Theology of Ordination Study Committee Ends First Meeting: As denominational leaders struggle to seek added biblical perspective on the theology of ordination, the fourth such committee (in the past 40 years) to hold forth on the matter convened amid tension this week.

Adventist Pastor Wintley Phipps to Sing at President Obama’s Inaugural Events: One of the finest voices in American gospel music happens to belong to an Adventist pastor whose talent, grace and commitment to Christ often place him in the company of the most powerful men and women on earth.

Romania-based Adventist Internet Ministry Continues to Thrive after 15 Years: Adventist Internet independent ministry "Intercer," which ministers worldwide primarily to online Adventists with ties to Romania, is multilingual and now averages 60,000 visitors a month.

Adventist Author’s New Book To Be Released by New York Publisher on February 12: A book on friendship written by an Adventist inspirational speaker is being published in February and heavily promoted by a large New York publisher—a rarity for an Adventist author.

Sixth International Congress on Vegetarian Nutrition to Convene February 24-26: What new things is science telling us about the interconnections of vegetarianism and cancer, diabetes, obesity, longevity, and aging? Loma Linda University in California is hosting a world congress, addressing these issues, next month.

A Fundamental Problem: Are the 10 Commandments really binding on the whole human
Columnist Preston Foster argues that the current Adventist position taken in the 19th Fundamental Belief does not concur with the teachings of Paul.

**Comments on SS "Origins" Lesson 3:** One of the most amazing (and most controversial) parts of the study of creation is the matter of *time*. When did God create it, and how much of it has passed thus far into history? Blogger Jack Hoehn considers the seven-day week and the movement of the planet, sun, and moon and marvels at how intricately they interact in *time*.

**Dr. David Wilbur: Power and Illusion: Religion and Human Need. Part 7:** Surveys of cross-sections of professed Christians show that their religion often seems to have a comparatively minimal effect on their level of ethical behavior. Why, then, do religions claim to bring transforming moral power into believers' lives? Blogger Ervin Taylor takes up the point.

**Sell Everything You Have:** What if—just what if—God called some of us to literally give up all our money and possessions for Him? It's scary, but it would be quite a challenge! says blogger Charles Eaton.

**Pictures:** Devotional blogger Debonnairre Kovacs paints pictures of life that give us glimpses of the sacred emotions that surely flow from the Father as He broods over His imperfect creation and imparts inspired clues to the depth of His care for us.

**SUBSCRIBERS' BONUS FEATURES**

**Adventist Today Winter Edition Mailed:** As the US faces a future in which hate of its healthcare plan seems at times more newsworthy than the nation's relatively low life-expectancy and frequent healthcare-related financial strain, author Maury Jackson, D.Min., pens "A Christian Response to the Global Healthcare Debate." (The winter edition of *Adventist Today* has been mailed, and this, its cover article, is made available free to all readers, through January 28, when it reverts to subscriber-only status. Celebrate the new edition with us and consider becoming a full-be nefit subscriber this month, for access to all *Adventist Today* content throughout the year. Phone (503) 826-8600).
Theology of Ordination Study Committee Ends First Meeting Thursday & Has Little to Say

Submitted: Jan 18, 2013
By AT News Team

Update Added at the End

“The first day was marked with tensions and apprehension” stated a report released late Thursday (January 17) by the officers of the Theology of Ordination Study Committee at the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Silver Spring, Maryland. The report included no hint as to what the issues may have been.

This session was focused on the primary task of establishing a theology of ordination that is consistent with Scripture and the Adventist heritage in preparation for dealing with the specific issue of gender discrimination in ordination at future meetings. “The steering committee [had] assigned certain individuals to prepare papers [that were] sent to all Study Committee members … before” the meeting, said the statement by Artur Stele, chair of the committee; Geoffrey Mbwana, vice chair; and Karen Porter, secretary.

After the papers were presented and discussed by the entire committee, the group broke into five discussion groups each assigned to bring recommendations back to the entire group. “We were all amazed by the similarity of the major points raised” in the discussion groups, the leaders said. “Based on the suggestions … from the … groups, the presenters will refine their papers and a second draft … will be sent out to the division Biblical Research Committees … for their input before the next meeting … in July.”

There was considerable emphasis on prayer and divine influence in the meeting. “We witnessed a very positive working of the Holy Spirit,” the committee officers observed. “We started each day with wonderful devotional messages and allowed ample time for prayer.”

Much has been invested in this committee as the way to find a solution to the debate over the role of women in Adventist clergy and preserve unity in the denomination. Three previous study groups in 1973, 1975 and 1988-89 each recommended extending ordination to women serving in gospel ministry and found their recommendations pulled back because of fear of conflict on the part of denominational administrators.

“This committee includes a number of people with the tools to do serious Bible study,” one theologian told Adventist Today. “It also includes members who are clearly on record on both sides of the issue. It appears that a real attempt has been made to have some balance in the group and this first statement seems to indicate that the leadership of the committee is working for integrity in its proceedings.” The statement was brief and lacked detailed information such as summaries or even the topics of the first round of papers, but it was prompt, circulated shortly after the end of the meeting.

Update: On Friday, after Adventist Today posted the news story above, the Adventist Review published a report with an additional statement from the committee: "We have real hope that the church will be able to find a way to resolve the differences we have on the issue of ordination,"
committee chair Artur Stele ... reported to church leaders worldwide via phone conference. "We left the meeting feeling very optimistic and confident that God is leading us."
Adventist Pastor Wintley Phipps to Sing at President Obama’s Inaugural Events

Submitted: Jan 17, 2013
By AT News Team

The well-known gospel singer who is pastor of the Palm Bay Seventh-day Adventist Church near Melbourne, Florida, will be part of a prayer service at the National Cathedral during the inaugural festivities for President Barak Obama’s second term. Pastor Wintley Phipps has performed for United States presidents Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush.

Phipps is also founder and chief executive officer of the Dream Academy, a nonprofit that provides educational assistance for some 18,000 at-risk children in ten cities across the country. It focuses on the children of prisoners with the goal of “breaking the cycle.”

The 58-year-old ordained minister has produced 22 albums since 1984 and was nominated for Grammy Awards in 1988 and 1989. He has been interviewed on the Oprah Winfrey Show and appeared on Robert Schuller’s television program, singing as well for Billy Graham Crusades, at Rosa Parks’ 77th Birthday gala at the Kennedy Center, at the Vatican, and at the 1984 and 1988 Democratic National Conventions.

The Dream Academy raised $2.6 million in the most recent year of record, including nearly $900,000 from government grants, a million dollars from individual donations and over $600,000 from benefit concerts. Board members include a number of prominent Adventists, such as Admiral Barry Black, chaplain of the United States Senate; Dr. Ben Carson, a medical school faculty member at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore; Dr. Leslie Pollard, the president of Oakwood University; and Dr. David Williams, a faculty member at Harvard University.

Phipps was born in Trinidad and grew up in Montreal, Canada. He graduated from Oakwood University and completed a seminary degree at Andrews University.

The Palm Bay Church has a membership of nearly 600 and is located near Interstate 95 in an outer suburban county of the Orlando metropolitan area. It is affiliated with the Southeastern Conference.
Romania-based Adventist Internet Ministry Continues to Thrive after 15 Years

Submitted: Jan 14, 2013
By AT News Team

Intercer is an independent Adventist ministry that serves the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Romania and Romanian immigrants across Europe, North America and Australia. Through web publications and social media it delivers news as well as articles about technology and health, Romanian poetry translated into English, music and video clips, links to online educational courses and a friendship site. It averages 60,000 readers a month and is widely read among Adventists with a Romanian background.

In 1996, Lucian Mihailescu, a computer analyst for a power company in Romania and a member of the Adventist Church, first saw an Adventist web site: the It Is Written web page. The following year he created the first Adventist web site in Romania for his local church in Slobozia, Ilomita, and that launched the Intercer ministry.

“Our main goal was to get to the secular people, but also to give Adventist members a place to find current spiritual materials,” Mihailescu told Adventist Today. In July 1998 he added the Romanian Online Bible. “And over the years the website visitors’ stats shifted. Our audience is about 70 percent Adventist” now.

Intercer publishes materials in Romanian, English and Hungarian. The majority of the readers are from Romania with smaller numbers from North America, Spain, Italy, Moldova, Germany, France and the United Kingdom. It has become a cluster of web sites, “some designed for Adventists, some for other Christians and some for secular people,” states Mihailescu.

Romania had one of the highest percentages of Adventists of any country in Europe a few decades ago and Adventist immigrants can be found in sufficient numbers to start congregations that function in the Romanian language in many cities in the United States, Europe and Australia. “The Romanian Diaspora appreciates our ministry,” Mihailescu reports. “It keeps them close to their family at home and with their local church back in Romania.”

Intercer is actually an inter-connected set of three organizations. International Christian Education and Relief Society (INTERCER) headquartered in Maple Ridge, British Columbia, Canada; Lucian Web Service, Mihailescu’s private business since 2002 that does database development and content management services for commercial and nonprofit clients; and Internet to Heaven/Intercer Romania, the original web site operation. Intercer also publishes a daily Email newsletter with links to its own materials and several providers that it represents. The operation is a member of Adventist-Laymen’s Services and Industries (ASI) in the Romania Union Conference.

In recent years support for the Intercer ministry has become sufficient that Mihailescu quit his job with the power company and now works full time for the nonprofit and his associated consultant practice. “We did not get any salary for the first 12 years,” he told Adventist Today. In fact, he had to reach into his own pocket to help cover the expenses of Intercer’s operation.

“We want to thank God for His help all these years,” Mihailescu stated. “Also we want to say ‘Thank you!’ to our co-workers, sponsors, collaborators and website visitors.” You can see
Intercer at: http://en.intercer.net/
Adventist Author’s New Book to be released by New York Publisher on February 12

Submitted: Jan 10, 2013
By AT News Team

She has already been interviewed on NBC television’s Today show and The Early Show on CBS television as well as in The Chicago Tribune, The San Francisco Chronicle and a number of well-known women’s magazines. Shasta Nelson’s new book will be released February 12, but you can already order it on Amazon.com and other major on-line booksellers and copies will probably be shipped starting in the next week or two.

Entitled Friendships Don’t Just Happen the volume is non-fiction and in the “personal development” category. Chapter 1 describes the need for friends that is a large issue in today’s fast-paced and often ephemeral society, including the fact that it is normal for friendships to shift often, and advocates that people should be more intentional about finding and nurturing friendships. Other chapters discuss the various levels of friendship, how to handle vulnerability and forgiveness, as well as the steps involved in personal growth.

“Maintaining meaningful friendships is a crucial element in health and success,” one pastor told Adventist Today. “Many people are failing at this aspect of life and it undercuts everything else. Nelson speaks to this need very powerfully and very helpfully.” He plans to encourage a small group in his church to read the book and discuss it together.

It is “an inspiring book that empowers women to reach out and connect as individuals,” said Dr. Irene S. Levine, professor of psychiatry at New York University School of Medicine. “At a time when so many people are ‘friending’ one another online yet reporting feelings of loneliness, this book reminds us that friendships worth creating are done with intention and significance,” commented Dr. Dale Atkins, a psychologist and media commentator.

Nelson served as an Adventist pastor before she became a life coach and a nationally recognized expert on friendship. She is the founder and CEO of GirlFriendCircles.com, the only online community that matches new friends off line by connecting local women in cities across the country. Her new book builds on the success of her social networking enterprise, her training and experience as a pastor committed to personal growth and healthy community, and her coaching practice based in San Francisco.

Turner Publishing Company has been recognized by Publisher’s Weekly as the fastest growing book publisher among the major New York companies. The book is already listed at http://www.amazon.com/dp/1618580140. The author also provides additional resources and information at http://girlfriendcircles.com/shastaN/bloggerkit.aspx and will be involved in speaking appointments and book-signing across the United States this spring.
Sixth International Congress on Vegetarian Nutrition to Convene February 24-26

Submitted: Jan 15, 2013
By AT News Team

The latest research on vegetarian nutrition will be showcased when Loma Linda University hosts a gathering of top experts from all over the world February 24-26. The International Congress on Vegetarian Nutrition occurs every five years and brings together the world’s leading researchers and their latest study findings in such areas as cancer prevention, diabetes prevention, obesity, longevity, and aging.

“Professional interest in vegetarian nutrition has now reached unprecedented levels, but the knowledge regarding vegetarian diets and their impact on human life is far from complete,” says Dr. Joan Sabate, chairman of the Sixth International Congress on Vegetarian Nutrition and a LLU faculty member. This is the “the largest scientific forum of its kind in the world, to exchange research findings, theoretical concepts and practical applications of vegetarian dietary practices for the prevention of disease and the promotion of health,” according to Sabate.

Among the presenters will be Dr. Neal Barnard, a leading nutrition researcher, author and health advocate, whose studies on the role of nutrition in diabetes, obesity and lipid management have led to major strides in chronic disease care. Dr. Thomas Sanders, head of the diabetes and nutritional sciences division at King’s College of London, will share some of the latest results of his research on the role of dietary fats in cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes.

Another speaker will be Dr. Rosalind Gibson, research professor in human nutrition at the University of Otago in New Zealand, who has conducted extensive studies on micronutrient nutrition in developing parts of the world. Faculty from LLU will be among the presenters, including Dr. Gary Fraser, professor of epidemiology and preventive care, who is lead investigator for the Adventist Health Study 2, an ongoing, large-scale study funded by the National Institutes of Health examining the links between diets, lifestyles, and health.

There will be a total of 48 presenters from leading institutions in many nations. The event is organized by the nutrition department in the school of public health at Loma Linda University and will be located in the Drayson Center on campus.

More information about the event, including how to register for the entire congress or attend specific sessions, is available at: www.vegetariannutrition.org

Loma Linda University is a health-sciences institution with more than 4,600 students located in southern California. It is affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
A Fundamental Problem

Submitted: Jan 10, 2013
By Preston Foster

There are theological and spiritual problems with Adventist fundamental belief (FB) #19. They are, as they say, “nontrivial.”

FB 19 deals with the Law of God as defined by the 10 Commandments of Exodus 20. The problems are contained in this excerpt of FB 19:

“They (the 10 Commandments) express God's love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are the basis of God's covenant with His people and the standard in God's judgment. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sin and awaken a sense of need for a Savior. Salvation is all of grace and not of works, but its fruitage is obedience to the Commandments.

Let’s parse the key phrases of this FB (highlighted above).

- 1. “. . . are binding upon all people in every age.”

This is, in my reading of the Bible, flatly wrong. The law may be eternal, but, according to Romans 10:4, Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. The words “for righteousness” clearly points to the moral law (in contrast to the ceremonial) or the 10 Commandments. 2 Corinthians 3:6-7, 11 explicitly describes the transitory and subordinate nature to the 10 Commandments or “the ministry of death” (because of the penalty for breaking it) “engraved in stone,” which is contrasted with the ministry of the Spirit, which (according to verse 11) “lasts” (NIV).

Then, there is that simple, statement, “. . . for we are not under law, but under grace,” Roman 6:14. How could this be if the law is “binding upon all people in every age?” In Galatians, Paul repeatedly, tells us that we are not to be led by the law, but by the Spirit. Further, he describes himself as dead to the law (Galatians 2:19). Paul, in Galatians 3, describes the foolishness of being led by the law and pointedly says that “the law is not of faith,” Galatians 3:12.

As if he is speaking directly to the authors of FB 19, in Galatians 4:21, Paul says, “Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says?” To be clear, Paul goes on to specify of which law (e.g. moral or ceremonial) he is speaking. Paul is speaking of the moral the law of Sinai (Galatians 4:24) and equates it to the Old Covenant and to spiritual slavery. We, Christians, are “children of the promise” (Galatians 4:28) and instructed to throw out the slave woman and her son (the law -- Galatians 4:30-31), and to be free in Christ.
Finally, Paul tells us that THE ONLY THING THAT COUNTS is faith as expressed through love (Galatians 5:6). He warns us that seeking to justify ourselves through law-keeping alienates us from Christ and His grace (Galatians 5:4). How can the law be currently binding if faith expressed through love is, exclusively, all that counts?

- 2. “... are the basis of God's covenant with His people . . .”

This is true . . . of the Old Covenant -- which is the problem of this statement. We, Christians, live in and are under the New Covenant. The New Covenant calls for us to be by the Spirit (rather than the law) and is defined by righteousness by faith. The Old Covenant is obsolete (Hebrews 8:13, NIV). The New Covenant is superior to the Old (Hebrews 8:6).

2 Corinthians 3:14-17 directly addresses the spiritual blindness associated with dependence on the Old Covenant and its laws:

“But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”

Earlier, in 2 Corinthians 3:6, Paul specifies that we are, expressly, ministers of the New Covenant:

“He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

To be clear, in his preamble (2 Corinthians 3:3), Paul specifies that the “letter” is referring to are the tablets written in stone -- the 10 Commandments.

- 3. “Salvation is all of grace and not of works, but its fruitage is obedience to the Commandments.”

This part of the FB is problematic because it is a conflation of several things: the 10 Commandments, grace, and salvation -- which are expressly not related (Galatians 2:16; Galatians 3:21-22). The dots are not properly connected. Salvation is a gift of grace. It is a result of faith in Christ and His blood sacrifice for our sins . . . period. If we are led by the Holy Spirit, the fruit it produces is love, joy, peace, and more -- for which THERE IS NO LAW (Galatians 5:22-23). The life of faith and the Spirit is contrasted with being led by the law (or the Commandments), Galatians 3:23-24). The point of all of this is to live a life in Christ, led by the Spirit, motivated by love, unbound by the law.
The problem with FB 19 is that obedience to the law is, literally, positioned to protect the observance of the 7th day Sabbath (FB 20). The Sabbath existed before the law and remains after the law (Hebrews 4: 3-6). The Sabbath needs no further protection. I believe we, Seventh Day Adventists, must develop enough faith to state that our fundamental work, our fundamental belief, is belief itself (John 6:29).
Comments on SS « Origins » Lesson 3.

Submitted: Jan 16, 2013
By Jack Hoehn

These comments are on the current Sabbath School lessons on Origins and attempt to open the conversation to a broader understanding of Creation than simply Young Earth Creationism.

**Introduction Lesson 3: “Why did He choose to make the seven-day time cycle that we call a week?”**

The Creator created Time when he created “the beginning.” From the moment of “the big bang,” things began to happen in a sequence that goes in only one direction. It starts at point A and moves on to point B, then to point C. Time is linear and does not go back to point A. “In the beginning” is the beginning of time. Creation of the universe was Creation Day Zero, and if our science is correct by observing the universe it is now approximately day 13.7 Billion x 365 days old!

To mark Time when beginning the creation of an earth suitable for complex life, God creates days, the darkness/light cycle he named day and night. Earth days are designated by the rotation of earth on its axis, so this event might have happened when God had created a light source (“let light be”) like the sun (perhaps at that time not visible due to atmospheric conditions from the surface of our planet?) and the rotation of our planet (which appears to have been more rapid then than it is now suggesting “24 hour days” would not be correct at that time).

The Creator then created months, or moons, designed by the phases of the moon. The wonderful and protective moon rotates about earth, but it does not rotate about its own axis, but amazingly it is locked so that the same familiar face of the moon always faces us. And the moon, although much smaller, is created with the exact same “apparent size” as the sun, permitting us to study the sun when it is eclipsed!

The Creator creates seasons and years, designed by the rotation of the earth around the sun, and the precise 23.439281° degree angle of tilt we have, which explains why we have four seasons each year.

The Sabbath and its week is a measure of time, not measured by any physical object or activity. The Sabbath is truly a historical memorial, a monument to God’s 6 Day creation and subsequent rest.
A monument is an image of its object. The statue of a man on his horse can be bigger than the real man, or smaller. The creation of a human life takes 9 months from conception, but the memorial of that long process is just one annual birth-day.

So the monumental, memorial Sabbath and its human work week commemorates God’s 6 Great Works of Creation, not necessarily being the same length as the original but following the same pattern.

Our work is to be timed into a cycle of 6 days followed by a Sabbath, like God’s work was timed into a cycle of 6 Creation Events followed by the ceasing from Creation. Creation days and week days surely could be the same length, but there is a lot of physical evidence suggesting that God’s Creation Days are longer than earth days. The Bible does teach that God and Heaven do not necessarily measure time as we do (2 Peter 3:8). I now think of the creation Days as heaven days whose duration I do not know, as opposed to our week of earth days. (Blog http://www.atoday.org/article/1488/blogs/hoehn-jack/2012/god-s-days-and-our-days discusses this in more detail.)

Lesson for Sunday January 13: “A second possibility is that the sun, moon, and stars were appointed their functions at that time.”

As the lesson humbly notes, there are several possibilities preventing dogmatism and rigidity on how the Sun appears 4 Days after light is created, and how the moon and stars (most created during Creation Day 0) are appointed in their vast array, are clearly areas where we can let science help us choose the best understanding of the Bible text.

If the Mosaic Creation story is an explanation of the organization of Creation into Time, Sea/Sky, and Land/Plants then it makes sense that God creates Time on Day one, and reveals his Timekeepers on Day four; Sea/Sky on Day 2 and fish and birds Day 5; Land/Plants on Day 3 and animals and man on Day 6. This again suggests we need not necessarily read the Genesis 1 story as chronology but we can read it as an interpretation of Creation. We can see the short Genesis story not a revelation of the mechanics or chronology of creation, but a revelation of the character of the Creator. God is purposeful, organized, and good. God is the Intelligent Designer. He has provided spaces and filled them for our good.
Lesson for Monday January 14: “God apparently gave each of His creatures the potential to produce a great variety of various offspring, further adding to the diversity of the Creation.”

Yes indeed, why do things adapt, change, adjust, evolve? Because God designed them to do this; it's in the design of the life code, DNA. Genetic science shows mechanisms created in the DNA allowing for genetic manipulations to happen in a way that can create new creatures from old. Although change can be random, the mechanisms are not random but designed to make change possible. The ability to change, adapt, adjust, evolve is intelligently designed. Instead of trying to deny the fact that life evolves, let's credit the ability to change and adapt in a useful way back to the Creator. (See this blog for expansion on this idea.


Wednesday January 16: “God commands us to give one-seventh of our lives to the remembrance of the act of Creation.”

If creation was rapid and sudden, happening ever-so-quickly in just 144 solar hours, why does God command us to give one-seventh of our lives to study a short week? Why are we all to devote 52 days a year to the study just of 7 days? If we sabbatize from birth to death at say 90, one could watch the whole full-length, unedited 144-hour movie of Creation’s wonderful events 780 times during a lifetime of Sabbaths!

If on the other hand the Genesis 1 is introducing us to a say 13.7 Billion years of universe creation, and say perhaps 4.56 Billion years of earth creation, then the command to spend a good portion of our lives trying to understand and admire creation becomes much more reasonable. Isn’t this perhaps why some humans are not satisfied with merely 1 day a week to study God’s handiwork? Some study the creation 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year. We call these devotees scientists. In a way scientists are sabbatizing 7 days a week in remembering, admiring, and trying to understand the acts of creation! The good news is that, the creation is so complex, so wonderful, so magnificent, so unexpected, so surprising, so functional, and so sensible, they never run out of things to admire and enjoy. The Sabbath command to remember creation every
week, suggests to me a whole lot more to think about than a single short 144 hour week.

Edited statement: “So crucial to our relationship with God, MY RESPECT FOR MY OWN OPINION is our trust of God and MY INTERPRETATION of His Word. If we can’t trust WHAT I THINK the Word of God MUST MEAN on something as foundational IN MY OPINION and as explicitly stated IT APPEARS ON FIRST READING as the Genesis Creation in six literal days, what can we trust Him OUR TRADITIONAL BELIEF on?”

How about this: Trust God to present things simply in the childhood of religion and science and more fully as we have matured and become capable of advanced truths? Finally the lesson has one more attempt to make a short chronology of Genesis the only option for Adventist creationists by adopting the position of Bible critics and skeptics!

Friday January 18. “Also, if the days in Genesis represented long epochs, one would expect to find a succession in the fossil record that matches the succession of the living organisms created in the successive six Creation “days.” Thus, the first fossils should
be plants, which were created on the third “day.” Next should be the first water animals and the air animals. Finally, we should find the first land animals. The fossil record does not match this sequence. Water creatures come before plants, and land creatures come before air creatures.”

This is most remarkable! Our author now joins the infidels and skeptics we were warned against, and uses their criticisms of Genesis 1, in the service of his one week chronology! “Genesis does not match the fossil record,” they claim! Why would a Bible supporter join the Bible critics?

1.) Plant life must have begun before animal life inasmuch as the earliest animals eat plants, so starting with plant life in Genesis does not seem at all out of order for Creation Day 3.

2.) “A new discovery provides a clearer and more potent argument on the side of biblical accuracy. The credibility of the third creation day has just become easier to defend. An international team of paleobiologists has determined that an extinct plant, Archaeopteris, matches the definition of "tree." It produces free spores very similar to the seeds and fruits of today's trees. How old is this early, perhaps the first, tree? It dates back 370 million years, more than a hundred million years before the first dinosaurs.”

These fossils support the accuracy of Genesis 1:11 in describing Day Three events: "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees . . ." While true that fruit bearing trees more suitable for mankind do not appear in the fossil records till closer to the time of man’s creation, the Genesis 1 outline still can be seen to match the fossil record.

3.) The fossil record clearly records the sudden beginnings of animal life in the sea on Creation Day 5. The well-known Cambrian Explosion of created life forms fits Genesis exactly. Flying dinosaurs and flying insects also show in fossils from this era.

4.) Flying birds related to the dinosaurs are seen next in fossils of the Jurassic along with the mammals supporting the Genesis appearance of land creatures on Creation Day 6.
So there we have it: plants—sea creatures including some flying creatures—land animals—and lastly humans. While Genesis 1 may be only an outline of the details of Creation, and may in fact not be a true chronology of creation but more an analysis of creation, the broad outline of Genesis 1 would seem to generally agree with the fossil record. I am disappointed that our authors side so quickly and firmly with Bible skeptics and infidels in claiming it does not!

(See http://www.atoday.org/article/1557/blogs/hoehn-jack/2012/the-false-burden-of-time for an attempt to show a general harmonization of long-earth creationism as outlined by Genesis 1 with the associated scientific evidence.)
Summary for Chapter 6: Religion and Ethics

The Common Belief

Religious groups regularly teach that morality flows from religious belief. This view seems to be accepted by most of their members. The failure of atheists to believe in the supernatural (God) is cited as evidence that they can’t be trusted. In John Stuart Mill’s day, an atheist couldn’t testify in a British courtroom. Personal ethics was not a major feature of most religion in antiquity, but the religious innovations of the Axial age (800 to 200 BCE) made it more significant.

The Observed Difficulties

Religion has been used to justify slavery, war, terrorism and even murder. The victims just need to be appropriately labeled as either enemies of the God involved or at least not adequate devotees of this Deity. Religion has also been widely used to justify exploitation of the weak by the strong. There is no reliable evidence that religious believers hold to a higher standard of personal morality than unbelievers.

Religion’s particular ethical innovation may be to excuse the believer from normal human morality so that he can in good conscience do evil for the sake of his religion or his religious leaders.

Exclusivity Problems

Any religion that goes out to proselytize the world must justify this by claiming that its knowledge of the mind of God is superior to that of all other faiths. When people reject this new way of life and faith, they are readily seen by those extolling it as less honest and good than those accepting. This easily moves on to thinking of the rejecters as less human and less loved by God—and finally as a subspecies not deserving of full human rights.
Some have suggested that human brains are preprogrammed from our hunter-gatherer days to divide those we meet into friends (like us) and enemies to be feared and distrusted. Religion seems to play into this dichotomization of the human world, especially for those leaders who find this useful.

*The Euthyphro (Authority) Problem*

In his dialogue *The Euthyphro*, Plato has Socrates ask if actions are good because God commands them or if God commands actions because they are good. The former creates a “command” form of morality with the source presumably a God while the latter says that morality might be a function of the world we live in and study might allow us to understand it better. One weakness of “command” morality is that we are dependent on men to tell us what God wants—God doesn’t suddenly appear to answer our questions. The possibilities for delusion and corruption are obvious and often realized.

*Non-religious Sources for Understanding Morality*

The oldest attempt to ground morality outside a specific culture or religion is the natural law tradition. This goes back to classical Greece and Rome. It found common rules occurring in a variety of societies and considered these as possible universal rules or laws for all human society. The Roman Catholic Church still appeals to this strand, as did those who managed the Nuremberg Trials after WWII.

For over two-thousand years, philosophers have sought to understand the basis for human morality. Those of the Scottish Enlightenment found it in our ability to identify with each other—similar to the teachings of the Confucian philosopher Mencius. Emanuel Kant offered his categorical imperative and Bentham and Mill gave us utilitarian theory. Other philosophers, starting with Thomas Hobbes, have given us a contractarian or contact-oriented approach to social justice. Though no one approach has come to dominate, they have immensely enriched our understanding of the complexities of a moral life.

Humans (and even social animal species) seem to have some built-in morality—already present in the very young. The selection of genes over millions of years to support a social way of life appears to have placed genes for responsibility and altruism in most members of the species. Of course they are forever in conflict with the selfish genes also selected for and present. Studies in “evolutionary psychology” are expanding our knowledge in this area.

*Religion and the Development of Written Law*

The Jewish Torah, Roman Catholic Cannon Law and Muslim Sharia law are all examples
of written sets of rules governing the responsibilities of humans to each other and to some Deity. The rules for human-human interaction seem appropriate for the age and cultures in which they originated and may sometimes have something to say to the modern world. On the other hand, each assumes it applies only to adherents to its specific religious system and this can’t be readily universalized.

Religion seeks to maintain the illusion that it is the only reliable source of morality. From this illusion flows some of its power, sometimes some good and also great risk for corruption.
Sell Everything You Have

Submitted: Jan 16, 2013
By Charles Eaton

What if Jesus meant what he said?

Ok, obvious, but humor me. I think we are often guilty of not taking Jesus as seriously as He intends us to. For example, consider Luke 18:18-22:

18 A certain ruler asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” 19 “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. 20 You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.’” 21 “All these I have kept since I was a boy,” he said. 22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” NIV

Not an unfamiliar text, but one that strikes a chord of horror deep down in the recesses of our green capitalistic hearts.

Sell everything you have.

Not, give 15% tithe and offering combined. Not, donate 20% of your yearly bonus to the charity down the street. Sell it all. The 401k. The pension plan. The retirement fund. Kids’ college fund. Emergency fund. Stocks, bonds, CD’s, all of it. Every single monetary item you possess sold without pomp or circumstance.

Does this seem extreme to you? If it does, take a second to think about why. Jesus essentially labeled Himself a homeless wanderer: “Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head” (Matt 8:20). Then, in Luke, Jesus admonishes His disciples to be homeless wanderers as well before He sends them off to minister: “Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no money, no extra tunic” (Luke 9:3). If worldly gain was so near the bottom of the list for Jesus and His disciples, how did it become such a priority in ours? I submit that the traditional axioms of the American Dream have duped us into balking at the idea of selling everything for Jesus. We have substituted Jesus’ call to go out into all the world and preach the gospel for a call to have two good cars, a white picket fence, and the NFL Sunday Ticket. We incorrectly perceive comfort and safety as Godly entitlements.

Has everyone been called to sell all their possessions? Not everyone--in one instance (Luke 19) Jesus was cool with a guy only selling half, but that doesn’t automatically preclude you or me
from this sacrifice. Here’s the kicker: If you believe that God wouldn’t ask this of you, that this is a calling reserved for people who have achieved some sort of Super Saiyan level of spirituality, then you would most likely be the very type of person to whom God would say this. No one can serve two masters.

So many times I have reasoned myself out of a Godly impression, telling myself that the voice I just heard in my head was my own, or perhaps an overreaction to an emotional pull, or perhaps a product of stimulated guilt, or perhaps anything except the voice of the Holy Spirit. While every night I ask God to speak to me that I might know His will. Lip service.

This isn’t really about money. It’s about what you and I value and how much we value it. I’ve learned the hard way that God really hates idols. No matter if it’s good or bad, a blessing or a sin, a promise or a curse, anything that is more important than God is a stumbling block. Here is the litmus test: Imagine with me that God just asked you to give up forever that thing or person that is central to your identity—did your conscience revolt at the thought or start a sentence beginning with “God would never…”?

He might.
Ask Abraham.

What’s worse is that for many of us, our idol is something unquestionably wrong. Maybe for you it’s porn, maybe it’s gossip, maybe it’s neglecting family and God for work. For me it was piracy—something so obviously wrong, yet so easy to gloss over. Faceless stealing is, after all, an offense that is obnoxiously difficult to feel bad about. Whether it was “sharing” music, downloading movies, or streaming popular TV shows, I am an expert at combing the net to find for free what mere mortals must pay for. But a few months ago, in the middle of a three-hour music download binge fest (gospel at that), God started disturbing my conscience about it. He, in His Divine rudeness, wanted me to delete my stash that I have literally taken years to build. Sell everything you have. 40 gigs of music. Dozens of DVD-quality movies. My favorite streaming site and my two backups. All of it. To some, this may seem like a trivial request. To me, it was back-breaking.

Eventually I submitted to God’s request, but I hesitated for weeks. That hesitation completely upended my spiritual life. I received no new inspiration of truth when I read the Word. My soul was enveloped in a murky soup of dread and guilt whenever I started to pray. My conscience was only cleared after I finally did what He asked.

The Bible makes it clear that the selling everything part comes before the following Jesus part. “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” Meaning we can’t even call ourselves followers of
God without first giving up our idols.

My prayer for you and me is a simple one: May God give us the ears to hear what He says, and the strength to do what we’re told. Honestly, I am terrified of what God might ask me to give up next. Yet swirling in the midst of my terror are strong streaks of anxious anticipation for the upcoming challenge. For this is truly Christianity.
The young man’s eyes shine with the light of a new dawn in spring. He is standing, trembling, at
the head of an aisle, watching as a vision of shimmering loveliness floats up the aisle toward
him. Can it possibly be true that she has chosen him? Forever? Will she ever regret it? Will she
always reflect back the glow of his eyes as she does now, or will she turn away? In his heart is a
steadfast, unbreakable determination that it won’t be because he fails her in any way. Ever.
That’s God’s face, looking at you. Isaiah 62:1-5.

The hen has black-and-white speckles on her feathers, and is always pretty, but today she is
fluffed up, her wings slightly extended, and the black and white are more vivid than usual. She is
making a low sound in her throat, an encouraging muk-muk-muk, and bobbing her head slightly.
Around her dash and dart little black fluffballs with bits of yellowish white on them. When she
gives her little call, they spread their ridiculous little dabs of winglet and run under the
outstretched wings almost too quickly to see. Some peek out from under her breast. One pops
through a wing feather and looks at the world from there. If you could ask them if they think
they’re safe, they’d look at you uncomprehendingly. It doesn’t even occur to them to fear.
Mother is here! What danger could possibly threaten?
Those are God’s wings, spread over you. Psalm 36:5-10.

The dancer sways and floats in the currents of music as if there were almost no gravity at all. Her
head turns with a grace that brings a catch to the throat. Her hands float out to her sides, one
higher, one lower, her fingers moving like leaves on the surface of a quiet brook. One leg bends,
the other straightens, a toe points, a foot pirouettes, her neck turns with apparent effortlessness, a
look of almost angelic serenity hallows her face. All the parts of her body function as God must
have originally created them to do. . . but if you asked her you’d learn of the hundreds of hours
of sweat and soreness, tears and trying again.
This is the body of Christ, moved together by His great heart and mind. 1 Corinthians 12:1-11.

The wedding is over, but the bridegroom is still gazing unceasingly at the shyly downturned face
of his new wife. Sometimes she looks up at him, and their eyes seem to ignite a spark that is
almost visible to all in the room. They probably have no idea that the wine has run out, or what
quality they are drinking, but at some point the steward hands the groom a cup and, his attention
captured, the groom tastes and raises his eyebrows in surprise. The steward gestures to a quiet Man
on the other side of the room and the bride and groom both look. This time the three-way eye
contact is a living, vibrant thing. Stillness slides over all the guests for a moment, and the bride’s
and groom’s hands meet and cling. Something—a promise, a blessing—something washes over
them. They will never forget this moment.
Jesus announced His power and presence at a wedding, as if to say that’s one of the best earthly pictures of His love. John 2:1-11.

No human picture of the love of God is ever big enough, glorious enough, or unbelievable enough. But every one shines like one tiny facet on a diamond. These four are from the lectionary readings for this week.
When Anger Heals

Submitted: Jan 15, 2013
By Maury Jackson

A Christian response to the Global Healthcare Debate¹

When communities embark upon shaping a vision of healthcare, such a task requires hearing more than the voice of financial decision makers. T.R. Reid argues for other voices when he writes that “the primary issue for any health care system is a moral one.”² While the 2012 U.S. presidential race resulted in the re-election of president Obama, one may be mistaken to suppose that healthcare reform is secure. Legislators who opposed so-called “Obamacare” voice fierce determination to continue the fight through budgetary maneuvers. For people of faith, economic and ethical issues address only part of their concerns. Because human beings are children of God, there are matters of the sacred to be considered. How might Adventists listen, rethink, and reimagine the ministry of healing in light of contemporary voices that speak with a trio of theological, economic, and ethical concerns? How might Adventist voices today retell the story of the healer from Galilee?

When the adolescent Jesus heard the baritone voice of a moaning leper singing his warning approach—“unclean, unclean” (Lev. 13:45, NRSV)—did he become hardened to the sound? And if so, what later awakened in Jesus a firm tenderness for the Galilean leper described in Mark’s Gospel? Might Jesus have developed a sense that all suffer for having lost compassion for lepers? Did he discern that with a lost compassion, all risk losing passion for the lepers’ justice?³

In what follows, where the text is silent and compels me to do so, I will draw inferences from the key passage in Mark 1:40-45. I will also exercise theological imagination in order to fill in parts of the story as it might apply to a contemporary Christian reflection on healthcare. After all, Gordon Kaufman in his book An Essay on Theological Method reminds us that the enterprise of theological craft remains ultimately an exercise in imaginative construction.⁴ Furthermore, as to the strident tone of the title for this essay, let the reader be warned that this practical-theological reflection draws out of the Gospel text a rally for global healing through anger. Yes, anger is rallied as an emotion that leads to healing.⁵

Can a Healed Leper Be Pro-Leper Colonies?

Mark’s passage begins a series of miracle stories. We learn of a leprous Galilean man who hungered for community—with a hunger that drove him from a leper colony, a hunger that drove him beyond the law’s ability to zone. He seeks a community that allows for “the dignity of a family-centered death.”⁶ He seeks community not pampered by leper workshop groups, leper commune health clubs, or leper small-group Torah studies.⁷ He did not feel the pain, but he was
sick. Because leprosy robbed him of the gift of pain, his body deteriorated in leaps. Although he was sick, the healthcare system of first-century Palestine proved to be sicker.

Ancient Bible manuscripts leave us with two different readings of this text; thereby, those sources also leave us with the task of deciding whether or not Jesus’ emotion was pity (splagchnistheis) or anger (orgistheis). I will leave it for you to decide. You tell me what is the proper response to diseases that lead people to socially ostracize the sick; the proper response to a sick man flagrantly breaking preventive health codes; the proper response to a person who doesn’t question Jesus’ ability, but does question Jesus’ desire to heal disease; you tell me the proper response when one recognizes that religion has added insult to the sick man’s injury—claiming that God determined Israel to treat its lepers this way (Lev. 13:1ff, 46)? Is the proper response pity, or is it anger?

First, notice that Jesus’ emotion comes early in the pericope; that is, it comes immediately after the kneeling, begging leper cries out: “If you choose, you can make me clean” (Mark 1:40, NRSV). And second, notice that while public health concerns at times require justifiable draconian methods (in order to contain a contagious disease), the idea of leper colonies itself concedes to a view of the world that envisions healthcare in terms of medical apartheid.

Both the historical stage of medical diagnosis and the logic of iatrophobia (fear of the healer) together challenge the Mosaic quarantine approach to infectious disease, in that: (1) diagnosis in the Mosaic health codes recognized that many skin eruptions were not contagious (Lev. 13:18-23); (2) reasonable persons would be skeptical of the idea that God acted as an agent who caused leprosy to come about: “When you come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, and I put a leprous disease in a house in the land of your possession” (Lev. 14:34, NRSV, cf. 2 Chron. 26:16ff; Num. 12:1ff), (3) containment strategies, more often than not, give a false sense of public safety and abandon preventative public health measures, particularly hygienic steps, (4) confinement does not address access to care, poverty, and homelessness—which themselves might be the cause of the disease in the first place, and finally, (5) the possibility of confinement might well lead persons to avoid diagnosis (fearing moral judgmentalism) and thereby spreading the infection all the more.

Leprosy causes suffering to the leper, but nothing needed healing more than the religious-legal healthcare system that added humiliation to his suffering. Every Thomas, David, and Haggai seemed to know this—except the rulers, the priests, and the guardians of the city. Lepers in the leper-colony knew. Family members of those who contracted leprosy knew. Friends of family members knew. Those who lived in the districts zoned to have leper-colonies knew. Healthcare workers knew.

So Mark tells the story of a leper who comes to Jesus for healing. This threw a monkey wrench
in Jesus’ plan to conquer the world through preaching the gospel. Without a doubt, we can harmonize Jesus’ preaching and healing ministry as one and the same, but that is because stories like these force us to do so. To simply preach the gospel is not workable in the face of grotesque human suffering.16 So I side with those commentators who say that Jesus was angry. And he was angry enough to become a partner in crime with this leper (by touching him).17 Ouch! The strident voice appears.

Jesus’ anger went beyond the Galilean healthcare system’s treatment of lepers. The passage in the Gospel of Mark tells us that Jesus was moved with anger before he stretched out his hand and healed the leper. But I imagine that in this story, Jesus COVER STORY became doubly angry. The man failed to follow Jesus’ imperative. As all partners involved in unlawful exploits, Jesus told his accomplice (there we go, again) to keep quiet about what had just taken place; “See that you say nothing to anyone” (Mark 1:44, NRSV). Instead, this former leper sang like a canary; “he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word” (verse 45, NRSV), providing another reason for Jesus’ anger. Jesus’ urban ministry had now become shortchanged because of this man’s disobedience; “Jesus could no longer go into town openly” (verse 45, NRSV, emphasis mine). What if Jesus had an urban strategy of healthcare for all Galileans? What if Jesus was less interested in that one leper’s healing than he was in getting the rulers to rethink the public health policy that allowed for leper colonies?

Many times human actions restrict or limit God’s ability to act, and yet God respects human decisions enough to allow us to live by the results.18 Mosaic strategy to deal with leprosy presupposed medical apartheid: a kind of national security strategy to isolate, quarantine, construct leper colonies (Lev. 13:46). The Mosaic era did not envision a pan-population healing.19 But in the face of the incarnate Son of God, this strategy was now unworkable. Jesus called for “healthcare that is service-oriented”20 and not healthcare that was templecentered. Jesus’ healing power inaugurated a new healthcare age. But because his crime partner could not keep his mouth shut, Jesus had to revise his vision for Galilean healthcare. What workable strategy could now be put in place?

Is the crisis in Healthcare Institutions really about Birth control?
I remember once being told that anyone who does not get angry is morally bankrupt.21 In the American context, there is a struggle to determine whether or not the European style of healthcare is more humane or a morass of bureaucratic waste. News talk shows may lead some to believe that the urgent crisis facing religious-based healthcare institutions is governmentmandated healthcare insurance coverage. When enacted, these laws require Catholic and Adventist hospital employers to provide healthcare coverage that includes preventive care like birth control/contraceptives. So I ask: is denying a female healthcare worker access to free contraception the most pressing issue for religiously owned healthcare policy decision makers? This issue doesn’t make me angry; it makes me laugh.
But what does make me angry is that access to healthcare is out of reach for the poor: “rationed by the ability to pay.” Christians should be angry at the slow pace of nationally integrated healthcare planning within their nations—due to partisan politics that lead’s religious-based hospitals to compete with each other for market share. We should be angry that hospital administrators can talk of the sick in terms of “market share.” We should be angry because of the high cost of healthcare, which seduces many to forget that “health service [is] a ministry rather than a business.” We should be angry at the unhealthy environmental conditions that cause disease; angry because crime and drugs have become a public health problem; angry because of poor nutrition and lack of early intervention programs. Today it is not the leprous person who is untouchable. The problem with healthcare today is that the market is untouchable.

At a time when publicly-subsidized systems of healthcare are routinely defunded and the costs in terms of equipment, medicine, and supplies rise, the religious alternative is so dependent on insurers that it is less able to care for the poor. In such a context, is it possible to transform Christian healthcare “from a ministry of religious institutes into a ministry of Christian communities”? Today, once again, the risen Jesus calls for “healthcare that is service-oriented” and not “healthcare that is market-centered.” The gospel era envisions the healing of all nations. Yet can Christian communities influence the healthcare system? What workable strategies can be put in place?

Jesus’ Fallback strategy for public Health reform
In Mark’s Gospel, “contact with Jesus makes the leper clean.” Jesus, a man possessed by the Spirit of God, is able to transgress boundaries as “God breaks though the barricade segregating human history.” Jesus has healing power, and this healing is not only for human bodies, but also for human communities. This truth comes as good news to the evangelist’s suffering community.

A story about a leper’s healing struck a note of interest in Mark’s outcast community of Jesus followers. Mark’s community had already broken with the worshipers at the synagogue. Mark’s community existed as a colony of untouchables. Mark’s community filled up daily with folk who had come to know what it feels like for Jesus to “get under your skin.” So it is good to know that Jesus operates on authority that runs crossways with other religious and legal authorities. Mark’s community was a fellowship of sinners in the hands of an angry God.

Jesus’ anger is a human anger. Jesus’ anger is a healing anger. Jesus’ anger is a holy anger. Jesus offered the formula of the new kingdom when he told John’s disciples to measure it by his indiscriminate healing—a passage (Matt. 11:1-6, NRSV) that ends with a foreboding warning, “And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.” Jesus directed the leper to go to the priests and offer the offering as a testimony against them. Jesus put the priests on notice that it was not
they, but he who declares the unclean clean. Legal and civil structures move aside for the will and work of God. And this leper spread the word that the true healer had come.

Wherever word spreads of his wonderworking life, Jesus has a backup plan. A clandestine Jesus outfit will work the urban places (the text does not say that Jesus no longer went into the towns, but rather that “Jesus could no longer go into a town openly,” emphasis mine). Jesus comes to serve undercover. A Jesus fellowship forms from every quarter to celebrate the gift of his life-giving spirit. Mark writes that “people came to him from every quarter” (Mark 1:45, NRSV). Sometimes Jesus comes undercover to his clandestine outfits. Other times his clandestine comrades go undercover from all directions to find Jesus.

This is the prestige of the gospel message in Mark. Jesus planned a surprise attack on the so-called authorities. When Jesus told the leper to “go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them” (Mark 1:44, NRSV), he was not endorsing Mosaic Law without qualification. He was declaring the arrival of a new order. Jesus’ presence brought about a new age. And to put this in the language of my colleague Wonil Kim: “Jesus is not envisioning some dream world. He is building a world on his political action.” Jesus sends this smooth-skinned, former leper to the priest because God desires that the powerful (those who control the keys to the city and religious centers) be the first to hear of and the ones to certify his healing acts in this world. In Jesus’ directive to this healed unnamed leper, he sends a warning that ministries of religious institutions must transform into ministries of sacred healing communities: communities angered by the conditions of unmet broken needs; communities angry enough to heal.

A World Of Angry Healers
Today contact with Jesus can once again make visions of public healthcare more noble and honorable. This very day public, private, corporate, and volunteer groups collaborate with healthcare professionals to model ministries of Christian community. And as it was in Mark’s day, Jesus still comes undercover. Jesus’ healing anger touches people even in organizations not called by his name.

Not long ago, Inmed started a “non-profit organization that works to enable disadvantaged people worldwide to improve the health of families and communities.” The healing anger of Jesus awakens in this world apart from religious healthcare institutions: Jesus the undercover brother. The reign of God will not be stopped. In the South American country of Colombia, The Foundation for Higher Education recruited volunteer health workers to visit 60 families two times a month in order to provide health education and update medical records.

And in Philadelphia, there emerged a Franciscan AIDS/Drug Baby Home that provided urban sanctuary. It was run by three sisters who legally foster more than two dozen infants at a time:
infants born to parents with AIDS or drug addiction. Across the street from my university, our own La Sierra University Church meets the nutritional and clothing needs for hundreds of people each quarter through a food bank and clothing giveaway.

God will be made manifest in our public health. There remain communities of angry healers. Yes, sinners are in the hands of an angry God. God is angry because health systems hurt rather than heal. God is angry because too many health structures bind instead of liberate. Sinners are in the hands of an angry God. And that is good news.

The Song of the Canary
I think there is great wisdom in those faithful disciples who shape the lectionary readings. The reading for the Psalm is coupled with the Gospel passage from Mark chapter one. Psalm 30 captures the end of this story so well. I can imagine that leprous man: steeped in the musical tradition of the ancient Hebrews, leaping from Jesus’ touch, singing this Psalm. And the baritone voice that once moaned the mantra “unclean, unclean” now breaks forth in a soprano shout of verses 4 and 5 (NRSV): “Sing praises to the Lord, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name. For his anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning.”

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1 For a good book to introduce readers to this discussion—comparing France, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, and Canada with the United States—see T.R. Reid, The Healing of America: A Global Quest for Better, Cheaper, and Fairer Health Care (New York: Penguin Books, 2010).
2 ibid., p. 3.
5 Reinhold Niebuhr illuminates the healthy role that tempered anger plays in political imagination: “no one will suffer the perils and pains involved in the process of radical social change, if he cannot believe in the possibility of a purer and fairer society than will ever be established. These illusions are dangerous because they justify fanaticism; but their abandonment is perilous because it inclines to inertia.” From Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man & Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 221.
6 ibid., p. 118.
7 ibid., p. 5.
10 A sermon preached by Sharon Nearhoof May on March 5, 2000, at Mack Memorial Church of the Brethren in Dayton, Ohio, Jesus’ Life and Ministry, “Healing Anger,” p. 32.
12 ibid., p. 21.
13 Washington, Medical Apartheid, pp. 326-327.
14 ibid., p. 329.
15 ibid., p. 330.
16 ibid., p. 55.
17 ibid., p. 56.
19 This language of “pan-population” referring to the healing of all-populations emerged from a luncheon conversation with my colleague and friend, Dr. Wonil Kim, Old Testament professor, HMS Divinity School at La Sierra University.
20 Harmer, The Compassionate Community, p. 113.
21 “Resentment is…merely the egoistic side of the sense of injustice. Its complete absence simply means lack of social intelligence or moral vigor.”
22 Harmer, The Compassionate Community, p. 115.
23 ibid., p. 118.
24 ibid., p. 121.
25 ibid., p. 122.
26 ibid., pp. 122-123.
27 ibid., p. 114.
28 ibid., p. 115.
29 ibid., p. 125.
30 ibid., p. 113.
31 Thurston, Preaching Mark, p. 27.
34 Thurston, Preaching Mark, pp. 23-24.
36 Thurston, Preaching Mark, p. 24.
37 May, “Healing Anger,” p. 35.
38 ibid., pp. 30-35. Throughout this article I used the phrase “healing anger,” which was the title of a sermon Sharon Nearhoof May preached on March 5, 2000, at Mack Memorial Church of the Brethren in Dayton, Ohio.
39 My friend Paul Mugane offered me this language of “undercover.”
40 May, “Healing Anger,” p. 34.
41 Harmer, The Compassionate Community, p. 126.
42 ibid.
43 ibid., p. 130.

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