**Summary**

The baby boom was an unexpected phenomenon. Demographers and others expected a short-term increase in the number of births following World War II, but none was prepared for a nearly twenty-year boom in births.

In the post-war economic boom, more couples married, they married younger, and they had babies as if it were a patriotic duty.

American society, in attempt to curb sexual promiscuity among the young, encouraged early marriage. In conjunction with early marriage, the belief in the positive value of having children became widespread and was reinforced in the media, in medical theory, and in public policy.

Having babies provided tangible evidence of a successful marriage, personal responsibility, patriotism, and achievement. Childbearing became a way of influencing the world.

These factors, coalescing as they did after World War II, gave rise to the phenomenon we now know as the baby boom.
CHAPTER V

SHAPERS OF THE BABY-BOOMER PSYCHE

Contrary to popular opinion, baby boomers were not always cynical about the institutions that give structure to society. According to Paul Light, studies in the late 1950s and early 1960s showed a generation well on its way to a normal respect for social and political institutions. Young baby boomers in interviews often spoke of the president as a benevolent leader, a kind of political father-figure, as someone to be trusted, even loved. They also had opinions on what society expected from a good citizen.1

On the other hand, in many ways they resembled their grandparents who came of age during the first decades of the twentieth century. These grandparents, as youth, had challenged the sexual norms of their day, pushed the divorce rate up and the birthrate down, and created a unique youth culture, complete with music, dancing, movies, and other new forms of urban amusements. They also began developing a powerful feminist movement, a strong grass-roots activism on behalf of social justice, and a proliferation of radical movements to challenge the status quo. It is the generation

1Light, 162.
in between (the parents of baby boomers), with its strong domestic ideology, pervasive consensus politics, and peculiar demographic behavior, that stands out as different.¹

What were the forces that caused the boom generation to largely reject their parents' society and its institutions and instead pick up where their grandparents had left off in trying to create a new society with new institutions and relationships? To these forces we now turn our attention.

The Family

"Nothing on the surface of postwar America explains the rush of young Americans into marriage, parenthood, and traditional gender roles."²

After World War II, the internal threat of Communism forged the need for a stable and secure home life. People were afraid of secularism, materialism, bureaucratic collectivism, and consumerism. The family seemed to offer a psychological fortress that would protect them against themselves.³ The legendary family of the 1950s, complete with brand-name appliances, backyard barbecue, and tricycles scattered on the sidewalk, represented something new. It

¹Tyler, 9.
²Ibid., 7.
³Ibid., 10-11.

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was not, as common wisdom tells us, the last gasp of "traditional" family life with roots deep in the past. Rather, it was the first whole-hearted effort to create a home that would fulfill virtually all its members' needs through an energized and expressive personal life.¹ Parents in the 1950s were hopeful that family life in the postwar era would be secure and liberated from the hardships of the past. They believed that affluence, consumer goods, satisfying sex, and children would strengthen their families, enabling them to steer clear of potential disruptions.²

Parents of baby boomers hoped that within the protective walls of the modern home, worrisome developments like sexual liberation, women's emancipation, and affluence would not lead to decadence, but to a wholesome family life. Sex would enhance marriage, emancipated women would professionalize homemaking, and affluence would put an end to material deprivation. Suburbs would serve as a bulwark against Communism and class conflict. In this way a piece of the American dream could be offered to everyone.³ In 1959, in the famous "kitchen debate," Richard Nixon, then vice-president of the United States of America, proclaimed to Nikita Kruschev, then Premiere of the Union of Soviet

¹Ibid., 11.
²Ibid., 12.
³Ibid., 20.
Socialist Republics, the "model" home, with a male breadwinner and a full-time female homemaker, adorned with a wide array of consumer goods, represented the essence of American freedom. He further articulated the American postwar domestic dream by describing its "successful breadwinners supporting attractive homemakers in affluent suburban homes."¹

Although these suburban tracts have born the brunt of scorn for their lack of individuality and mass-produced sameness, they did offer a modicum of comfort and convenience to growing families of modest means. These enclaves, which helped weaken ties to extended families, promoted homogeneity in neighborhoods, intensified racial segregation, encouraged conformity, and fostered a style of life based on traditional gender roles in the home.²

According to surveys at the time, about half of those who purchased homes in 1949 and 1950 were White World War II veterans in their mid-thirties with young children. The second half were about ten years older; their housing needs or financial resources had changed, prompting them to buy larger homes in the suburbs. Both groups were parents of the baby-boom generation.³ Boomer parents wanted secure jobs, secure homes, and secure marriages in a secure

¹Ibid., 16.
²Ibid., 174.
³Ibid., 173.
society. Security would enable them to take advantage of the fruits of prosperity and peace that were, at long last, available.\(^1\) With the exception of avant-garde intellectuals and a small number of politically active feminists, few Americans articulated alternatives to the suburban lifestyle.\(^2\)

The key to security was "containment." Society believed that it needed to contain Communism and atomic power and to control domestic Communism by containing subversives. The home and family were seen as the key factor to this containment policy. The American home would tame these dangerous external social forces. The concept of containment held sway until the 1960s when it collapsed and the baby boomers abandoned it.\(^3\) Marriage was in. The home was in. Having children was in. Perhaps one of the reasons these marriages were so viable is that of the "prevailing norm."\(^4\) Men and women alike believed in marriage. A

\(^1\)Ibid., 13.

\(^2\)Ibid., 174.

\(^3\)Ibid., 13-14.

\(^4\)The concept of the "prevailing norm" is akin to that of "peer pressure." Since nearly every segment of society believed in and supported the concept of marriage and family, the prevailing norm was that everyone should be married and have a family. Not to do so was considered abnormal. With this kind of social pressure, divorce and singleness were nearly out of the question for most Americans.
majority of them thought that single individuals were either "sick or immoral, too selfish or too neurotic."

However, the demographic explosion in the American family represented merely a temporary disruption of long-term trends. It lasted only until the boomers came of age. Their parents, having grown up during the Depression and World War II, had begun their families during the years of prosperity. Their children, on the other hand, grew up amid affluence and the Cold War. They reached adulthood during the 1960s and 1970s and created a counterculture and a new women's liberation movement. In vast numbers they rejected the political assumptions of the Cold War, along with the domestic and sexual codes of their parents. This generation brought the twentieth-century birthrate to an all-time low and the divorce rate to an unprecedented high.¹ Like the generation of the 1930s, baby boomers came of age in a world filled with turmoil and change. It was the first generation to grow up with the threat of nuclear war, the first to grow up with television, the first to grow up with space flights, rock and roll, oral contraceptives, and LSD.²

These children, in whom their parents had invested so much of themselves, could not possible satisfy all their parents' expectations. Adults would wring their hands over their children's behavior, playmates, and social circles;

¹Ibid., 9.
²Wallechinsky, 1-2.
authorities would fret about the alleged rise of juvenile
delinquency; and those treasured children would become the
rebellious youths of the 1960s, before eventually growing up.¹

Consumerism in the postwar years went far beyond the
mere purchases of goods and services. It included important
cultural values, demonstrated success and social mobility,
and defined lifestyles. It also provided the most vivid
symbol of the American way of life: the affluent suburban
home. There can be no doubt that the gender roles
associated with domestic consumerism—homemaker and
breadwinner—were central to the identity of many women and
men at the time. It is also evident, however, that along
with the ideology of sexual containment, postwar domestic
consumerism required conformity to strict gender assumptions
that were fraught with potential tensions and frustrations.²

Baby boomers substituted risk for security as they
carried sex, consumerism, and political activity outside the
established institutions. Activism replaced adaptation as
the strategy for changing the conditions of life.³ It was
only in the late 1970s and early 1980s that a powerful
backlash emerged to the boomer assault on containment. This
backlash revived the rhetoric of the Cold War. It renewed

¹Ibid., 15.
²Ibid., 182.
³Ibid., 15.
the call for the "traditional family" as the best means to achieve national and political security.¹

**Economics**

Following the crash of the stock market in 1929 and the Depression of the thirties, the economy of the United States began to steadily climb during the war years. After World War II, the country entered into a period of a continually expanding economy. Parents of baby boomers, while not generally wealthy, were in much better shape financially than their parents had been, especially the White middle class. Although all groups in American society contributed to the baby boom, it was the values of this group that shaped the dominant political and economic institutions that affected all Americans.²

The generation of the Depression was primarily concerned with basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. Their children, the parents of the boom generation, have been characterized as the "Consumer Generation."³ With GI benefits and a flourishing economy, they were able to use time-payments to buy homes, cars, appliances, toys, and just about anything they desired. They wanted to ensure that their children never had to

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¹Ibid.
²Tyler, 13.
³Murren, 30.
suffer the deprivation they had suffered during the Depression.

In addition to the economic and industrial expansion they enjoyed, parents of boomers also enjoyed rising values in their homes and the increased purchasing power of their dollars.¹

Because of this economic climate, baby boomers, from the first, were accustomed to instant gratification. From Davey Crockett coonskin caps to Hula-Hoops, they started and ended one fad after another. They were conditioned to act and think alike, moving as a single entity. "Trendiness became a generational trademark: from Pot (Marijuana) to Yoga and jogging, they embraced the 'In' thing of the moment and then quickly chucked it for another."²

Manufacturers and advertisers were quick to take advantage of the vast market the generation offered. Advertising moved from an emphasis on usefulness and status, to the value of luxury and pleasure. "Luxury was in, practical merits were out."³ Ads for baby boomers were clear—products mattered, not for their social connections, but for the mere pleasure of ownership and performance--

¹Ibid.
²Light, 20.
³Light, 120.
values which cross boomer economic and social divisions even today.¹

Baby boomers were the first generation of children isolated as an identifiable market by Madison Avenue. According to Landon Jones, "isolated" is the appropriate word. Marketing, especially on television, isolated the needs and wants of boomers from those of their parents. From birth they were surrounded by products created especially for them—from Silly Putty and Slinkys to Hoola Hoops and skateboards. As Jones puts it, "the dictatorship of the new—was integral to the Baby Boomer experience."² New products, new toys, new commercials, and new fads were so prevalent that boomers themselves rarely realized how different these made them.³ According to Jones, baby boomers breathed newness as if it were air.

Television

A discussion of the full impact of television on the baby boom generation is beyond the scope of this project, but it did impact the generation. Television literally "captured" boomers. Few grew up in a home without it. For

¹Light, 121.
³Ibid.
many it became a built-in babysitter.¹ According to Wilbur Schamm et al.,

television was "first and always predominantly a magic doorway into a world of fantasy, glamour, and excitement. It is an invitation to relax, to disregard one's real-life problems, to surrender oneself to the charming and handsome people, the absorbing events, that flicker on the picture tube."²

Paul Light writes that television affected boomers in three distinctive ways:

1. From the beginning, it separated them from traditional social connections, and taught them their ultimate lessons about being an adult without any intervention from parents or teachers.

2. It presented a world of remarkable similarity from channel to channel.

3. If television violence did not create a pathological generation, it may well have created a sense of fear about the world.³

Early television generally appears innocuous compared to the fare available via both network and cable programming today. Many shows overtly proclaimed to be educational in nature, such as "Romper Room" and "Captain


³Light, 124.
Kangaroo." Others, while appearing as strictly entertainment, did support generally accepted societal values. Family shows like "Lassie," "Ozzie & Harriett," "Father Knows Best," and "I Love Lucy," all promoted family values to their audiences. Even programs considered violent, such as those of the "western" genre, made it clear that crime does not pay and that in the battle between good and evil, the good always win. And it was easy to tell the good guys from the bad guys—the good guys wore white hats.

Even so, baby boomers who grew up with television grew up too fast for their own good. They were in the unique position of having their adult experience exhausted in advance.1 According to Eugene Glynn, "There is little they have not seen or done or lived through, and yet [these are] second-hand experience(s). When the experience itself comes, it is watered-down, for it has already been half lived but never truly felt."2

According to Light,

As a result of their childhood television viewing, baby boomers entered adulthood with a much clearer sense of the risks of life, whether from the fantasy of television or from the reality of events like Vietnam. If television was a magic doorway to fantasy, it was a frightening doorway to violence and fear. It was a doorway that most baby boomers passed

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1Eugene Glynn, "Television and the American Character—A Psychiatrist Looks at Television," Television's Impact on American Culture (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1956); quoted in Light, 126.

2Ibid.
through, regardless of their age, gender, education, or class.¹

The baby-boom generation became one of little adults, asked to think about the big questions of life, long before they had the capacity to find any answers.² For boomers, television portrayed a fantasy world, with a vision of the American family that was both unrealistic and unattainable.³ According to Robert Bast,

They saw an idealized world which never encountered difficult problems or raised complex issues. It was a world of white middle-class families whose greatest difficulties could always be happily resolved within thirty minutes. It is not surprising that the baby boom generation has had so much trouble coming to grips with some of the uncomfortable realities of family life.⁴

Politics

Following World War II, as has already been stated, the two biggest political issues were that of the containment of Communism and the containment of nuclear warpower. American parents were deathly afraid of the so-called "Communist threat." When Nikita Kruschev banged his shoe on a desk at the United Nations and proclaimed to the citizens of the United States, "We will bury you!" millions shivered with fear and prayed their country would win the

¹Ibid., 131.
²Ibid., 126.
³Bast, 35.
⁴Ibid.
Cold War. Few, if any, were able to follow the example of Georges Clemenceau, the legendary World War I French Premier. When told of his son's decision to join the Communist Party he replied, "My son is 22 years old. If he had not become a Communist at 22, I would have disowned him. If he is still a Communist at 30, I will do it then."¹ Americans were not able to respond to the excesses of idealistic youth with the same Gaelic shrug.²

The fear of nuclear holocaust lay like a blanket over baby-boom heads. According to Tyler, in 1959 two out of three Americans listed the possibility of nuclear war as the nation's most urgent problem. Baby boomers had America's only formal and entrenched bomb-threat education, which took place in the public schools.³ That lesson--along with lessons about the bomb from government, the media, and the family--was well learned.⁴ Boomers have a collection of memories, images, and words that will not disappear, even for those who profess not to be troubled. Even today, with the emphasis on a survivable nuclear war, baby boomers, the

¹Walter Shapiro, "Don't Trust Anyone under Forty-five," Time, September 1988, 17.
²Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
"bomb generation," believe that nuclear war can bring nothing but victims.¹

These fears caused postwar Americans to look to the professionals, the experts, to tell them how to manage their lives. Postwar America became the era of the expert.²

These are the primary forces that made their impression on the minds of young baby boomers. These forces were intended to teach them the traditional American values of family, loyalty, and patriotism. Their job was to train the generation to continue in the path of their elders, socially and politically. But something happened on the way to American nirvana.

In American culture, adolescence is a transition period for young people. Considered neither children nor adults, teenagers fluctuate between the two in a maze of hormones that make predicting their behavior hazardous at best. It was during this period of life that several events took place which forever shaped the mind-set of the baby-boom generation.

**Changes in the Family**

The first of these events concerned the family--the dramatic increase in divorce among parents of baby boomers. Although not unheard of prior to the baby boom, divorce was

¹Ibid.

²Tyler, 26.
considered socially unacceptable—so much so that many divorced couples hid the fact of their divorce from family and friends as long as possible. Many felt scandalized, should one occur with one of their relatives.

However, this anathema toward divorce began to decline as early as 1931 when *Photoplay* began to carry articles stating that divorce was acceptable if love had vanished and a husband and wife were incompatible. Even though divorce laws were still based on the guilt of one party or the other, Hollywood, the focal point for the country's mass culture, began to endorse the concept of irreconcilable differences as a legitimate reason for divorce.¹ The motion-picture industry was one of the few economic enterprises that did not suffer from the Depression. On the contrary, it expanded, gaining wider audiences in both urban and rural areas all over the country, and Americans identified with the heroes and heroines of the filmed dramas.²

Tensions in American homes increased with the end of World War II and the return of the GIs from the battlefront. Women, who had taken their place in the workforce, were reluctant to give up their new-found independence and move meekly back to the kitchen. As long as the husband was the primary provider, he welcomed his wife's assistance. But if

¹Tyler, 43.
²Ibid., 41.
his wife developed her own career or had a job where she earned more than he, it became a potential problem in the home.\(^1\) Here Hollywood provided little or no help.

In many of its films, Hollywood dealt with marital tension, and its message came through loud and clear. In such films as "His Girl Friday," "Blond Venus," and "Gone with the Wind," the message of Hollywood was, if an emancipated woman could be tamed by domesticity, with a man to support her and their children, the family would be rejuvenated. But if husbands were weak, or if their wives took their independence and sexuality out into the world, disaster would strike the home and family.\(^2\) Hollywood offered few suggestions on how a successful career woman could also achieve a workable family life.\(^3\)

For all its affirmation of women, Hollywood could not point the way to a restructured family that would incorporate independent women. Hollywood admired tough, rugged career women as women, not as wives and mothers.\(^4\) So the popular culture began to condone divorce. Instead of being merely an escape for women married to brutal or irresponsible men, or for men with less-than-virtuous wives, divorce became a solution for difficult circumstances, or

\(^{1}\)Ibid., 55.  
\(^{2}\)Ibid., 47.  
\(^{3}\)Ibid., 43.  
\(^{4}\)Ibid., 42.
disrupted power relations in the home. This represented a major shift from earlier times.¹

Because of this shift in thinking about divorce, by the 1960s divorce was rapidly altering the course for baby boomers, especially New Wave ones.² While 80 percent of Old Wave boomers made it to the age of eighteen with their parents' marriage intact, only 50 percent of New Wave boomers did.³ This trend caused them to count the cost of marriage far more carefully and make the commitment only when they were ready.⁴

Their attitude toward marriage is perhaps the first example of the boomers' societal separation from the past. For example, they have an increased tolerance toward people who are single by choice. Their own divorce rates confirm the change in attitude toward it. According to Light, by the time baby boomers complete the marriage course in the twenty-first century, 60 percent of boomer women will have divorced at least once.⁵ According to Norton and Moorman of the Census Bureau:

It can be argued that the oldest baby boomers were at once deviant and trend setters whose extraordinarily high divorce rates, although somewhat

¹Ibid., 43.
²Light, 25.
³Ibid., 83.
⁴Ibid., 150.
⁵Ibid., 147.
anomalous, also helped establish new normative societal standards that permit a generally high rate of divorce.\textsuperscript{1}

In a study of thirty-five-year-old women, it was found that 25 percent of them had divorced by age twenty-nine.\textsuperscript{2}

Another result of the increase of divorce among parents of baby boomers was the rise of non-married couples living together. From 1980 to 1985 the number of those couples rose from 1.6 million to 2.2 million. In 1985 at least 5 percent of all couples living together were not married.\textsuperscript{3}

In spite of all this, marriage remains popular among boomers. They may delay it; they may divorce; but they still see marriage as important. As they age, it appears that the divorce rate is stabilizing, at least since 1986. For many harried parents, the workaholic ethic of the eighties has abated some and given rise to a growing desire to spend more time together as a family. When the Chevas Regal poll asked working Americans to identify the most


\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., 148.

\textsuperscript{3}Ibid.
important indicator of success, 62 percent said a happy family life. Only 10 percent said making more money.¹

With baby boomers then, one will see a continued emphasis on the family accompanied by a continued openness to those who choose to remain single as well as to those who experience divorce.

Changes in the Economy

Paul Light quotes a 1965 Time magazine article naming the baby-boom generation "Man of the Year" saying,

Cushioned by unprecedented affluence and the welfare state, he has a sense of economic security unmatched in history. Granted an ever-lengthening adolescence and life span, he no longer feels the cold pressures of hunger and mortality that drove Mozart to compose an entire canon before death at 35.²

Time could not tell in 1965 that the seventies would bring a rise in the inflation rate that would soon deplete the affluence of the American economy. The double-digit inflation of the seventies along with the rise in oil prices created economic havoc among baby boomers, who were graduating from college, and beginning their careers and families, as well as those who would soon follow them. Life does present economic rough spots, but there is no doubt that boomers have suffered more than their share of these and that the generation's size makes it likely that it will

¹Ronald Henkoff, "Is Greed Dead? (Money Society of the 1980s)," Fortune, August 14, 1989, 41.

²Light, 20.
suffer even more. Compared to their parents at the same age, baby boomers have not done as well.

For boomer families headed by twenty-five-to-thirty-four-year-olds, the seventies brought a 54 percent jump in utility rates and a 65 percent jump in gasoline prices. From 1974 to 1984 consumption by boomer families declined $1,000.00 per year. After subtracting increases in rent and/or mortgage costs, baby-boomer families had 6 percent less discretionary income at the end of 1984 than they did at the end of 1974. Thus, for most boomers, there was little room for the kind of luxuries often linked to the generation via the so-called Yuppies. Strategic buying became the natural response to the inflation of the seventies. Tempered by time and experience, baby boomers in the seventies became more cost conscious. With increasingly tighter budgets, they became bargain hunters and hard bargainers. Strategic buying was the natural response to the inflation of the seventies. For boomers, it also reflected a rejection of the old rules. Baby boomers do not buy something just because someone else has it.

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1Ibid., 59.  
2Ibid., 51.  
3Ibid., 52.  
4Ibid., 155.  
5Ibid., 114.
"Keeping up with the Joneses" is not part of their psyche.

Pollster Florence Skelly states:

One of the reasons . . . business is so unpredictable is that boomers are not conformists. It's very hard to predict a buying thrust in any area, because strategic consumers know what they want, and they don't care what anybody else has.¹

Skelly believes that this situation caused baby boomers to become a "post-material" generation. She says,

The boom generation was acculturated during a time of tremendous economic growth. During the 50s, when they were growing up, the country was very optimistic: the suburbs were emerging, 30 percent of Americans owned their own homes, people weren't stuck in the cities. [It was a period when the public believed it had achieved the American dream]. Kids could go to college if they wanted; they could certainly have their own rooms; they could live in owned homes; their families has two automobiles, an air conditioner, a refrigerator, you name it.²

According to Light, at least in the beginning, baby boomers did not have to worry about economic survival. They had the luxury to wonder about the meaning of life³ and that has carried over into their habits as consumers.

**Political Crises**

In the arena of politics the assassinations of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Senator Robert Kennedy, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights movement, and the Watergate scandal left an indelible

¹Ibid., 155.


³Ibid.
mark on the psyche of the baby-boom generation. These events came together at the most sensitive moment in their life cycle, just when they were making the transition from the carefree world of childhood to the already confusing period of adolescence and young adulthood. Other generations were affected by these events, to be sure, but none experienced the lasting impact and shared Zeitgeist of the boomers. It was a life-cycle, historical, and generational effect with lasting impact on their ties within their own families.  

Although not a boomer himself, John Fitzgerald Kennedy (JFK as he was affectionately known) with his glamorous wife, Jackie, and their two children Caroline and John John, captured the hearts of the generation. For a generation tired of Cold War rhetoric, the words "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country," were a clarion call to altruism, a promise that there would be a tomorrow, an assurance that it could make a difference. In spite of what may now be known about Kennedy's personal excesses, he will always have a special place in the heart of the boomer generation.  

Nearly every Old Wave baby boomer can tell anyone who asks exactly where she or he was when told of President

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\(^1\)Ibid., 43.

\(^2\)These words were spoken by President John F. Kennedy during his inaugural speech in 1961.
Kennedy's assassination. Most heard it from their teachers or from the principal over their school's public address system. They went home to spend the weekend watching the videotaped replay over and over again. The images were indelibly impressed on their minds—Jackie Kennedy's blood-stained dress, little John John's salute to his father lying in the flag-draped casket, the brutal murder of John Harvey Oswald on live television viewed by an entire nation. Scenes of horror like these were repeated throughout the decade from Memphis to California, at Mai Lai and Kent State. These did more than create a shared memory of isolated historical events. The cumulative result of these, beginning with the first Kennedy assassination, was a twenty-year separation from political life.¹

Baby boomers wanted to know that Kennedy's assassination did not mean the end of his highly personal style of leadership. Yet, according to Light,

Unfortunately, Kennedy was followed by presidents known more for their aloofness than for their warmth—each considerably older than Kennedy, each eventually leading the nation into a great crisis, each remarkably unpopular, each ultimately forced out of office in defeat and disgrace.²

Kennedy's death by itself did not separate boomers from politics. They loved and respected Kennedy and his death coincided with their own unresolved issues such as

¹Light, 165.
²Ibid., 169.
giving up their childhood attachment to their parents.\(^1\) His
death saddened and confused them, but it did not alienate
them. What alienated them was the fact that in the struggle
for civil rights, in the Vietnam war, and in the Watergate
scandal, they saw basic flaws in the political system they
were brought up to respect and believe in.

Coupled with these, Kennedy's death became merely
the first in a series of disillusionments that separated
them from the political system.\(^2\) During the period from
1963 through 1973, baby boomers abandoned their once hopeful
outlook for a new course of political independence and
separation. By the end of the 1960s, boomer party loyalty
was nearly non-existent and trust in the political system
had hit bottom. The era of "the President knows best" was
replaced by "President knows least."\(^3\)

The war in Vietnam both united and divided the
generation. Many baby boomers were either drafted or
voluntarily joined the armed forces to fight in Vietnam.
Most of those went overseas believing that they were
fighting to protect democracy from the insatiable spread of
Communism. Many became disillusioned as they fought in the
mosquito-infested swamps of the Vietnamese jungle. The rest
became disillusioned when they returned home to the U.S.

\(^1\)Ibid.

\(^2\)Ibid., 170.

\(^3\)Ibid., 165.
Rather than being hailed as heroes, most were treated either with disdain or were ignored. Some were spit on, others were beaten. It was hard for many Vietnam veterans to find jobs so they stopped putting the record of their military service on employment applications.

As it became obvious that the United States government had no intention of winning in Vietnam and that it had deceived not only the general public but also its own troops in the field about its true motives and plans, boomers in increasing numbers joined the call for complete withdrawal from Vietnam. Perhaps for different reasons, most boomers were united in their desire to get the United States out of the war.¹ Looking back today,

[A]way from the heat of political campaigns, many Americans acknowledge that the Viet Nam War was fought with moral ambiguity and that honor could be found in either serving one's country or protesting what one believed was its march toward folly.²

The death of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. dealt another severe blow to the idealistic minds of young baby boomers. Part of their definition of a meaningful life included the ideal of equality—equality regardless of gender, equality regardless of race. Blacks and Whites joined hands in protesting the Vietnam war as well as the "Separate but Equal" ideology of the South. Blacks and Whites marched together to Selma, Alabama. Blacks and

¹Ibid., 172.
²Shapiro, 17.
Whites forced Governor George Wallace, through the justice system, to allow Black students to attend the University of Alabama. Blacks and Whites cried together when an assassin cut short the life of Dr. King.

Another political crisis that affected the generation was that of the Watergate scandal and the subsequent resignation of President Richard M. Nixon. Nixon was probably the quintessential fifties' politician. In 1968 he returned to the White House, this time as president of the United States. Nixon was a politician of the Cold War. And although dealt a severe blow by the Vietnam war, the Cold War ideology remained a powerful force in national politics, and it continued to be tied to the ideology of domesticity. Those who claimed that Vietnam fell as a result of softness on Communism also blamed feminism for what they perceived as the destruction of the family.1

Nixon appeared to be tough on Communism and a strong promoter of what has come to be called "family values." Unfortunately for him, and for the baby-boom generation, his personal insecurity lead to his personal downfall and completed the political alienation of boomers. As Light puts it, what boomers did not learn about distrusting government from Vietnam, they learned from Watergate.2

1Tyler, 224.
2Light, 172.
In 1993, the oldest of the boomer generation turns forty-seven. Many are becoming grandparents. Many are entering mid-life. Many are making career changes. Before long, Old Wave baby boomers will be entering retirement. What issues define them today? What can we expect as this generation continues its inevitable trek toward obscurity?

Baby boomers will not always be young and brash. Yet, they will always be marked by their personal and social histories. Their social and political values may differ because of their place in the life cycle, their place within their families, their place in history, or their shared sense of generational experiences. Even so, as American Demographics says, "The baby boom's 45th birthday may prove to be as momentous as its first."¹

In trying to understand the boomer psyche it is critical to remember that the issues of the sixties remain close to the surface of most baby-boomer minds. Even in current political debate, issues of drugs, draft dodging, "free-love," feminism, civil rights, and rock music often enter the discussion. Baby boomers have entered the mainstream, but for many, the ideals of the sixties still await their fulfillment. However, unlike the sixties where boomers staged protest marches and love-ins, they are now

trying to use more peaceful means (e.g., the political system) to achieve their agenda.

For those blinded by nostalgia,

It is critical to remember that the 1960s involved far more than the Woodstock festival and a few peaceful protest marches. It was an exceedingly violent period, with all the warning signs of impending political collapse - conspiracy trials mocked the judicial process, political violence took lives on both the left and the right, "America: Love It or Leave It" became a right-wing rallying cry, and national guardsmen loaded live ammunition to police angry crowds. For every picture of a love-in there were two of protestors moving through a cloud of tear gas toward an inevitable battle. As the riots continued during the summer of 1967 and spread to the campuses, the very survival of constitutional government seemed in doubt. America came precariously close to abandoning its traditional process altogether. Baby Boomers were on the front lines.¹

According to Tyler,

In the early 1960s, it was not immediately obvious that a unique historical era was coming to an end. Signs that the postwar consensus was beginning to crack were hardly more visible than they had been in the fifties: a few voices of dissent from the intelligentsia, the growing popularity of counter-culture heroes such as Elvis Presley and James Dean, and the spread of the civil rights movement from black activists in the South to northern whites. . . Most cultural signs still pointed toward the cold war consensus at home and abroad, and the ideology of domesticity was still alive and well.²

However, in the dank, subterranean high-school hallways near the boiler rooms, the styles and explosions of

¹Light, 184.
²Tyler, 217-18.
the sixties were born as students decided that their elders were indeed unreliable, perhaps even insane.¹

Baby boomers did not completely abandon the therapeutic methods and personal values that had motivated their parents. Rather, they rejected familial security as the means and retained individual freedom as the end and in so doing, carried forward the quest for liberation.² That concept of individual freedom is still a major element in boomer philosophy even today.

William Scranton, Jr., the former Republican Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania, whose lifestyle in the sixties contributed to his defeat when he ran for governor in 1986, says without shame that he was there in the mud at Woodstock puffing on a joint.
"My generation has to recognize [he says] that we are going through a rite of passage... There are litmus-test issues in the eyes of the country. It's not whether we smoked marijuana or protested the war, but how we handle it today."³

In statements like these we are reminded once again of "all the unresolved passions of the 1960s, a time of both angry and generational rebelling, when national leaders were reviled, patriotism was mocked, and drug taking exalted."⁴ Baby boomers are still concerned with equality and civil

¹Light, 138.
²Tyler, 15.
³Shapiro, 17.
⁴Ibid.
rights for all members of society. They are still skeptical about institutions and institutional leaders. They may have mellowed a bit in their methods, but their idealism has dimmed little since the sixties.

They tend to choose political candidates who appear to support their ideals, who promise to fight for equality, who are concerned about the environment and the protection of human rights. According to Light,

Baby Boomers came through the 1960s and early 1970s with extremely weak political attachments. They had abandoned their social and political traditions with ease, moving into a state of political limbo which continues to the present. The Baby Boomers seem quite comfortable with their political dealignment, perfectly willing to pick candidates on the basis of fleeting imagery or issues.¹

Baby boomers "are perfectly comfortable remaining on their highly individual course, moving in and out of politics on the basis of their short-term concerns."² And, unlike older Americans, they have little interest in the private lives of public candidates. They are more likely to distinguish between personal issues which affect politics and those which are best left in private.³ They are able to draw a line between human mistakes which remain private (such as those of Pat Robertson and Gary Hart), and political mistakes which indicate potential problems in

¹Light, 180.
²Ibid., 179.
³Ibid., 181.
office (such as those of Joseph Biden and Michael Dukakis). Because of the generation's introspective nature, it is harder to read and more difficult to hold politically. Baby boomers are comfortable in referring to themselves as both Republicans and Democrats simultaneously. Many of them prefer to be called Independents. They are generally Republican on economic issues and Democrat on social issues.

If a political candidate or party wants to reconnect the generation to the national community and build in it a commitment for the long term, several things must take place. First, it must be understood that boomers retain much of their earlier liberalism, albeit tempered by age and experience. Second, it must be acknowledged that they do not talk in traditional "liberal/conservative" terms. They appear to think about politics in three dimensions: a search for personal opportunity and space (which emerges from their crowding and poor economic performance), a search for safety (which emerges from their fear of crime and nuclear war), and a renewed search for meaning (which emerges from a growing frustration with self-interest). Many boomers are

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1Ibid., 182.
2Ibid., 204.
3Ibid., 188-9.
4These items are excerpted from Light, 12-3.
returning to their ideals and trying to right what they see as still wrong with society.

As Cheryl Russell says,

Nothing changes people so much as an education. . . . Becoming educated makes life more complex because it turns black and white into shades of gray. Getting educated is like losing innocence—once lost, it is gone forever.'

Summary

A number of factors combined to shape the psyche of the baby-boom generation. Among these were changing attitudes toward the family, the post-war economic boom, television, the "Cold War," the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, Jr., the Watergate political scandal, and the Vietnam war.

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CHAPTER VI

BABY BOOMERS AND SPIRITUALITY

In the previous chapters I have attempted to depict those events and circumstances that have affected the mind and heart of the baby-boom generation. In this chapter I discuss the spirituality of the generation.

Many observers of the boomer generation see it as godless. And, perhaps, on the surface it appears to be so. However, baby boomers generally have a deep sense of spirituality. The problem is that they usually define it differently from their forbearers, particularly when it comes to equating spirituality with membership in an organized religious system. Previous generations found it easy to join a church or social club, and in so doing acquire many friends. Boomers appear to be working on a much more personal level.¹ Pastor Timothy J. Galliger, a Presbyterian pastor, finds that "Boomers are looking for a religious experience that makes sense out of their lives and gives them some answers to their questions. To the extent

¹Russell, 204.
that a church can do that, it will be successful [in reaching them]."¹

During the 1960s and early 1970s, multitudes of baby boomers left Christianity. No denomination was spared this exodus. They identified the Christian church with decadent Western society. They saw it, at worst, foisting on people a set of values and beliefs that removed their freedom, and at best, simply an out-dated institution that was hopelessly out of touch with the reality of life. According to Robert Bast, of the approximately 77 million baby boomers, about 26 million were raised in a church and have remained active. About 52 million have been outside of the church for all or part of their lives.² Bast refers to a study sponsored by the Lilly Foundation which found that two-thirds of the generation have dropped out of religious participation for a period of two years or more, and only about 40 percent of the dropouts have returned to church.³ Thus, currently in round figures, we have about 47 million baby boomers in the church and 30 million outside it.⁴

But that is not to say that these 30 million are not spiritually hungry. In their quest for meaning in life,

²Bast, 22.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
boomers have searched the world. Having rejected Christianity, many turned to Eastern religions. When the Beatles turned to Maharishi Yogi with his message of transcendental meditation, millions followed. Others have turned to yoga, Buddhism, Islam, and other non-Christian religions. The so-called New Age movement attracts many. Bast refers to an article in American Demographics which states:

Affluent baby boomers are the group most likely to embrace the so-called New Age movement. They are hungry for something that mainstream society has not given them. They say they are looking for "alternatives," "new paradigms," "social transformation," "personal wholeness," "enlightenment," and even "utopia."

Perhaps baby boomer Katherine Mader spoke for this group when she remarked,

I believe each of us, inside ourselves, has our own personal, moral conscience and that's our God. So when I say I don't believe in God, I mean I don't believe in an "organized" God that we go to see every Friday night at the synagogue. I feel that many people use religion as a crutch to evade their own responsibility to themselves, and feel that they can just go visit God once a week and somehow that makes them okay as people. I reject all that. I feel we walk around with our own God inside on a daily basis.

A sense of emptiness in their spiritual quest has led many baby boomers into the New Age movement. One person pointed out that those in the New Age movement "don't care


2Wallechinsky, 189.
for existing religions, so they have come out with a new kind of religion—a New Age one, a kind of attunement."¹
Light says that the continued separation of boomers from traditional social roles and the estrangement from political and social institutions (like the church) are probably not so much because of old anger against them, but because these institutions and roles appear to be irrelevant to their lives.² According to the article in American Demographics, these baby boomers are affluent, educated, successful, professional, discriminating, creative, and trend-setters. They are the elite among boomers.³ In spite of this, they are still searching spiritually.

Newsweek magazine several years ago published an article entitled "A Time to Seek." It dealt with the baby-boomer search for spiritual meaning in life. According to the author, "The search for meaning is a powerful motivation to return to the pews. In the throes of a midlife re-evaluation, Ecclesiastes'--'a time for everything under heaven'--is suddenly relevant."⁴ As boomers age, they continue their quest for meaning. Having lived through the age of "conspicuous consumption" in the eighties, they are returning to matters of the spirit.

²Light, 179.
³Bast, 67-8.
⁴Woodward, 50.
However,

Unlike earlier religious revivals, the aim this time (aside from born-again traditionalists of all faiths) is support, not salvation, help rather than holiness, a circle of spiritual equals rather than an authoritative church or guide. A group affirmation of self is at the top of the agenda, which is why some of the least demanding churches are now in the greatest demand.¹

In their efforts to accommodate, many religious leaders have removed the concept of sin from their language. Like politicians, they only recognize "mistakes" and urge their congregations to put them behind them. They appeal to a nurturing God who helps His people cope. In this creed, heaven is never having to say no to yourself, and God is never having to say you are sorry. However, this celebration of self is a game young people play. As the baby-boom generation ages, this form of surface religion appears to be giving way to a deeper faith—a spiritual development which takes time, discipline, and hard work.²

Baby boomers are now becoming parents and grandparents.³ They are beginning to realize that not only do they have spiritual needs, but their children and

¹Ibid., 56.

²Ibid.

³In fact, baby boomers are creating a small baby boom of their own. Just as not one demographer predicted the original baby boom and analysts were unprepared for the boomers delaying of marriage and childbearing, so the demographers were not expecting the 4 million births of 1989, a number not seen since the close of the baby boom in 1964. Waldrop, 27.
grandchildren need a place to learn solid values and make friends with other people who share them.\textsuperscript{1} Thus many are beginning to return to the Christian faith, although this return is tempered by their experiences in the counter-culture of the sixties and seventies.\textsuperscript{2} Like an outsized herd of grazing sheep, the 77 million baby boomers have transformed every pasture they have rambled into during their much-studied march toward middle-age.\textsuperscript{3} And, as with everything else, their return promises to change the way we practice church.

Much has been said about the return of boomers to the church. It is important to remember that nearly one-third of them never left the church at all. Many of them have simply switched denominational allegiance. The most steadfast of these are conservative Protestants. They tend to be less mobile in their youth, less likely to attend college, and less likely to take up alternative lifestyles.\textsuperscript{4} They tend to appreciate a conservative, traditional way of life which includes traditional forms of religion and worship.

However, for the two-thirds of the generation who have been unchurched for all or part of their lives, the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1}Woodward, 51.
\item \textsuperscript{2}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{3}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{4}Ibid.
\end{itemize}
picture is drastically different, and any church that wishes to attract them must understand this. In this chapter I briefly discuss what baby boomers are looking for in a church and then look at ways the church can minister to, reclaim, and evangelize this largely "missing" generation.

Why Boomers Are Returning to the Church

These are the 1990s. Soon we will enter the twenty-first century. For baby boomers, this is a time of "mix 'em, match 'em salad-bar spirituality" with "Quaker-palians," charismatic Catholics, and New Age Jews, where "brand loyalty is a doctrine of the past and the customer is king." For many boomers, what counts on a Sabbath or Sunday morning, if a church or synagogue is to attract its share of the boomer market, is not the name on the door or the sign out front, but the programs taking place inside. In sophisticated urban centers, baby boomers in the under-forty-five age group define themselves as independent spiritual seekers and thus above the bonds of any one tradition. One researcher found that 60 percent reject the notion one should be limited to a single faith. According to Leith Anderson, baby boomers see a congregation as a "way station." "One church is chosen and joined for one chapter

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1Ibid., 50.
2Ibid., 17.
3Ibid., 55.
of life, but there is great ease in moving along to the next church (at the next 'way station') when the next chapter begins.¹ Perhaps, as Light suggests, the sameness baby boomers lived through in their childhood "provoked the drive for individualism and tolerance of diversity that distinguishes the baby boomer from its parents and grandparents today."² Boomers, particularly New Wave ones, will inspect a church much the same as they would a restaurant. They may check the menu and leave if they find nothing that suits their tastes. They do not convert, they choose.³

Boomers are returning to the church for a variety of reasons. The expectations of the sixties and seventies have not been realized. The promise of the "good life" remains unfulfilled for much of the generation. Economically, they are not doing as well as their parents at the same stage of life. Most boomer families need two wage-earners just to stay afloat financially. Now, having gone through the consumptive eighties, they are realizing that material success not only is not assured, it does not satisfy the deepest longings of the heart. Many are turning to God in

¹Leith Anderson, Dying for Change (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1990); quoted in Bast, 61.
²Light, 111.
³Woodward, 52.
the hope He will lift them above the limits of materialistic thinking.

They are also realizing their need to define their values. In the sixties and early seventies, many had a values system which provided the context for their actions. When their dreams died, their values died too. Now that they are becoming parents, they are realizing the need to have a coherent values system to pass on to their children. They are looking to the church for help in defining values that will help them to make sense out of life. As Murren says, "They have rejected the values of their parents and society for so long, they are at a loss to know how to communicate them to their own children."¹

Baby boomers are returning to Christianity because they have found non-Christian religions unfulfilling. The New Age Movement does not frighten them; they have just found it empty and are looking for more traditional channels for their faith.

One of the ideals of the sixties was that of being able to change the world. Many boomers still believe they can. They want to believe that their lives can make a difference. Baby boomers swelled the ranks of the Peace Corps as teenagers. Baby boomers initiated and became the first student missionaries. Baby boomers forced an end to the Vietnam war. Many still have their youthful idealism.

¹Murren, 68.
It is their hope to make this world a better place through the social action involvement of the church they attend.

They are also looking for companionship. In spite of their tremendous numbers and strong sense of individualism, many are lonely. Both single and married boomers have a sense of loneliness. Many have moved several times and feel displaced. Those who have been divorced or have had several affairs are getting tired of serial relationships. They hope to find some relational stability within the family of the church.

Baby boomers are also returning to the church because life has become boring. Many have settled into a rut of family and career. They have a sense of longing for the excitement of their youth. They want to re-experience the zest they once felt. The church, in their minds, offers stimulation toward a renewed sense of creativity and awareness that will challenge them into new areas of living and thinking.

**Types of Churches Attracting Boomers**

What kind of churches are boomers choosing? Murren, in his book *The Baby Boomerang*, suggests that churches which attract baby boomers have the following characteristics:

1. These churches offer boomers participation, not just church membership. One needs to remember that baby boomers are predominately non-joiners. When they visit a church two questions enter their minds: (a) Will they make
me stand up and introduce myself? and (b) Are they going to immediately grab me and try to make me a member? If a boomer experiences either of these in a church, he or she will not return.

Boomers come to church to experience something. They hope for a kind, human touch. They want to participate in worship. They want to participate in ministry. They do not want to be just another name on a long membership list. Many will eventually become members, but they must become participants first.

2. Leaders in these churches emphasize the individual, not the institution. As mentioned above baby boomers are notoriously anti-institutional. Paul Light says "Americans of all ages lost faith in their institutions and leaders in the 1960s and have yet to recover [it]."\(^1\) Boomers are still operating with an anti-institutional bias.\(^2\)

Paul Light refers to a Harris poll from 1985 that indicates that for baby boomers, the organized church represents one of the least trusted of all institutions, and boomers are the least trusting of all age groups.\(^3\) Bast suggests that evidence of this continuing distrust can be found in the low level at which boomers participate in the

\(^1\)Light, 159.
\(^2\)Bast, 60.
\(^3\)Light, 160.
life of the church, their reluctance to join a congregation, their lack of interest in identifying with a denominational body, and their ease of departing from a congregation.\footnote{1} This can be particularly confusing and painful for pastors and congregations from an older generation who see such mobility as a rejection of the church if not a personal rejection.\footnote{2}

Because of this mobility and the boomer attitude of local rather than denominational control over a congregation, few churches will have guaranteed constituencies.\footnote{3} They will have to work intentionally to gain and keep new members. They must stress relationships rather than structure and creeds.

3. These churches will replace tradition with informality and casualness. Baby boomers are paranoid about formality. As Bast says, "We would like to tear your pretentious structures down and start over with something more 'spontaneous'."\footnote{4} For most boomers, formality is phony and casual is human. In the boomer mind, genuine churches are highly human. They want informality with meaning. They are not willing to attend formalized institutions. "Traditional" is a bad word among them. Churches which

\footnote{1}{Bast, 61.}
\footnote{2}{Ibid.}
\footnote{3}{Ibid., 62.}
\footnote{4}{Murren, 58.}
build on a caring environment with emphasis on the personal touch and participation will attract them.1

The baby-boomer generation is the "blue jeans" generation. Jeans are comfortable as well as a statement on casualness. One often see boomers, even in the business world, wearing jeans with suitjackets. They will come to church the same way. The message is:

Okay, so you got me into this church scenario, but I'm letting you know I don't like it when it's stuffy and formal. There's a real individual inside these Levi's. So don't judge me for what I'm wearing; appreciate me for who I am."2

Baby boomers want pastors who are casual and high-touch. They want pastors who do not hide, and are out of reach, aloof, and distant. They want to be touched with the pastor's humanity. In their high-tech world, boomers need pastors and churches who say to them, we are human, too, and we will be human with you.

Even TV moguls sense this need among boomers. Shows like "The Cosby Show," "Family Ties," and "Cheers" appeal to this hunger for authentic relationships. Even the theme song of "Cheers" (a bar in Boston) carries this focus--it is a place where "everyone knows your name."

Churches where people are genuinely interested in others as human beings are generally high-touch places. This attracts the boomer because in such a place he or she

1Ibid.
2Ibid., 59.
hopes "to find a God [he or she] can know on a personal level and who will know [him or her]."¹

Baby boomers are also not impressed with titles. As Murren puts it, they want a "face" on life. They are title-haters and use first names with a handshake in transactions. They are not impressed with degrees and the relational formality with recognizing them in the church. They will look for churches where even the pastor has a name, not a title, a place where "people are faces with names."²

Along with the reticence to use formal titles, boomers are also reluctant to get involved with formal membership in a church. Many see church membership as a sellout to formality.³ If they find a church that provides "informality with meaning,"⁴ they will attend, and later, perhaps much later, become members. Churches that allow baby boomers to celebrate with them first, without becoming members, will find them staying to become members at a later date.

4. Finally, baby boomers are looking for churches where the congregation is fused together by relationships rather than through creeds or doctrinal statements.⁵ This

¹Ibid., 60.
²Ibid., 63.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ibid.
means that denominational churches will have to get used to a diversity of approaches as local congregations build relational ministries that fit their own particular situation. Worship services will be different. While retaining content and a recognizable liturgy, they will be high in touch and relational community building.

Worship services will be casual yet offer a spiritual depth that will reach the heart. Sermons must share scriptural truth in a relational way in order to find their way into the hearts of boomers. Orthodoxy and doctrinal agreement are important, but churches that attract and keep baby boomers will find that their real adhesive lies in relationships.¹

All of the above serve to remind us that boomer loyalty to a church must be earned. Boomers are very distrustful of institutions, especially large ones. In fact, there is no loyalty to the church as an institution. Loyalty to the church as a denomination is nearly non-existent. Baby boomers may become Baptist, Pentecostal, Lutheran, Seventh-day Adventist, or Methodist, all during one lifetime. Some may become one or more, all at the same time and see nothing incongruous in it. This is markedly different from the past.

Murren refers to Lyle Schaller's book, *It's a Different World*, and says,

¹Ibid., 64.
in 1965, 80 percent of the Methodist Church members said they had always been Methodists; 85 percent of the Baptists declared they'd always been Baptists; 75 percent of all Lutherans had always been Lutherans; 90 percent of the Catholics had always been Catholics, 66 percent of the Presbyterians reported that they had always been Presbyterian; and 60 percent of the Episcopalians had always been of that faith. Schaller further points out that those days are now long gone. Today, only a small percentage would consider themselves permanently affiliated with any particular group or denomination.¹

Local churches will be successful as local units, not as members of a denomination, large or small. Baby-boomer loyalty is as deep as the answer to the question "What have you done for me lately?" In their minds, deep institutional loyalty will only get them into trouble.² According to Murren, "Denominations that will thrive in the 1990s will be those who put their energies into making strong, local congregations and celebrate the distinctive identities that each congregation will have in given cities."³ He suggests that denominations, rather than being frightened by this, need to encourage it.

Ministries to Reach Baby Boomers

There is no one way, no single ministry to reach, attract, and hold the baby-boom generation. It is much too diverse for that. Those churches who wish to minister to this generation must be willing to accept the fact that one

¹Ibid., 66.
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
overriding value that runs through the generation is that of choice. Baby boomers insist on the power to choose. Take away or limit that power, and you will not even come close to reaching the generation. Thus, to effectively minister to, reach out to, and retain them in a local congregation, that congregation must provide a smorgasbord of ministries to them. Below is a sampling of things a church might do to appeal to this generation.

Singles Ministry

According to Murren, demographers have confirmed that in the 1990s, over 50 percent of the population in the United States will be single.¹ In terms of the church, this means that the pews no longer will be dominated by parents with children, but will more and more reflect the singleness of American society.

This presents a major challenge to the church. For centuries the church has focused its ministry to the family (i.e., father, mother, children), all living together in the same house, and has considered singleness an aberration, a temporary state to be endured until one finds a mate and gets married. With the baby-boom generation, both the divorce rate and the rate of those who choose not to marry is high. Thus many churches find that a ministry that

¹Ibid., 76.
focuses only on the family misses a large percentage of its constituent population.

The current emphasis on the family by such celebrities as Dr. James Dobson fails to take into consideration that the "traditional family," such as that described above, is itself an aberration in American society. Cornell University professor Edward L. Kain recently stated,

Young Americans are returning to levels of singleness that have been characteristic throughout the history of this country -- but which were interrupted by a few decades of unusually high marriage rates and low ages at the onset of marriage."¹

Murren reminds us that singleness is a normal phenomenon and not an aberration of the baby boom.² It was the high rate of marriage among boomer parents, as a result of society's attempt to control the sexual behavior of its youth, that was unusual.

Churches need to realize that singleness is biblically normal, that marriage is not a requirement to be met before becoming a Christian. Christ Himself was single, as were several of His early disciples. Thus, churches who wish to minister to baby boomers will accept and try to understand singles and provide a well-run singles ministry. This ministry will involve such things as dispelling

²Murren, 80.
stereotypical myths of singleness (such as "all singles are neurotically lonely, incredibly homely, and sociologically retarded"1); presenting singleness in its biblically positive light; addressing the felt needs of singles (such as companionship, support, warmth, and affection, etc.); providing gathering opportunities for singles; and involving singles in church leadership.

Support Groups

Baby boomers appreciate support groups. They will attend groups dealing with addictions, divorce recovery, singleness, grief, etc. If there is a support group for it, boomers will attend it. Murren lists seven practical suggestions for reaching out to the dysfunctional people in the boomer generation.

1. Initiate occasions when specific sermons/messages address various addictions.

2. Develop a theology of Christian growth that allows for the healing process of addictive cycles in individuals.

3. Be adventurous in your church's outreach, extending care to the hurting and addicted segments of your community.

4. Establish programs of your own, even if your church is small.

1Ibid., 85.
5. Engage in networking, if your church is not large enough to commence programs of its own.

6. Educate your congregation to expect people with AIDS in their midst.

7. Read and encourage others to read books on various addictions.¹

Celebrating the Individual

As previously mentioned, baby boomers are significantly individualistic. Individuality is a highly regarded value among this generation. They look with a skeptical eye at anything that appears to even threaten the rights of an individual. This causes them to be distrustful of mass movements of any kind and especially churches that require a high degree of conformity. According to a Gallup poll conducted in 1985, baby boomers were the least trusting of all age groups toward organized religion.² Thus traditional, very conservative churches have a difficult time attracting them unless they are willing to intentionally "loosen up" in their approach to the generation. Those which expect the individual to bend to the will of the church will fail in reaching the generation.

Baby boomers ask consumer-type questions about any church they might visit: "Does this church take me

¹A suggested bibliography of books on addictions and recovery is listed in Appendix A.

²Murren, 138.
seriously as an individual?" "Do the people here remember my name?" "Will this church meet my needs?" "What services does this church offer my family and me?" "Is this church interested in me personally, or is it only interested in its survival as an institution?"

Baby boomers respect individual opinion. Processed or preconceived opinions forced upon them will drive them away. They are not interested in churches that tell them what to believe, how to live, and what to think on every imaginable issue. Boomers value churches that appreciate multiple opinions, that allow for an individual's right to think for her/himself. They are attracted to churches that provide tools for helping them to make good decisions on what to believe, how to live, and what to think, but they do not want their Christianity prepackaged for them.

Boomers like options. Many churches that appeal to baby boomers offer multiple worship services at different times. Some even offer different pastors at different services. For too long the church has said, "Here is our worship service. Here is our style of worship. Here is our pastor. Take it or leave it." And baby boomers have largely left. By offering different times for the worship service, different styles of worship, and (if the pastoral staff has more than one person on it) different pastors at the different services, the church says clearly: "We care about you, we are here to serve you. We will not make you
adjust your schedule to fit us. We will give you the option of attending a worship service when it is convenient for you." This attitude tells boomers that the institution is there to serve them, not the other way around.

Baby boomers are also inclined to appreciate pastoral leadership that not only believes but practices "servant leadership." Murren defines servant leadership as leadership that "inspires and implements God's people to new personal heights they never thought imaginable."¹ Baby boomers want leaders who will respect their individual gifts and talents and allow them to be used for the good of the church they attend. Boomers are not a corp of obedient followers. Rather, they are a volunteer group that wants and needs a church that has multiple options, talks more about the individual than the institution, is committed to truth yet respectful of counter opinions, does not force consensus, and exercises servant leadership that puts the individual's interests above the institution's needs.² Baby boomers are looking for a church where they can experience spirituality. They are hungering for the actual experience of God in their lives.³

¹Ibid., 147.
²Ibid., 148-9.
³Ibid., 155.
Summary

Baby boomers are a spiritual generation, but not in the traditional sense. By and large they have rejected Christianity and institutional religion. Many have explored Eastern and off-beat religions, and have even developed their own brand of religious faith.

In recent years, many baby boomers have sought to return to their Christian roots. However, they are not willing to accept the traditional "package." As they have returned, they have begun changing the way Christians "do church." Churches which desire to minister to this generation must be willing to innovate, use contemporary musical styles, and focus on relational rather than doctrinal ministries.
CHAPTER VII

BABY BOOMERS AND THE FUTURE

The oldest baby boomers are now forty-something. The "pig" in our society's "python" is moving its way to the end of its journey. Yet, that end is still some forty to sixty years into the future. We have seen some of the changes this generation has made in the institutions of American society. It is obvious to anyone watching the generation that it will continue to make changes until the end.

Baby boomers are a different breed from any that have come before, and, perhaps, from any to come in the future. Some welcome the change the generation has brought, others decry the generation as destructive of all good and seeking only its own interests and desires. The truth is probably somewhere in between.

Certainly, the generation has its problems. In its search for meaning in life, it has gone far beyond the beatniks of the fifties in experimentation with drugs and has surpassed the "Roaring Twenties" in sexual promiscuity. Yet, the generation is one of idealism. It is a generation that has sought more than a paycheck from its careers, more
than security in the family, and more than protection from the government. It is a generation that has sought meaning at every level and in every arena of life. It has pushed back the boundaries and American society will never be the same. Light says:

While there were baby boomers who were absorbed in self-indulgence and perfection, there were so many more who were merely seeking to break free from the old traditions. Some of the search for self-knowledge was and is destructive. Yet, some was healthy. Witness the baby boom's rejection of race and creed as a basis for judging an individual's value; witness its tolerance for those who do not fit traditional stereotypes. Surely no one wants to return to the social straightjackets of the 1950s?¹

Wallechinsky says,

I would like to make it clear that I do not find the generation of the 60s to be better or worse than any other generation. I do believe it is an intriguing generation, which found itself on the cutting edge of a period of confrontation, questioning, and transformation.²

For many, "sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll" was the popular catch-phrase to describe the interests of baby boomers.³ But, for boomers, as for other generations, Hammes believes

the midlife transition is a time of important psychological and social change. Many [baby boomers] who have done well will also feel that they wouldn't want to go on living as they have for another twenty years. Their lives have an empty quality. They will worry about the value of being able to send their kids to college if the price they pay is not knowing

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¹Light, 255.
²Wallechinsky, 3.
³Ibid., 31.
their kids very well. They will wonder about the virtue of having what is publicly a good marriage, when the reality is that neither spouse really knows the other one very well.¹

Hammes also states that "BBs came to adulthood with some awareness that a good life involved more than just earning an income. It included making society better for everyone."²

Even the so-called "Me" decade of the eighties came, at least in part, as a result of the boomer search for meaning.³ According to Paul Wachitel,

These movements did begin with a moral impulse, however much they may have strayed. In the 1960s, concern with self-awareness and personal growth reflected a rejection of the materialism that was seen as the basis for a social system that oppressed its minorities and wrought havoc around the globe. Today, this psychological and therapeutic emphasis continues to represent (at least potentially) an alternative to dominant values that point toward productivity instead of experience; that tells us that we can't "afford" social programs though we somehow still can afford new cars, gadgets and weapons; and that painfully push us to scrape raw our body politic against the rough edges of limited energy, toxic pollution and misordered priorities which require us to make things we don't need in order to provide jobs.⁴

Obviously, baby boomers are not just a generation of "hippies" turned "yuppies." Neither are they a generation of self-indulgent acquirers. This generation is complex and

²Ibid., 157.
³Paul Wachitel; quoted in Light, 255.
⁴Ibid., 255-6.
provocative.¹ Wallechinsky says, after interviewing members of the "Class of '65" for his book *Midterm Report*, "I felt encouraged by the reminder that members of my generation were still at it, still exploring, still searching. I hope this is a process that never stops."²

Echoing his thoughts, David Hinkley, one of Wallechinsky's interviewees said,

There are those of us who have been so heavily polarized that we could never really return [to the way things were]. We can accommodate to the way things are, but we're not at peace with it. We find our ways to make war with it, even if it's within a much more respectable "framework." But some of us became citizens of the world. We became human beings, and our politics became the politics of a human being rather than of a citizen of a fallible government and nation and economic structure. Some of us detached ourselves from an immoral political and economic framework in such a way that we were liberated to pursue our own destinies and to preserve our own political will.³

Baby boomers have been and continue to be more willing than other age groups to stand alone.⁴ Their access to education gave them a sense of freedom, just as their over-crowding created in them a lifelong commitment to individualism.⁵

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¹Wallechinsky, 3.
²Ibid., 213.
³David Hinkley; quoted in Wallechinsky, 404.
⁴Light, 199.
⁵Ibid., 131.
What will baby boomers bring to the future? No one knows for certain. As one researcher said, "It's never completely safe to predict the behavior of baby boomers."¹ Light reminds us,

By the year 2016, of course, these questions about baby boomers will have been answered. America will know whether the baby boomers ever made a difference. By 2016, for example, the baby boomers will have cast perhaps 700 million votes. The question is whether those votes will add up to anything more than a series of short-term, image elections. Eventually, the baby boomers may be held accountable by their own children and grandchildren for what they did or did not do with their great potential. Indeed, . . . . the election of 2016 may be the first election in history that will be more a referendum on a generation than on a party or candidate.²

I close with two statements that, perhaps, sum up the baby-boomer feeling about the future:

We can forecast to our hearts content, but until we actually get there we won't really know how life will change when 76 million Americans sag, slouch, gray and go bald together. Even so, it is hard to resist imagining what the world will be like when the Woodstock generation hits the golden years, not just in business, but in going about the business of everyday life. Sex? Slowly. Drugs? Heart medication, no doubt. As for the last category, everyone knows that rock and roll will never die.³

I look back on that period of upheaval with a mixture of feelings, not just with a sense of defeat. We won in a way; we lost in a way. On the whole, it's a story without an end. We haven't heard the last of them, and they haven't heard the last of us.⁴

¹Waldrop, 26.
²Light, 13.
⁴David Hinckley; quoted in Wallechinsky, 404.
Summary

Many people have tried to predict what is in store for the baby boom and society in the future. Most predictions have been based on past history. Yet, most prognosticators are beginning to realize that baby boomers constitute an unpredictable generation.

They have changed the definition of every life-stage they have passed through, and most demographers admit that they will probably continue to do so until the last baby boomer dies.
CHAPTER VIII

BABY BOOMERS AND THE SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH

When I began this project my focus of concern was my generation—baby boomers. I was especially concerned about people I had gone to school with, who were once Seventh-day Adventist Christians and who no longer are. As I studied the available materials on the subject of baby boomers and their attitudes toward spirituality and religion, especially Christianity, a responsive chord rose up in my own life. I wondered if other Adventist baby boomers felt the same way. So, as part of my project, I chose to survey some of them.

I chose as my sample the graduating classes of 1967 and 1968 from Adelphian and Cedar Lake academies located in the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. I also received seven completed surveys from baby-boomer pastors who attended a doctoral class taught by Dr. Steve Case. Although the academies are located in the Midwest, these graduates are now living in nearly every region of the United States. I sent out 228 surveys¹ (not including the ones from the doctoral class referred to above). Nineteen

¹See Appendix B for a copy of the survey instrument.
(19) of these were returned marked "addressee unknown, return to sender." Two (2) surveys were returned by people who did not wish to participate in the survey. Of the 207 remaining, I received 117, or a 57 percent response rate. These, with those of the pastors, gave a total of 124.

The survey asked for demographic information as well as information concerning the individual's relationship to the Seventh-day Adventist church. This project was primarily interested in the latter and used the former in attempting to understand the information received.

All of those who returned surveys were at one time baptized members of the Seventh-day Adventist church. The mean average age of baptism was 11½ years and the person/s with the greatest influence in the respondent's decision to be baptized were the parents (ninety-nine respondents checked parents as the most influential in their decision to be baptized). When asked what particular reason they had for becoming a Seventh-day Adventist, sixty-two respondents

---

1The youngest age at baptism was 7 years and the oldest was 17.

2The following are other influential factors in descending order with the number of respondents who checked that category: the pastor (16), a friend (15), a teacher (10), grandparents (9), an evangelist (9), siblings (4), SDA literature (3), the Holy Spirit (3), a fellow student (2), SDA radio program (1), other relatives (1), and school (1). The total is more than 124 because some respondents checked more than one response.
marked "I was raised in an Adventist home." Most (seventy-nine respondents) felt that their instruction concerning Adventist beliefs and practices prior to their baptism was adequate and 31 percent believed this instruction to be quite adequate or very thorough. Only fourteen respondents (11 percent) believed it to be inadequate and no one marked "non-existent."

Yet, in spite of being raised in Seventh-day Adventist homes with parents who encouraged them to be baptized, only 69 percent marked that they were active members in the church at the time of the survey. Eleven percent considered themselves inactive Adventists and 20 percent are no longer members of the Seventh-day Adventist church. I wondered why? Several questions on the survey instrument were designed to form an answer to this question. These questions dealt with relationships, doctrinal emphasis, the Adventist emphasis on Christian standards, and church life and ministry.

Fellowship in the Adventist Church

Question 9 on the survey asked: "What kind of fellowship do/did you find in the Seventh-day Adventist Church?" The other top responses in descending order were: convinced Adventism was the truth (49), urged by the voice of God (34), and to please parents (27). Interestingly, peer pressure appears not to have been much of a factor. Only eighteen responded that they were being baptized because their friends were and only seven said they did it to please their friends.
Church?" Table 1 shows how respondents answered this question. The first line of percentages represents those of active Adventist baby boomers. The second line are those of inactive members, and the third line gives the percentages of those who are no longer members of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Warm &amp; friendly</th>
<th>Cold &amp; unfriendly</th>
<th>Filled with love</th>
<th>Tried to involve you</th>
<th>Aloof &amp; reserved</th>
<th>Understanding</th>
<th>Critical judgmental</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<td>28%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inactive</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be readily seen, those who are presently active members of the Seventh-day Adventist church perceive it in a much more positive light than those who are inactive or no longer members.¹

Survey Results

The survey asked respondents to rate their feelings about various Adventist emphasis on a scale from

¹What I find interesting here is that, generally, those who have left the membership of the church appear to see it as both more positive and more negative than those who are inactive but still members.
one to five (with one being "not appreciated" and five being "appreciated"). The following tables show the results.¹

Table 2 below shows the feelings of respondents to questions of emphasis of a relational nature.

Responses to Relational Questions

In studying table 2, one sees that active members generally appreciate the following: members' attitudes towards them, church leaders' attitudes towards them, the pastor's attitude towards them, and the pastor's attitude towards non-SDAs. They do not appreciate slander, gossip, unfair criticism, a condemnatory spirit, and hypocrisy. They appear to be ambivalent in the areas of members' attitudes towards non-SDAs, members' Christlikeness, concern for others' salvation and happiness, love for non-SDAs, tolerance, and sociability.

Inactive baby-boomer Adventists do not appear to appreciate many of these relational attitudes as found in the Seventh-day Adventist church. Not one category received more than a 39 percent approval rate. In fact, only the pastor's attitude toward non-SDAs (56 percent) and slander about others (54 percent) rated above 50 percent even in the ambivalent column. In virtually

¹For purposes of this project, columns one and two, and columns four and five have been collapsed to give three columns of statistical information.
**TABLE 2**

**RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS OF A RELATIONAL NATURE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Members' attitude toward you</th>
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<th>76</th>
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<table>
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<table>
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<table>
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<th>32</th>
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<td>46</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
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<table>
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TABLE 2—Continued

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Helpfulness</td>
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<td>80 12 8</td>
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<td>Gossip about others</td>
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<td>84 8 8</td>
</tr>
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<td>Unfair criticism</td>
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<td>54 15 31</td>
<td>72 24 4</td>
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<td>39 46 15</td>
<td>72 20 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypocrisy</td>
<td>61 31 7</td>
<td>46 39 15</td>
<td>72 16 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

every category, inactive members did not appreciate or were ambivalent towards what they saw in the Adventist church.

By contrast, former members appeared to know what they appreciated and what they did not appreciate. In only three categories was there a significant amount of ambivalence among them: the pastor's attitude toward them (30 percent, 35 percent, and 35 percent), concern for other's salvation (22 percent, 61 percent, and 17 percent), and love for church members (13 percent, 52 percent, and 35 percent). Former members appreciated the members' attitude toward them, the sociability of the
church, and the church's helpfulness. They did not appreciate the church leaders' attitudes toward them, the members' attitudes toward non-SDAs, the pastor's attitude toward non-SDAs, the members' apparent Christlikeness, love for non-SDAs (which appears to be interpreted as a lack of), tolerance (again, interpreted as a lack of), slander, gossip, unfair criticism, a condemnatory spirit, and hypocrisy.

Again, both current active members and former members appear to be closer in their attitudes, generally, than current active members and current inactive members.

Responses to Doctrinal Questions

Table 3 shows the feelings of respondents to questions on emphasis of a doctrinal nature. Generally, active Adventist baby boomers appreciate the doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist church. No doctrine is overwhelmingly unappreciated. However, there is a fair amount of ambivalence surrounding four: law and obedience, strict Sabbath observance, offerings, and church organization.

Inactive Adventist baby boomers again show a marked ambivalence and/or negativity. Only the emphasis on the Second Coming (62 percent) and creation (85 percent) received high appreciative marks. Concerning the emphasis on righteousness by faith, 46 percent of the
respondents marked 3, the ambivalent category. Law and obedience received a 54 percent negative response and a 31 percent positive response. Strict Sabbath observance received a "do not appreciate" response of 46 percent and an "appreciate" response of 46 percent. Tithing received 46 percent negative response and a 39 percent ambivalent response. Offerings received a 54 percent ambivalent response with the remainder evenly split between "appreciate" and "do not appreciate." Ellen White fared little better with the returns nearly evenly split among the three categories (39 percent, 31 percent, and 31 percent). The inspiration of Scripture did a little better with both ambivalence and appreciation each receiving 46 percent. The emphasis on belief in SDA doctrines received a 46 percent approval rating with 31 percent not appreciating it and 23 percent ambivalent. Adventist prophetic interpretations fared a bit worse. Forty-six percent did not appreciate this emphasis while only 31 percent did. And church organization received a 42 percent "did not appreciate" rating, a 42 percent ambivalent rating, and only a 17 percent "appreciate" rating.

Among former Adventist baby boomers, strict Sabbath observance, Ellen White, the emphasis on belief in SDA doctrines, and Adventist prophetic interpretations fared the worst with 54 percent, 58 percent, 54 percent,
TABLE 3
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS OF A DOCTRINAL NATURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Inactive</th>
<th>Non-member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>1 3 5</td>
<td>1 3 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christ</td>
<td>4 19 77</td>
<td>39 46 15</td>
<td>13 22 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Righteousness by faith</td>
<td>1 28 71</td>
<td>31 46 23</td>
<td>17 30 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law &amp; obedience</td>
<td>23 40 37</td>
<td>54 15 31</td>
<td>42 21 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strict Sabbath observance</td>
<td>22 41 37</td>
<td>46 7 46</td>
<td>54 17 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Coming</td>
<td>7 21 72</td>
<td>7 31 62</td>
<td>8 38 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tithing</td>
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<td>46 39 15</td>
<td>25 42 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offerings</td>
<td>7 40 53</td>
<td>23 54 23</td>
<td>33 29 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen White</td>
<td>11 34 55</td>
<td>39 31 31</td>
<td>58 21 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiration of Scripture</td>
<td>0 5 95</td>
<td>7 46 46</td>
<td>13 42 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief in SDA doctrines</td>
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<td>31 23 46</td>
<td>54 29 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prophetic interpretations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Church organization</td>
<td>10 43 48</td>
<td>42 42 17</td>
<td>42 38 21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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and 54 percent "do not appreciate" ratings respectively. Only the emphasis on righteousness by faith, the Second Coming, and creation received at least a 50 percent "appreciate" level.

Responses to Questions about the Adventist Lifestyle

Table 4 shows the responses to questions on the emphasis of the "Adventist lifestyle." Lifestyle issues appear to be a perennial area of controversy among Seventh-day Adventists. Traditionally, the Seventh-day Adventist church has emphasized living healthfully, modestly, and spiritually. This is evidenced, according to many, by abstinence from caffeinated beverages, alcoholic beverages, tobacco and unclean foods, not wearing ornamental jewelry, and attendance at Sabbath worship, Sabbath School, prayer meeting, by sharing their faith, and belonging to various denominational clubs and organizations.

It is here that I expected to find greatest divergence between the three groups surveyed. However, it was here that some surprises appeared.

Active Adventist baby boomers appear to see more integrity in the church than do inactive or former ones. Active Adventist baby boomers rated their appreciation of the church's integrity (member adherence to the moral values the church espouses) at the level of 51 percent.
However, even among this group, 37 percent were ambivalent. Among the inactive group, 58 percent were ambivalent and only 17 percent gave an appreciative rating of the integrity they perceived in the church. Among former members, both the ambivalent and appreciative category received a 40 percent rating.

In terms of missionary interest, 49 percent of active Adventist baby boomers were ambivalent, while 24 percent did not appreciate the emphasis and 27 percent did. Among the inactive, fully 50 percent did not appreciate the emphasis while ambivalence and appreciation each received 25 percent. On the other hand, 44 percent of former members appreciated this emphasis while only 20 percent did not. The remainder were ambivalent.

Active and former members were both ambivalent to the emphasis on living up to SDA beliefs at 51 and 42 percent respectively. Only the inactive were generally unappreciative of this emphasis, and none of the groups appreciated the double standards they perceived in the church.

Christian education was appreciated by all three groups at 77 percent, 46 percent, and 46 percent respectively.

The soul-winning emphasis was appreciated by 60 percent of active Adventist baby boomers, but by only 23
TABLE 4

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ON THE ADVENTIST LIFESTYLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Inactive</th>
<th>Non-member</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Integrity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missionary interest</td>
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<td>Live up to SDA beliefs</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Double standards</td>
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<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dancing prohibition</td>
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</table>

| Area                  | 3        | 5        | 1          | 3        | 5        | 1          | 3        | 5        |
| Integrity             | 25       | 58       | 17         | 20       | 40       | 40         |
| Missionary interest   | 50       | 25       | 25         | 20       | 36       | 44         |
| Live up to SDA beliefs| 46       | 39       | 15         | 29       | 42       | 29         |
| Double standards      | 31       | 54       | 15         | 58       | 33       | 8          |
| Christian education   | 15       | 39       | 46         | 25       | 29       | 46         |
| Vegetarianism         | 31       | 39       | 31         | 42       | 38       | 21         |
| Soul-winning          | 39       | 39       | 23         | 46       | 38       | 17         |
| Ingathering           | 69       | 31       | 0          | 50       | 21       | 29         |
| Jewelry standard      | 62       | 23       | 15         | 79       | 13       | 8          |
| Wedding ring standard | 62       | 31       | 8          | 83       | 13       | 4          |
| Dress standard        | 54       | 23       | 23         | 71       | 25       | 4          |
| Alcohol prohibition   | 31       | 31       | 39         | 42       | 21       | 38         |
| Tobacco prohibition   | 15       | 23       | 62         | 38       | 21       | 42         |
| Theater standard      | 46       | 31       | 23         | 79       | 13       | 8          |
| Music standard        | 46       | 31       | 23         | 83       | 17       | 0          |
| Dancing prohibition   | 69       | 8        | 23         | 75       | 21       | 4          |

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TABLE 4—Continued

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
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<th>Inactive</th>
<th>Non-member</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sacredness of marriage</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Form of worship</td>
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<td>46</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Services</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>57</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

percent of inactive ones, and by only 17 percent of the former members. The church's emphasis on Ingathering (its annual fund-raising campaign for missions and community service projects) was not appreciated by any of the three groups. Forty-eight percent of active members, 69 percent of inactive members, and 50 percent of former members marked the "do not appreciate" category for this emphasis.

Ambivalence appears to be the standard concerning the form of worship. Among active Adventist baby boomers 49 percent appreciate it while 43 percent were ambivalent. Among inactive Adventist baby boomers, 39 percent appreciate and 39 percent were ambivalent. Among former Adventist baby boomers, only 33 percent appreciate it while 42 percent were ambivalent. The emphasis on
prayer meeting ranked similarly except among the inactive
where no one appreciated the emphasis and 58 percent did
not appreciate it.

With the Pathfinder program, active Adventist
baby boomers appear to appreciate it with an approval
rating of 61 percent, and former members with 54 percent.
Inactive members again were ambivalent with 58 percent
marking column three on the survey questionnaire.
Similarly, the Community Services emphasis received a 57
percent "appreciate" level among active Adventist baby
boombers and a 50 percent approval rating among former
members. Among inactive members, a mere 33 percent
checked that they appreciated this emphasis in the
church.

Only the emphasis on the sacredness of marriage
appeared to be clearly appreciated by all three
categories with 88 percent, 83 percent, and 71 percent
respectively.

The emphasis on vegetarianism was appreciated by
45 percent of active members and ambivalent among 46
percent. Among inactive members this emphasis was nearly
equally divided, and among former members, 42 percent did
not appreciate it while 38 percent were ambivalent.
Among other health-related emphases, the prohibition on
alcohol was appreciated by 84 percent of active members,
39 percent of inactive members, and only 38 percent of
former members. The prohibition on tobacco fared somewhat better with an approval rating among active members of 89 percent, among inactive of 62 percent, and among former members of 42 percent. The standard concerning caffeinated beverages, however, was not appreciated as highly. Among active baby boomers only 42 percent appreciate this emphasis, among inactive members the approval rating is only 15 percent, and among former members, only 13 percent.

The other "standards" emphases, which deal primarily with the Adventist understanding of worldliness and spirituality, did not fare well at all. The emphasis on dress was appreciated by only 34 percent of active Adventist baby boomers, 23 percent of inactive ones, and 4 percent of former ones. The standard on jewelry was appreciated by only 8 percent of former Adventist baby boomers, 15 percent of inactive Adventist ones, and a mere 29 percent of active ones. The standard on the wedding ring (a prohibition against wearing one) is even less appreciated with 4 percent of former members, 8 percent of inactive members, and only 24 percent of active members appreciating it.

Recreationally, 41 percent of active Adventist baby boomers appreciated the standard on theater attendance, 43 on the music standard, and 54 percent on the dancing standard, while ambivalence was apparent.
among 41 percent, 46 percent, and 29 percent respectively. Among inactive Adventist baby boomers, each of the above standards received a 23 percent appreciation level and a 46 percent, 46 percent, and 69 percent non-appreciative level respectively. Only 8 percent of former members appreciated the theater standard, while none appreciated the music standard and just 4 percent appreciated the no dancing standard. The percentages of former members who did not appreciate these standards were 79, 83, and 75 respectively.

What do these statistics tell us? For one thing, they tell us that Adventist baby boomers do not generally appreciate the traditional emphasis of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Of all the categories surveyed, only the inspiration of Scripture and belief in creation rated above a 90 percent appreciation level, and then only among currently active Adventist baby boomers.

Even a cursory perusal of these statistics shows not only an ambivalence but an animosity toward much of what has defined Adventism. And this is not true just among the inactive or the former baby boomer members. Even among currently active Adventist baby boomers, there is a tremendous amount of ambivalence and non-appreciation for these traditional emphases.

The survey instrument asked each category of respondent to share why she or he chose to either remain
a Seventh-day Adventist, leave the Seventh-day Adventist church, or, having once left, rejoin. The following are some of their responses.

Among active Adventist baby boomers, the primary reason for remaining an Adventist is their belief in the doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist church (37 percent). The next major reason was their personal relationship with Jesus Christ (25 percent), followed by their belief that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church of Bible prophecy (18 percent).

Nearly all of the respondents who consider themselves inactive Adventists did not respond to the question of why they choose to remain Seventh-day Adventists. Even though their names are still on a church's membership roll, they, by and large, consider themselves non-Adventists and most responded to the question of why they chose to leave the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Thus, I will incorporate their responses with those who consider themselves non-members.

Of the ones who responded to this question (20 percent did not), 27 percent said they left because of the intolerance shown by the church toward individualism and/or non-members. Fifteen percent said they left because they no longer believed Adventist teachings. Twelve percent left due to marrying a non-Adventist spouse. The last two major reasons were the emphasis on
Ellen White (9 percent) and the fact that the church no longer met their needs (9 percent).

When asked what would need to take place for them to rejoin the Seventh-day Adventist church, most (33 percent) said that it would not happen. Other responses ranged from "my spouse's conversion to a change in Adventist doctrine/teaching to a personal recommitment to Adventist beliefs." In spite of this, most respondents (71 percent) feel a deep need for spirituality in their lives. Some have tried to fill this need by attending another church, others by developing their own philosophy and living by it.

The question was asked of former members who have rejoined the Adventist church as to how the church could be more successful in retaining its members, and what it could do to minister to former Seventh-day Adventists. However, respondents from each category chose to answer these questions. Some of their responses follow.

"Don't be so dogmatic and unyielding re: standards with no biblical foundation." "Find out why they left and invite to return (not necessarily rebaptize)." "Accept people for who and what they are instead of trying to change them." "Emphasis on people relationships that benefit everyone even if not a member."
"Stop shouting about the truth! What is truth anyway?" "Live the example, maintain contact but do not push." "By teaching more from the scriptures and less from Mrs. White. By being more accepting--taking and loving people right where they are."

"Stop the judgmental attitude, the back biting, the gossiping about people who are not just like you. Understanding that God made each of us different and not trying to fit everyone into the same cog."

They [former members] are very distrustful--they believe SDAs are still very legalistic and hold Mrs. White higher than God's word. The members must understand righteousness by faith first and recognize their own need of Christ before they will accept former SDAs without judgment.

"Don't 'kick out' before finding out facts. Major in important factors--caring and accepting spirit."

"Accept people where they are, how they are. Don't force a guilt trip." "Increase Bible study--Fellowship--Pray for one another." "Be genuine friends with them--Not discuss religion unless they ask about it."

"As we add more members--nurture them always! Not just coming in but love and care for them after they join. Take care of members like the Mormon church."

"Keep inviting to planned special events--but also keep distance. Their choice. Keep praying for them."

"Social/relationships. Involvements/activities. Personal involvement in spiritual activities."
"Be genuine and sincere to your fellow member and be a friend. Care—don't just say you care, show it, mean it, and live it. Don't be unduly critical." "You have to start by being a friend to them—sincerely genuine."

"If individually we kept our eyes upon Jesus we would be more effective in both winning souls and in retaining members." "Keep in touch with them, invite them into our fellowship. Visit them, phone them. Show them we care. Don't give up on them and don't rush them. Pray for them constantly. Listen to their needs. Don't judge them." "Learning to love." "Offering friendship." "Being less concerned on rules and traditions—being more concerned with Christ and the personal relationship with Christ."

"Let them know church is beginning to change from legalism to relationship emphasis—Forgive hurt from hypocrisy of others, emphasize total focus on Jesus." "Make church and Sabbath School more appealing. Have more social activities, more visiting and hospitality among members." "Point out the fact that they need to look to Christ as our example not the pastor or members and show them love and concern."

"Increased use of small Sabbath School action units, with prompt recognition and action when a member is missing even after one or two weeks." "Visit them
often. Let them know you love and accept them, just as they are. Let them know they are missed, but don't scold or lay a guilt trip on them. They know where they belong, usually. Encourage to look to Jesus." "Point to Christ more, make sure members put their faith in Christ and not in humans." "Members be friendly and open to former members and never let former members think someone in the church doesn't have a concern for them!" "More emphasis on a personal relationship with God."

As one reads the above responses, it appears that Adventist baby boomers have much in common with baby boomers in general, particularly their emphasis on relationships. Most of the above responses emphasize both vertical and horizontal relationships. Very little emphasis is placed on truth or doctrine.

For Adventist baby boomers, truth is a person, Jesus Christ. Doctrines or beliefs are simply a means by which to get to know Him better, even among those who say these are what keeps them Adventists.

The Seventh-day Adventist church needs to focus more on relationships and less on doctrine, standards, and tradition. As we do this, we will retain more of our baby boomers and reclaim some of the ones we have lost. According to the survey conducted for this project, 30 percent of those who have left the Adventist Church have considered rejoining. If we are able to learn how to
reclaim them, is it possible we might reclaim some of the 70 percent? I believe it is.

Summary

Adventist baby boomers show a remarkable similarity to the rest of the baby-boom generation. In spite of their growing up in a conservative Christian tradition, they are not willing to accept without question the doctrines, standards, and teachings of their church.

There is a marked ambivalence among them concerning these things that shows that their spiritual focus lies elsewhere. In synch with non-Adventist baby boomers, Adventist boomers are especially concerned with relationships—both horizontal (with other people) and vertical (with God). For them, relationships take pre-eminence over doctrine, teachings, and standards.

A significant number of Seventh-day Adventist baby boomers have left the church. Yet, many of them have considered returning to its fold. Whether they do or not depends largely on the church reaching out in ways that are meaningful to them. This means innovation, openness, and a willingness to change.
CHAPTER IX

AN EVALUATION OF THE SEMINAR "BABY BOOMERS AND THE CHURCH: A SEMINAR TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING"

This seminar was conducted twice at different locations. The first seminar was conducted at the Dowagiac Seventh-day Adventist Church, 410 Hill Street, Dowagiac, Michigan, on March 27, 1993, from 1:00 to 7:15 P.M. The second was conducted on April 3, 1993, in Room 230 of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, from 1:30 to 6:30 P.M.

There were a total of nine participants between the two seminars (six at the Dowagiac seminar and three at the Seminary seminar). Three of the participants were baby boomers; the other six were from a previous generation.

Pre-seminar Understanding of the Baby-Boom Generation

When asked the question "What do you think of when you hear the words 'baby boomer'?" the responses varied from "I don't know" to "my generation." Most respondents replied to this question with a qualitative
rather than a quantitative response. Quantitatively, the generation consists of those born from 1946-1964, and numbers between 75 and 77 million people. However, as is evidenced by the responses received, the term "baby boomer" has taken on a qualitative aspect. People who hear it immediately have a perception in their minds as to what a baby boomer is.

The other responses to this question were: "People born in the 50s--60s?" "A certain generation in a certain time. Change in our society--Ideas and way of life"; "Independent thinkers and doers"; "It is an unfortunate appellation for very successful, useful people"; "Lost generation"; and "The most dynamic generation there is, not ego, dream/vision/inspiration. The 'us' generation."

The participants were then asked how they felt towards the baby-boom generation. One respondent replied that she did not know who or what baby boomers were supposed to be. Another replied, "confused." Most responded that they felt okay about the generation and one commented, "It's exciting because of the creativity and non-traditional approaches to problem solving."

When asked how they related to baby boomers, most felt they related fairly well. One replied that, although she did not always agree with them, she did get along with them.
Most respondents had not done anything personally to try to win baby boomers to Christ. One commented that he shares his personal testimony and does everything possible to "love them to Jesus"; another remarked that he had started a radio station designed to reach baby boomers for Christ.

In answering the final question on the entrance questionnaire—What has your church done to win baby boomers to Christ?—seven participants replied "nothing" or "not much" and one replied "Bible studies/seminars."

Post-seminar Responses

At the close of the seminar, participants completed an exit questionnaire to find out if their understanding of or feelings towards baby boomers had changed. In addition, several questions asked if they now had any ideas of what they or the church could do to win baby boomers to Christ.

Personal Understanding of and Feelings Towards Baby Boomers

Seven of the participants checked the "yes" response when asked if their understanding of baby boomers had changed as a result of the seminar. It had changed, they said, because they now understood how events that occurred in the baby boomers' childhoods had affected them and shaped their feelings, values, and ideals. Of the two who checked "no," one commented that
the seminar had "just crystallized" his or her understanding of the generation.

Four of the participants said the seminar did not change their feelings towards baby boomers. Three of these gave no explanation and the fourth replied, "I have reared two baby boomers and have taught hundreds of others and have understood them before."

Of the five who indicated that their feelings had changed, the consensus was that because they now understood the generation better, they were better able to identify with them. Because of this, six participants also said that they would relate more positively to members of the baby-boom generation.

Personal Outreach to Baby Boomers

In response to the question as to whether they thought there was now anything they could do to win baby boomers, all but one participant believed there was, and that one remarked that he or she would have to think about it.

Others believed they could be more loving and understanding, could treat baby boomers with more courtesy and respect, could work with them one-on-one, could let baby boomers be themselves and show them that they honestly care about them, and could spend time with them and accept them for who they are.
What the Church Could Do

Only one respondent said he was not sure yet what the church could do to win baby boomers to Christ. The other eight participants, after completing the seminar, believed there were things the church could do.

Some responses were: "Be less conformed to doctrinal standards and accept them [baby boomers] as they are," "They [the church] could have a special ministry or programs for them [baby boomers], start some programs on to have a personal relationship with Christ," "Lighten up! Allow [for] individuality. Change some of the style of worship; don't be as critical of others including baby boomers."

Other participants said, "Be Christ-centered rather than doctrine/creed centered. Be more accepting; less judgmental. Be honest, sincere, genuinely caring." "Keep the church open and friendly and work to develop a spirit of acceptance."

Comments

The participants were invited to express any comments they might have concerning the seminar including its presenter, content, presentation, length, etc.

In a negative vein, four participants commented that the length of the seminar--five to six hours--may be a bit much. One suggested that the material might be too deep for some in attendance.
However, most of the comments were positive, the participants being grateful for the opportunity to attend the seminar. Most appreciated the information shared in the seminar saying it helped provide a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the baby-boom generation and that it was sensible, practical, and easy to understand.

Conclusions

Although I wish there had been more participants, the seminar accomplished what I wanted it to. Most of the participants were not sure what they knew, felt, or understood about baby boomers prior to the seminar. The seminar, according to the responses, provided a means of clarifying their knowledge, feelings, and understanding of the generation. It also helped them focus on what both they and the Adventist church could do to win this generation for Christ.

This project has been a long time in preparation. Yet, as I look back on it, this experience has been one of the most rewarding in my pastoral career. I have reconnected with baby boomers I went to school with and renewed some friendships. I have realized that I am not the only one who feels the way I do about the Adventist church's lack of attention toward the baby-boom generation.
It is my prayer that this project will be at least one step in awakening my church to the potential for Christ that lies in the people we call baby boomers.

Recommendations

This project has helped me understand some of my own attitudes towards the church, authority, and change. As a result, I would make the following recommendations to anyone who might be interested in developing a ministry to reach the baby-boom generation with the gospel.

1. Take the time to try and understand your own attitudes towards the church, authority, and change.

2. Make sure you are attempting to reach baby boomers for their sake and not just to add new members to your church's roll.

3. Understand that, just as it is easier to build a new building than it is to remodel an existing one, it is easier to start a new church focusing on ministry to baby boomers than it is to take an existing church and redirect its focus towards the baby-boom generation.

4. If you want to redirect your current church's ministry towards baby boomers, pray for patience because change takes time. You must be willing to move slowly and take your church with you as you change the direction of its ministry.
APPENDIX A

A SUGGESTED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON ADDICTIONS AND RECOVERY


APPENDIX B

COVER LETTER AND SURVEY INSTRUMENT
August 28, 1990

Dear ,

I am conducting a survey among those who graduated from Adelphian and Cedar Lake Academies for the years 1967 and 1968. This is part of a doctoral project to try to find how many of us are still members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, how many are no longer members, and how many left and since returned to membership. I am also surveying the reasons why we have chosen as we did.

Your answers will be kept strictly confidential. I will compile and compare responses, but I will not reveal your identity in any way to anyone. The identification number on your envelope is simply to allow me to record the fact that you have returned your survey. Once I receive your survey, I will place a check mark by your name and destroy the envelope to insure your complete anonymity.

Please participate in this survey. Your responses will help me personally in my research, and, perhaps, help the Adventist Church to better minister to our generation. God bless you, and thanks in advance for your help.

Sincerely yours,

Gary Russell, Doctoral Candidate
Andrews University Theological Seminary

P.S. I've also enclosed a copy of your class list. These are the most up-to-date addresses I have. If you have any corrections or additions, please send them to me. Thanks!
# Adventist Baby Boomer Church Relationship Survey

## Confidential

### Demographic Information

1. **Sex**
   - female
   - male

2. **Age**

3. **Occupation**

4. **Marital Status**
   - single
   - engaged
   - married
   - separated
   - divorced
   - widowed

5. **Ethnic Background**
   - white North American
   - black North American
   - Native American
   - Hispanic
   - Other (please specify)

6. **Approximate yearly income**
   - $0,000 - 2,999
   - $3,000 - 5,999
   - $6,000 - 9,999
   - $10,000 - 14,999
   - $15,000 - 24,000
   - $25,000 - 39,999
   - $40,000 - 74,999
   - $75,000 - up

7. **Educational Background**
   - please specify grades completed and whether at an Adventist or non-Adventist school

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<tr>
<td>Graduate School</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Survey

1. Have you ever been a baptized member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church? _yes _no
   (If yes, please state your age at the time of baptism and continue the survey. _yes_)

   (If no, please share your reasons for not becoming a member on a separate sheet of paper and send it to me. Please do not complete the remainder of this survey. Thank you for your participation.)

2. Please describe your current relationship to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
   - _active member
   - _inactive member
   - _non-member

3. Do you believe you had reached the age of spiritual maturity at the time of your baptism? _yes _no

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4. Was the instruction you received concerning SDA beliefs and practices prior to your baptism:

- non-existent
- inadequate
- adequate
- quite adequate
- very thorough

5. Who or what influenced you most to become a Seventh-day Adventist?
- parents
- grandparents
- siblings
- friend
- neighbor
- teacher
- pastor
- church officer
- evangelist
- fellow student
- musical group
- youth group
- SDA radio program
- SDA television program
- literature
- other (please specify)

6. Please share the particular reason you became a Seventh-day Adventist by rating the following on a scale of 1 - 5 (with 1 being the least influential and 5 being the most influential reason).

- urged by the voice of God/Holy Spirit
- convinced Adventism was the truth
- to find salvation
- conversion
- impressed by Adventist beliefs
- liked the pastor
- to please parents
- to please relatives
- to please friends
- because my friends were being baptized
- because my parents were being baptized
- I was raised in an SDA home
- I wanted to join a church
- other (please specify)

7. How long did you study and evaluate the teachings of the Adventist Church before you became a member?
- Can't say, was raised Adventist
- less than two (2) months
- 3 - 6 months
- 1 - 3 years
- more than three (3) years

8. On a scale of 1 to 5, at the time when you were most fully committed to the Adventist Church, how would you rate your:

- devotional life
- church attendance
- church involvement
- witnessing activity
- relationship with Christ

- non-existent
- irregular
- non-existent
- active
- non-existent
- vibrant

9. What kind of fellowship do/did you find in the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

- warm & friendly
- cold & unfriendly
- filled with love
- tried to involve you

- kind & reserved
- understanding
- critical/judgmental
- other

10. For how many years were you/have you been a Seventh-day Adventist? ___
11. Please share your feelings about the following areas in the Adventist Church (with 5 being very much appreciated and 1 being not appreciated at all).

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<thead>
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<th>Not Appreciated</th>
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</table>
If you are currently a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, please go to question 12.

If you had been a member, but left, and have since returned, please go to question 13.

If you had been a member, but have since left and are currently not a member, please go to question 17.

12. Please list, in order of importance, the five (5) major reasons you have chosen to remain a Seventh-day Adventist.

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

Thank you so much for your participation. Please place this survey in the envelope provided and mail it back to me. If you have any other comments or observations, please write them on a separate sheet of paper and enclose it as well. If you would like a copy of the survey results, please send me a postcard with your request and I'll be happy to send you one. Thanks again for participating.

13. How many years were you not a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church? __________

14. How satisfied are you with your decision to return?

____ very satisfied
____ quite satisfied
____ satisfied
____ not satisfied
15. In your opinion, how could the church be more successful in retaining its members?

________________________________________________________________________________________

16. What suggestions do you have for ministering to former Seventh-day Adventists?

________________________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for participating in this survey. Please place it in the envelope provided and mail it back to me. If you have any other comments or suggestions, please write them on a separate sheet of paper and enclose it as well. If you would like a copy of the survey results, please send your request on a postcard and I will be happy to send you one. Thanks again for your participation.

17. Were there any significant events that disrupted your life just prior to your leaving the Seventh-day Adventist church.  yes  no

If yes, could you please briefly describe it/them? __________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

18. How would you describe your past relationship with the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

19. How would you describe your current relationship with the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

20. Please list the five (5) major reasons why you chose to leave the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

1. ________________________________________________________________

2. ________________________________________________________________

5
21. Was the decision to leave the Seventh-day Adventist Church:
   ___ your decision  ___ the Church's decision with your consent
   ___ the Church's decision without your consent
   ___ the Church's decision without consulting you

22. Has anyone from the Adventist Church tried to "win you back" since you have left?
   ___ yes  ___ no
      If yes, please briefly explain who and how.

23. Have you ever considered becoming a Seventh-day Adventist again?  ___ yes  ___ no

24. What would need to take place for you to rejoin the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

25. How do you presently feel about the need for religion/spirituality in your life?

Thank you for your participation. Please enclose this survey in the envelope provided. If you have any other comments, observations, or suggestions, please write them on a separate sheet of paper and enclose it as well. If you would like a copy of the survey results, please send your request on a postcard and I will be happy to send you one. Thanks again for your participation.
APPENDIX C

SEMINAR MATERIALS
BABY BOOMERS

AND

THE CHURCH

A SEMINAR TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING

by

Gary E. Russell
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SESSION I

THE NEED OF A SPECIALIZED MINISTRY TO BABY BOOMERS

Both Scripture and church history have shown the need for intentional, specialized ministries to target groups. Because of the special needs of baby boomers, a specialized ministry to this generation is theologically sound, historically based, and immediately necessary.

1 Why a Specialized Ministry to Baby Boomers?

2 A Biblical Basis for Such a Ministry
DEFINING THE BABY BOOM GENERATION

Baby boomers share a common time frame, a common history, and common ideas about tolerance and the rejection of social and political traditions.

In spite of these commonalities, the generation is not monolithic. Several considerations serve to divide it into smaller pieces.

1 | Baby Boomer Commonalities

2 | Baby Boomer Differences

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Four Baby Boomer Ideologies

Conclusion
SESSION III

FACTORS LEADING TO THE BABY BOOM

The baby boom was an unexpected phenomenon. Demographers and other "experts" predicted a short-term increase in the birth-rate following World War II, but none were prepared for a nearly twenty-year boom in the number of births.

In the post-war economic boom, more couples married, they married younger, and they had babies as if it were a patriotic duty.

1 | The Depression and the Great War

2 | Post-war Sexuality

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A number of factors combined to shape the psyche of the baby boom generation. Among these were changing attitudes toward the family, the post-war economic boom, television, the "Cold War," the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, Jr., the Watergate political scandal, and the Viet Nam war.
Babymoers are a spiritual generation, but not in the traditional sense. By and large they have rejected Christianity and institutional religion. Many have explored Eastern religions, off-beat religions, and have even developed their own brand of religious faith.

In recent years, many baby boomers have sought to return to their Christian roots. However, they are not willing to accept the traditional "package." As they have returned, they have begun changing the way Christians "do church." Churches which desire to minister to this generation must be willing to innovate, use contemporary musical styles, and focus on relational rather than doctrinal ministries.
Why Boomers Return to Christianity

Making Church Attractive to Baby Boomers
Reaching Baby Boomers: A Sampling
Many people have tried to predict what is in store for the baby boom and society in the future. Most predictions have been based on past history. Yet, most prognosticators are beginning to realize that baby boomers constitute an unpredictable generation.

Baby boomers have changed the definition of every life-stage they have passed through, and most demographers admit they will probably continue to do so until the last baby boomer dies.
Adventist baby boomers show a remarkable similarity to the rest of the baby boom generation. In spite of their growing up in a conservative Christian tradition, they are not willing to accept without question the doctrines, standards, and teachings of their church.

A significant number of Seventh-day Adventist baby boomers have left the church. Yet, many of them have considered returning to its fold. Whether they do or not depends largely on the church reaching out in ways that are meaningful to them. This means innovation, openness, and a willingness to change.
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Questions on the Adventist Lifestyle

Something to Think About
BABY BOOMERS AND THE CHURCH
A SEMINAR TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING

Registration Form

Name________________________

Address________________________ City, State, Zip:_______

Why are you attending this seminar? ______________________

______________________________

______________________________

______________________________.

How did you hear about this seminar? ______________________

______________________________

______________________________.
ENTRANCE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What do you think of when you hear the words "baby boomer?"

2. How do you feel towards the baby boom generation?

3. How well do you relate to baby boomers?

4. What have you done personally to win baby boomers to Christ?

5. What has your church done to win baby boomers to Christ?
EXIT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Has your understanding of baby boomers changed as a result of this seminar? ___yes ___no If yes, please explain in what ways it has changed ______________________

2. Have your feelings towards baby boomers as a generation changed as a result of this seminar? ___yes ___no If yes, please explain how? ______________________

3. Do you think you will now relate differently to baby boomers as a result of attending this seminar? ___yes ___no If yes, please share why you think so: _______________

4. Is there anything you now believe you can do to win baby boomers to Christ? ___yes ___no If yes, please share what this/these things might be: ______________________

5. Is there anything you now believe your church can do to win baby boomers to Christ? ___yes ___no If yes, please share what this/these things might be: ______________________

6. Please share any other comments you may have concerning the seminar—its director, content, presentation, length, etc. (please feel free to use the back of this sheet if necessary) _______________________

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SUPPLEMENTARY BIBLIOGRAPHY


BIBLIOGRAPHY


Dudley, Roger, Bruce Wrenn, and Slimen Saliba. "Who Are(n't) We Baptizing?" Ministry, April 1989, 4-8.


VITA

Gary E. Russell was born in 1950. He graduated from Adelphian Academy in 1968, Andrews University with a Bachelor of Arts in Theology in 1972 and a Master of Divinity in 1974, and Loma Linda University with a Master of Public Health in 1981.

He is married to the former Diane L. Rendel and has four children, Chad, Kurt, Tara, and Bret.

He enjoys most sports, computers, reading, photography, motorcycling, muscle cars from the 60s, and editing ABBA, a newsletter for Adventist baby boomers.

As an Old Wave baby boomer, he experienced the turbulence of the 1960s. He is concerned that the Seventh-day Adventist Church begin to implement an intentional ministry to his generation.