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**Police Investigate Death of Young Adult from Keene, Texas:** A recent student at Southwestern Adventist University perished under "suspicious circumstances" in a Keene residence, and extensive forensic research is ongoing....[See More](#)

**Van Accident in Florida Kills 3, Injures 13 from Adventist Church in Fort Lauderdale:** A tragic Sabbath-morning highway accident killed three freeway commuters and injured 13 on their way to Sabbath services....[See More](#)

**Berlin Adventist Hospital Opens Center to Treat Victims of Female Genital Mutilation:** Coming-of-age practices in a number of countries include ritual mutilation of sexual organs—often causing lifelong pain, infection, infertility, and death. Now an Adventist hospital in Germany is using special medical procedures to alleviate the effects....[See More](#)

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**Traditions:** Debbonnaire Kovacs says good-bye to Joan Chittister’s *The Monastery of the Heart*, and reflects with the author on the value of ancient traditions and wisdom in directing our spiritual walk today....[See More](#)

**A Painful Addiction:** Denominational publications these days may seem filled with rhetorical malapropisms and dated theology, says columnist Andrew Hanson. He calls reading these magazines a "painful addiction" that tries his soul....[See More](#)

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**Interfaith Relations at Oakwood University:** The founder and director of Oakwood University's Center for Adventist-Muslim Relations has received a prestigious award, and an award-winning documentary, *Out of Cordoba*, is being screened at the university to celebrate the historic cooperation and peace among the three great religions....[See More](#)
Police Investigate Death of Young Adult from Keene, Texas

By Adventist Today News Team, September 19, 2013

It may take two to four weeks for the medical examiner to determine the cause of death, but police officers who responded to a private residence in Keene, Texas, at around 11 p.m. last Tuesday (September 10) found a 22-year-old white male dead. They "believed the death to be of a suspicious nature and called for a crime scene unit" that serves the larger Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area, according to the Keene Star.

The young man has been identified as Aaron Preston, a member of the Keene Seventh-day Adventist Church, as is his mother, Lynne Preston, states an announcement on the church web site. The largest institution in Keene is Southwestern Adventist University and an internal memo distributed to employees and students at the university said that he was "one of our alumni (class of 2013)." When Adventist Today asked the vice president for student services at the university about Preston, it received an Email from Darcy Force, director of public relations, stating that Preston "was a senior biology/chemistry major last enrolled at Southwestern in the Spring 2013 semester."

The internal memo stated, "Aaron had many friends on our campus who studied with him, played intramural sports with him, as well as worked with him at camp." The announcement on the church web site stated that "after working as summer camp staff at Camp Kulaqua, he joined Gary Blanchard, Texas Conference youth director, visiting area churches to share his story of his ... faith in Christ." It also said that a memorial service will be held on Sabbath, September 21, at 4:30 p.m. in the church sanctuary.

The local newspaper quoted Keene Police Chief Rocky Alberti, "the investigation is ongoing" and includes local officers, as well as investigators from the neighboring town of Cleburne and the district attorney's staff. Detectives have interviewed several "persons of interest," but no arrests have been made. The medical examiner is waiting for the results of toxicology tests.

Both the university counseling center and the church pastoral staff are offering counseling for students and others in the community. "The death of a student is relatively rare around an Adventist campus," a minister who has worked on a number of campuses both as a pastor and a faculty member, told Adventist Today. "This undoubtedly leaves a real emotional scar on many of the young people who knew him. Adventist campuses are supposed to be places of refuge and safety."
Van Accident in Florida Kills 3, Injures 13 from Adventist Church in Fort Lauderdale

Adventist Today News Team, September 16, 2013

Over the weekend a van crash gained national media attention about a Seventh-day Adventist Church group traveling from Fort Lauderdale to a Florida Conference event in Tampa. Three people lost their lives from the accident and 13 were transported by ambulances and helicopter to nearby hospitals. The major television news operations covered the tragic event which stopped traffic on Interstate 75 for about four hours. A van with 16 people left the Ambassador Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lauderdale Lakes, a suburb northwest of downtown Fort Lauderdale, at 4:15 a.m. Sabbath (September 14), reported the South Florida Sun-Sentinel on Monday, quoting the Florida Highway Patrol. At about 7:30 a.m. the left rear tire blew out and the van spun around and then rolled over several times. This occurred in Lee County near Fort Myers, according to The Christian Post.

A 20-year-old man was ejected and killed immediately. Two other people died later in the hospital from their injuries. Among the critically injured was a two-year-old baby.

"It's a terrible situation for everyone involved," the Sun-Sentinel quoted Pastor Henoc Paulicin. He stated that a total of 40 church members made the trip in several vehicles and they were part of a church plant sponsored by Ambassador called the Maranatha French Mission Group. They intended to join a convocation with more than 1,000 others from throughout the Florida Conference. Ambassador Church is a congregation with 839 members, mostly Caribbean immigrants.

Two of the dead were leaders in young adult ministries, Paulicin told the Sun-Sentinel. The third was 62 years of age and highly respected in the group. "They were very special people to us, and it is hard because they were very well known to the congregation," he stated.

Police investigators are looking into the question of who was wearing a seat belt. Despite legal requirements with fines and constant education by risk management professionals, this continues to be a significant safety problem with church vans.

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Adventist Today

Berlin Adventist Hospital Opens Center to Treat Victims of Female Genital Mutilation

By ANN

In collaboration with a foundation established by former supermodel Waris Dirie, the Adventist hospital in Berlin, Germany, opened a new center last week to help restore victims of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), a cultural ritual in parts of Africa and Asia. The Krankenhaus Waldfriede opened the Desert Flower Center in partnership with the Desert Flower Foundation in Vienna, Austria. Dirie, a Somali with a successful career in the fashion industry spoke at the opening ceremony of the center in Berlin on September 11. She is a victim of FGM from age five and has become an international activist on the issue. Her 1997 book Desert Flower was made into a movie in 2009. The center at the Berlin Adventist Hospital is the first clinic opened in cooperation with her foundation.

At the opening ceremony, 300 attendees watched a portion of the movie depicting Dirie being mutilated. “How many little girls are victims of such suffering,” Dirie said in her speech. “Even with all these tears, I’m truly happy to sit here. When I see this sign ‘Desert Flower Center,’ I do believe in truth.”

Dirie ran away from her home in Somalia as a teenager, surviving a multi-day trek across the desert without food or water. She eventually made her way to London, where she worked at McDonalds and learned English in evening classes. She became a supermodel and was Oïl of Olay’s first black model. She gave up her modeling career in 1996 and has since authored five books.

FGM is practiced in nearly 30 countries in Africa and Asia. Young girls are subjected to the removal or slicing of some of their sexual organs as a coming-of-age cultural tradition. FGM is sometimes viewed as a status symbol within certain cultures and some advocates claim that it controls sexuality and promotes chastity. Its effects often include infection, chronic pain and infertility. The United Nations banned the practice last year. The World Health Organization estimates that 150 million women are victims.

The new center at Berlin Adventist Hospital is expected to serve between 50 and 100 women each year. Dirie, 48, said her foundation is planning to establish other clinics worldwide, especially in Africa. Another speaker at the event was Dr. Pierre Foldés, the French physician who partnered with Dr. Jean-Antoine Robein to invent a surgical technique to repair damage caused by FGM. To date he has operated on 4,000 women.

Other FGM victims attended the ceremony, including the two women who will soon become the center’s first patients. Hospital officials said the center would likely serve 50 to 100 women per year.

Dr. Gabriele Halder, a gynecologist, said more awareness about FGM is needed even in countries where it isn’t practiced. Women from such a culture are still treated with traditions of their homeland while living in Western countries. “Women, after the death of their husbands, are often mutilated again so they can remarry. This needs to be stopped here in Europe, too.”

Denise Hochstrasser, women’s ministries director for the denomination’s Inter-European Division, based in Berne, Switzerland, said the new center would help restore victims to how God created them. “When women have lost parts of their body through misunderstanding, tradition, incomprehensible practices, crime and abuse in the past, then if we can, it is our duty to give them back whatever we can so they can live a normal life, as God has meant it to be from the beginning,” Hochstrasser said. “We are happy that an Adventist hospital has taken this step to help on a topic that in so many countries remains silent. We have to speak up for these women; we have to inform wherever we can.”

*The Adventist News Network (ANN) is the official news service of the denomination. Corrado Cozzi played a key role in reporting this story.*

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Traditions

In her epilogue to The Monastery of the Heart, Joan Chittister speaks of the value of age-old traditions of her Catholic faith.

_Benedictine spirituality. . .
Is a way of life, a free-standing and stable model
of the God-seeking human enterprise
that is based on age-old traditions
and ancient wisdom._

She goes on to say that it “is the work of a lifetime.”

I am reminded of traditions and wisdom handed down in our own Adventist faith. “Sanctification is the work of a lifetime.” Both our founders and Benedict of Nursia were seeking to follow much older traditions than either of these two denominations. They were seeking to follow the Word of God, which is far older than even our earliest stories recorded in the Bible. Long before any prophet wrote down a message from God, long before any prophet (even Enoch, possibly the first prophet of all) even spoke a message from God, God was speaking.

God talked with Adam and Eve. Before that, God talked with angels. Had there been no sin at all, sanctification would still have been the work of a(n endless) lifetime. It would have been defined differently, of course. Sanctification would still mean “setting aside for holy use,” but it wouldn’t have had the strong overtones of redemption from evil that it has now. But it seems to me that it still would have been one’s life work—learning to live with God. Really live. Really with.

Chittister says that Benedict’s Rule “urges us to immersion in the Word of God, respect for study and reflection, and regularity at prayer.”

If we still lived in the perfection for which we were created, if “Word” meant actual, face-to-face talking with God instead of the spoken and remembered and saved and written and printed words of someone God talked to, wouldn’t we immerse ourselves in it even more?

What would happen, I wonder, if we got up every morning and moved into our day with the strong sense that we are meant to be “set aside for holy use,” that God is walking right beside us, and speaking directly to us, and wants us to hear?

What would happen?

I have enjoyed tremendously my time spent with this little book, and highly recommend it. You can find more information at both www.joanchittister.com and www.monasteryoftheheart.org.

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A Painful Addiction

By Andy Hanson, September 17, 2013

You might say I must be addicted to official church publications. I’m the only one in my circle of Adventist friends that religiously, pun intended, reads every issue of the Review, World, and Ministry Magazine. I use the word “addicted” because I don’t seem to get through even one issue without experiencing intellectual and spiritual heartburn.* Consider the following:

The elect are reviving and reforming while cruising the Mediterranean, Inland Passage, or vacationing in Israel, along with Adventist media personalities while conversing about the future of Adventist faith.

Angel Manuel Rodriguez affirms the historical fact of Creation and the Flood. Ellen White is quoted: Without Bible History, geology can prove nothing. Clinton Wahlen, an Associate Director of the Biblical Research Institute, claims that once the biblical account of Creation is undermined, it is easier to find reasons to reject its message regarding the two original institutions: marriage (between a man and a woman) and the seventh-day Sabbath. He concludes that higher criticism...is robbing God’s word of power to control, uplift, and inspire human lives.”

Clinton and Gina Wahlen argue that God is not a moral monster even though “the Bible does contain some troubling images of God, but faith helps us grapple with [God’s command to exterminate] the Canaanites.”

Frank M. Hasel obviates: To insist on Scripture alone (sola scriptura) is more than giving Scripture primacy over other sources in theology. Sola scriptura affirms that Scripture is the sole source of its own exposition. This makes Scripture foundational for theology. Only a symphonic reading of the whole Bible will do justice to the multiplex phenomena of Scripture under the unifying guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Richard Litke invites pastors to read a National Geographic Magazine article to see the mummified face of the woman who tried to adopt the boy Moses as her own son, and who later failed in her quarrel to make him the next king of Egypt.

Then there is the new Doug Batchelor book, Revelation: the Bride, the Beast & Babylon with a cover that features two seductive women and a spooky dragon with wings and seven snake-like appendages.

The Idaho Conference is sponsoring the seminar for today’s world based on Daniel 11’s Time of the End prophecy.
Cliff Goldstein believes that absolute truth is a transcendent metaphysical standard by which everything is judged such as what the Bible teaches... And if one culture teaches you to love your neighbors, another to eat them, who determines which one is superior? And Jovan Ilijev agrees that if there is no God, there are no objective moral values.

Because living creatures die, Cliff warns his readers to base hope on religious belief, no matter the waft of cherries and the glitter of new galaxies...cherries often rot on the bough and the “new galaxies” might have already died...Our hope can’t be in the natural but only in the supernatural because the natural now leads only to an eschaton of worms.

Grenville Kent testifies that some atheists want honest dialogue...have reason and intuition, the ability to love, some innate knowledge of right and wrong, a sense of purpose—because they are created in God’s image, whether they recognize it or not.

Michael Doernbrack urges readers to believe that Genesis 3 is not the chapter that shows how God kicked Adam and Eve out of Paradise. It is a chapter that draws a beautiful picture of the character of God and ultimately reveals the gospel.

Martin Proebstle discusses an incident in which God wanted to kill Moses because his son was not circumcised. Moses needed to circumcise his son and exhibit the covenant sign in his family before he would lead Israel out of Egypt. Touching Moses’ genitals with circumcision blood seems then to be a symbol for Moses’ reinstatement into God’s covenant. Thus his son’s circumcision saved Moses’ life.

James Park opines that an individual’s or a country’s openness to the gospel is greatly affected by the amount of change or trials they are facing. He quotes George Knight:

Whenever riches have increased, the essence of religion has decreased in the same proportion...But as riches increase, so will pride...and love of the world in all its branches...So although the form of religion remains, the spirit is swiftly vanishing away.

Must Love God. Those words, in bold type over an inch high, dominated the cover of the February 14, 2013 Review.

*Reader, if you care enough to want references to any of these passages, I will be happy to provide them via email. aphanson@csuchico.edu If you want to know why each of these extracts gave me heartburn, cite a specific passage online, and I’ll provide an online answer.

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Interfaith Relations at Oakwood University

By Debbonnaire Kovacs
Submitted September 18, 2013

Oakwood University’s Center for Adventist-Muslim Relations is becoming a center for positive interfaith relations. Two current stories exemplify the wide-reaching changes the Center seeks to make in a world where violence between religions is almost expected.

Interfaith Award

On June 24, 2013, CAMR founder and director, Dr. Keith Augustus Burton, received the Rabbi Jeffrey L. Ballon Memorial Interfaith Award at the annual Interfaith Mission Service banquet. Interfaith Mission, a coalition of member congregations of all faiths, has been tearing down walls between races, religions, and classes for over 40 years in the Huntsville area, and is recognized as one of the oldest interfaith organizations in the south. Its banquet celebrates the work of its volunteers and mission, stated on its website as:

“To strengthen and enhance our congregations’ capabilities to meet human needs, participate in the public forum, and promote religious, racial and cultural harmony.”

IMS recognized Oakwood’s CAMR as doing all of the above. An article in al.com, written by Kay Campbell, quotes David Person, who presented Dr. Burton with the award, as saying, “When a Christian minister is recognized for his work in bridging Christian-Muslim understanding with an award named for a Jewish rabbi, you know you’re in the company of a visionary, barrier-breaching organization.”

Award-Winning Documentary

The Office of Diversity at the University of Alabama at Huntsville was co-sponsor for the above banquet, and has also partnered with CAMR to show an award-winning documentary at Oakwood’s McKee Business & Technology Building on Thursday, September 26. The film centers on the lives and work of two enormously influential 12th century philosophers: the great rabbi Maimonides, and Averroes, the famous Muslim thinker, scientist, and religious scholar. Both men were born in Cordoba, Spain, and the society that thrived there on cooperation and peace among these two faiths and Christianity is the subject of the documentary.

Out of Cordoba was produced by Jacob Bender, Jewish himself, who set out after 9/11 shook his faith, to see if peace were possible. His conclusion is that “there is no clash of civilizations between the Muslim world and the West. There is only a clash of ignorance.”

Bender traced the footsteps of Maimonides and Averroes in Spain and then followed the traces of peace around the Mediterranean during the time of the Crusades, when peace between Christian and Muslim seemed unthinkable. He talked to many Jewish, Christian, and Muslim
workers for peace today about the part their own faith plays in their determination to seek peace.

Bender will be attending the screening of his film at Oakwood, as well as lecturing that evening. He says that those today (and there are many) who are working hard to build bridges instead of walls, can look back nine centuries to see that it can be done, and gain courage for the struggle.

*Out of Cordoba* has been screened at the 2010 Amnesty International Arts Festival, the 2010 Global Peace Film Festival, the Jerusalem Jewish International Film Festival in Israel, and more. It has been seen in Morocco, Spain, France, Italy, and the US.

To see more information about both of these stories, visit the websites below.

http://www.al.com/living/index.ssf/2013/09/jews_muslims_peace.html#incart_river This site includes the 8-minute trailer for *Out of Cordoba*.


www.interfaithmissionservice.org

www.camr-ou.org

www.outofcordoba.com