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In Ukraine, Adventists Share Message of Hope Amid Political Crisis

By AT News Team and Yuriy Kuzmenko/ANN staff, February 18, 2014

An outreach event hosted by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ukraine is continuing despite the deepening political crisis in the Eastern European country, according to a release from the Adventist News Network (ANN), the denomination's official news service.

More than 150 literature evangelists, medical missionaries and pastors are in Kiev to help meet the physical and spiritual needs of residents. “Kiev: City of Hope” offers smoking cessation advice, alcoholism support, diabetes management, postnatal health education and eye care. Adventists are also hosting Christian music concerts and distributing books and invitations for further study. Thousands of residents visited healthy nutrition kiosks and hundreds have enrolled in Bible studies.

Meanwhile, Viktor Alekseenko, president of the Adventist Church in Ukraine, is reiterating his call for Adventists to pray for their country and avoid provoking hostility—on the streets and on social media, where he urged church members not to leave inflammatory comments.

“Rather, encourage people to resolve conflicts peacefully,” Alekseenko said. Adventists, he added, should find ways to express their civil and political positions within the confines of law and respect for individual rights.

Months of large-scale demonstrations in Ukraine have led to violent clashes between protestors and the police in recent weeks. Violence escalated on Tuesday when government forces stormed the main protest camp in Kiev. The BBC reports at least nine people killed in the raid, including two policemen.

Protestors continue to call for President Viktor Yanukovych to step down and for closer ties to the European Union. Unrest in Ukraine began in November when Yanukovych shelved a planned trade deal with the European Union in favor of a loan from Russia.

No Seventh-day Adventists have been arrested or injured during the ongoing conflict, local church leaders said. They also reported that worship services have continued uninterrupted at Kiev’s 25 Adventist congregations.

“Kiev: City of Hope” runs through March and culminates in a 10-day evangelism series.

There are nearly 52,000 Adventists in Ukraine worshipping in some 900 congregations and 300 groups.
GC President Visits South Pacific Island Nations, Marks 100 Years of Missions There

By AT News Team, February 17, 2014

Pastor Ted Wilson, president of the General Conference (GC) of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, visited government leaders and Adventist institutions in the Solomon Islands and Fiji last week. The visit marks a centennial for the Adventist faith in the Solomon Islands, 100 years after the first missionaries arrived.

Wilson met with Gordon Darcy Lilo, prime minister of the Solomon Islands in the nation’s capital, Honiara last Monday. He also met with Governor-General, Sir Frank Kabui.

“We are honored to have you here,” the Prime Minister said, as he welcomed Wilson in a public event, according to official sources. Lilo stated that Christian churches play a very important role in that nation, shaping and developing Solomon Islands policy and culture, and in providing education and health care.

The Prime Minister said that the Solomon Islands government recognizes the important connection of the people with the Church. During the meeting, Lilo briefed Wilson on the history of the Adventist Church in the Solomon Islands.

In his remarks, Wilson thanked the government and the people of the Solomon Islands for the warm reception and hospitality shown to him. “It is the first time for me to be in this part of the world and this is a historic visit for me. I will make sure I inform church members worldwide of your wonderful country and people,” Wilson said. “I pray for the blessing of God to be upon this beautiful country.”

The Solomon Star newspaper announced the opening of a campus of Pacific Adventist University (PAU) in the Solomon Islands. The main campus of PAU is located near Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea. A ground-breaking ceremony for construction of the new campus was held while Wilson was in the country. The nation’s minister of health, Charles Sigoto, and Pastor George Fafale, president of the denomination’s Solomon Islands Mission, as well as Pastor Barry Oliver, president of the denomination’s South Pacific Division, participated in the event.

The denomination has operates two senior secondary schools and a number of junior high schools throughout the country. It also operates Atoifi Adventist Hospital on Malaita Province and a number of clinics throughout the Solomon Islands. The hospital also has a nursing school.

This year the denomination is working to establish nine FM radio stations throughout the country. The Hope Network radio service is already broadcasting in Honiara and Lata. By the end of the year stations will be on the air in Auki, Gizo, Noro, Choiseul, Kia and Kira Kira.

Wilson spoke last week to a crowd of 5,000 in Maranatha Hall in Honiara with the prime minister present. He also paid tribute to pioneer church leaders of the denomination during a visit to Betikama cemetery.

In Fiji, Wilson inaugurated the new campus of Fulton College which has been relocated from Tailevu to Nadi. He repeatedly expressed his amazement at the warm reception he received from people during his visits and the large crowds that came out.
Cracking the corporate “glass ceiling” for Sabbath keepers, after eight years

by Christopher Readus and Tim Allston
Submitted February 20, 2014

Nebuchadnezzar: “Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt, . . .” Daniel 3:25
On January 12th, America noted the passing of Franklin McCain who, in 1960, was one of the “Greensboro Four” African American male freshmen from North Carolina A&T State University, whose Woolworth department store whites-only lunch corner sit-in ignited successfully the nationwide student protests for civil rights.

A victory for Civil Rights in 1960, thanks to McCain, Joseph McNeil, David Richmond and Ezell Blair, Jr., and . . .


Jonathan Cantrell, Alexander Wade, James Bloodshaw, II, and David Duggins were all aspiring team leaders qualified and poised to advance their careers at a national cable TV provider (note: these 21st century “four Hebrew boys” asked Adventist Today to withhold their company’s name, “to minimize predictable backlash, thank you.”); unfortunately, each one faced the identical
roadblock to climbing the corporate ladder’s next rung.

David’s manager told him, “how he loved talking to him and how he is a great leader and very direct; however, he’ll never be a supervisor.” David, 29, believes that this is an example of “Sabbath salt” (in the wound); managers even told David about other Adventists who work on the Sabbath. “They do it; why don’t you do it?” David countered, “I’m not living for them!”

Of the Faithful Foursome, Jonathan, 31, has worked with the company the longest, eight-and-a-half years. “I started off on the phones for about a year and from there, I moved into coaching and training,” he said; any job or promotion past being a coach was not possible for practicing SDAs, he recounted. Corporate policy mandated that team leaders needed to be able to work every day of the week. “There were all kinds of reasons given why I couldn’t move up. I applied seven times for supervisor, and the last three times I applied they begin to say, ‘Jonathan, we can’t see your application;’ then my application would be lost.” “One person even confided, ‘They’re even ripping up your application, and the reason for it is because you’re a Seventh-Day’.”

This is the glass ceiling all SDAs faced there. These four men working at the Huntsville, Alabama site were asked repeatedly when they were available to work, and each responded with the same answer, mouthed differently:

Wade, 27: “Look, I’m a Seventh-Day Adventist. I don’t work on the Sabbath – that’s from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. So, what I need from you is to accommodate that schedule, and I’ll need this much money! If you can do those things I’ll be happy to work for your company; if not, thank you so much for your time.”

David: “I’m Seventh-Day Adventist, as you know…I’ll come in after sunset and work as you need me to, but I will not work on Sabbath.”

Wade said it best when asked if it was a deal breaker to work on Sabbath. He countered with some questions of his own: “If I was an Orthodox Jew, would you ask me that? If I was a Muslim, would you offer me ham? You would not do that. My faith is not something I pick up and put down!”

Because of their unflinching consistency, a senior level manager told David, “Because of not just you standing, but because of (the) others standing on what they believe, we’re in the process of creating a policy so that we accommodate team leaders.” Done.

Glass ceiling? Crack.

At their Huntsville’s First SDA Church Divine Worship testimony on Sabbath, February 15, Duggins summarized in his climactic basso profundo, “Had Jonathan not stood six times; had I been willing to fold one time; had Wade said ‘maybe,’; had man James (Bloodsaw, 27)…had (he) been, like, “I just might take that (Sabbath shift), because I need the money, . . .” But the Bible says, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you tell a mountain be thou removed and it will be cast into the ocean” (Matthew 17:20).

To change the mind and mandate of one of America’s leading multi-billion dollar cable TV
companies, with over 30 million customers, was their mountain removed.

“The greatest want of the world is the want of men; men who will not be bought or sold; men who in their innermost souls are true and honest; men who are as true to duty as is the needle to the pole; men who are not afraid to call sin by its right name; men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.” Ellen G. White, Education, p. 57.

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Christopher Readus is the current Oakwood University student body president and senior PR intern under Tim Allston, immediate past OU PR director and president of Allston Communications, Inc., consulting firm.
Face the Sun

http://www.atoday.org/article/2339/poetry-the-arts/visual-arts/face-the-sun

"...Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise" Malachi 4:2.
Christianity vs Religion vs Tradition?

By Glen Striemer, February 2, 2014

There are many “hot potatoes” when discussing religion. Here I present a formula to help sort out the importance of such issues. No matter how passionate I am about a subject, it generally falls into one of 3 columns. There is a sign outside a church which reads: “Sick of organized religion? So are we.”

The purpose of this article is to present a key to understanding the difference between religion and Christianity. There is a never failing abundance of religion in the world, but there is a definite lack of pure Christianity.

Column 1: Salvation

Found in this column is what we call SALVATION ISSUES. God wrote us a Bible through men of old who were inspired by the Holy Ghost. Many times in Scripture we witness salvation in process. When the jailer cried out to Paul, “What must I do to be saved?” Paul’s answer was short, sweet, simple and very doable: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house” (Acts 16:30-31). When Abraham “believed in the Lord and God counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen. 15:6),

the salvation question becomes “Believe what?” To be called a Christian, one must believe in a number of things. We are not saying that only Christians will be saved for there are those whose lives, apart from the influence of fellow Christians, have been moulded in genuine good works, not that they do these works to be saved, and such are deemed as being “Gentiles, which have not the law, doing by nature the things contained in the law, are a law unto themselves” (Rom. 2:14). To be recognized as a Christian, here are salvation issues which require belief in:

1. **FATHER**
   - Recognition of the supreme God, known “as our Father which art in heaven” (Matt. 6:9).

2. **SON**
   - God’s only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

3. **HOLY SPIRIT**
   - The Comforter and teacher of Jesus.

4. **CREATION**
   - “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen 1:1).

5. **MARRIAGE**
   - In the garden, God gave the man Adam his wife, the woman Eve along with the command, “Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth” (Gen 1:28).

6. **SATAN**
   - The bitter enemy of God and men.

7. **SABBATH**
   - “On the seventh-day God rested from all His work and blessed the seventh day and sanctified it” (Gen. 2:2,3).

8. **TEN COMMANDMENTS**
– Sin is the transgression of God’s holy law given in the Ten Commandments. It is our measuring stick, our mirror.

(9) DEATH

– “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23).

(10) REDEMPTION

– Through the blood of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

(11) PROPHETS

– God spake to us by the prophets so that “when it is come to pass, ye might believe” (John 14:29).

(12) BIBLE

– Written by “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). God’s book was given to men in two parts, the Old Testament and the New.

(13) PRAYER – Christians pray to God.

(14) HEALTH

– “Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you and ye are not your own” (1 Cor 6:19).

(15) INCARNATION

– God sent His only begotten Son to be “made of a woman” (Gal 4:4) to become God with us.

(16) JESUS LIVED A SINLESS LIFE

– Not by a thought or deed did Jesus ever sin.

(17) CRUCIFIXION

– Christ was crucified for the sin of the world.

(18) RESURRECTION – Jesus rose from the dead.

(19) BAPTISM

– Christ’s example to us that we may align ourselves as followers of Christ.

(20) SECOND COMING

– Jesus promises to come back to claim His own.

(21) HEAVEN – Our promised eternal home.

(22) HELL

– God’s place of punishment for the Devil and his angels and the eternally lost.

(23) ETERNAL LIFE

– “Whosoever should believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

If you answered affirmative on all the above points, then you belong to that vast tribe on earth known as Christians. It becomes easy to assess Mormons in Column 1 because they have created scripture in addition to the Bible. The best you can offer Mormons is that they are a sect with very strong Christian leanings, for any group which is following a book other than the Bible, in the opinion of many, disqualifies
them from being called Christians. They may be wonderful people, and may be in heaven one day, but on this earth they cannot be identified as Christians.

What about Jehovah Witnesses? They answer affirmative to every one of the above qualifications in Column 1. Although they interpret differently than most Christian groups, the fact is that almost every one of the doctrines is held by some other Christian group in singular fashion, (i.e., state of the dead is held by Anglicans and Seventh-day Adventists; Jesus as an inferior created being was held by Adventists clearly into the late 1800’s and even in some sectors today; and the Holy Spirit as an influence is widely regarded in Christianity today). Sure, they have their own Bible, but it is an interpretation, no different than the hundreds of interpretations available. So yes, according to Column 1, Jehovah Witnesses—in spite of how irritating they may be to you—are qualified Christians. However, Christian Scientists, who follow the writings of Mary Baker Eddy, cannot be named Christians. For starters, they do not believe in God as a Person but as an influence. They do not believe in Calvary. They are at best a spiritual group consisting of almost 400 so-called churches with Christian leanings.

What about Muslims, Hindus, Bhudists and other non-Christian religions? We do not bar the door from any of these people entering into eternal life, but this much we do know, if they are fortunate enough to make it, apart from Christianity, they will one day understand in Jesus, “There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, neither is there salvation in any other” (Acts 4:12), and one day all nations will bow before Him and acknowledge this salvation fact.

What about homosexuals who praise God and attend churches? Again, because they have accepted a marriage format outside of what God ordained from the beginning, homosexuals who praise God and attend churches must be considered at best, a group partaking in what the Bible, in many readers’ opinion, calls sinful behaviour, albeit with strong Christian leanings. No one can be called a Christian who has a belief system important, the Bible says so: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine” (2 Tim. 3:16). Doctrine is the influence. They do not believe in Calvary. They are at best a spiritual group consisting of almost 400 so-called churches with Christian leanings.

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It is stated that Christians as individual groups are weak in comparison to other world religions or governments. However, when every Christian group who believes in Column 1 is banded together, including Catholics and Protestants, the growth rate of Christianity in this world is far more rapid than the birth rate. The growth of collective Christianity is almost 4-to-1 ahead of the growth of the Muslim faith. God looks down and sees a mighty band of believers of every different stripe and denomination who call themselves Christians and notes we are winning the battle. This is the state of the world so long as the angels are holding back the winds of strife.

**Column 2: Doctrine**

Salvation is not derived from Column 2 simply because we are not saved according to how intelligent we are. Many people are not capable of understanding doctrine and are content to simply follow “I believe in Jesus,” and God is content with this also. However, doctrine is important, the Bible says so: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine” (2 Tim. 3:16). Doctrine is the place where “deep calleth unto deep” (Ps. 42:7). The reason there are so many churches who feel they possess the “exclusive” truth is because “Everyone of you hath a doctrine, a revelation, an interpretation” (1 Cor. 14:26). Jesus warned His disciples to “Beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees” (Matt. 16:12). Men like William Miller could not grasp the understanding of the heavenly sanctuary and are considered to be saved. That we are not saved by doctrine is evidenced by the Protestant Reformation, whereby even Martin Luther never kept the seventh-day Sabbath and men willingly went to the stake to die for their faith even though their doctrines were contradictory. Doctrine is what established the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Doctrines steadfastly believed by earlier Seventh-day Adventists (non-Trinitarian position) would be enough today to have their membership questioned. God does not look at a person’s understanding of doctrine to determine whether he or she is saved; God looks at their heart. It is safe to say there is no salvation found in Column 2. What is found is the comfort in knowing and understanding the doctrine which defines my church family, my understanding of last day events and life eternal. Doctrinal differences are what generate strife between various Christian groups, to the place in history where wars and bloodshed have occurred due to differing doctrines. Church doctrines can accurately be portrayed as being “Religion.”
(1) FATHER
– Some Christians believe God is male, others non-gender.

(2) JESUS
– Some Christians believe He is a created being, inferior to His Father, others believe He is eternal, equal to the Godhead, having surrendered His Omnipresence and retaining His human nature.

(3) HOLY SPIRIT
– Some Christians believe He is the literal 3rd person of the Godhead, others merely the world's most powerful influence.

(4) CREATION
– Some Christians believe the Godhead created the world in seven literal 24-hour days, others any combination of God and evolution stretching from thousands to millions of years.

(5) MARRIAGE
– Some Christians uphold the definition of marriage is between man and woman. Others like Abraham, David and Solomon believed this included the marriage of one man with many women. Any belief system which includes the marriage of man-to-man or woman-to-woman disqualifies one from claiming the title of being Christian.

(6) SATAN
– Christians believe Satan to be the fallen angel Lucifer, with a host of fallen angels under him, a very real being whom Jesus fought with. To believe Satan is the name we give evil influence in this world, or to not believe in Satan at all, disqualifies one from being called a Christian.

(7) SABBATH
– Some Christians adhere to the literal 7th day Sabbath given in Eden, others believe the day was changed to the 1st day, while yet others believe every day is a Sabbath experience. Many Christians believe the Sabbath was one of the ordinances nailed to the cross and no longer relevant.

(8) TEN COMMANDMENTS
– Some consider God's law eternally binding, others as nailed to the cross and simply guidelines. Some Christians believe that God enables us to overcome sin as defined in the Ten Commandments by the power invested in us from above. Others believe we try our best but sinning is our lot in life and will not be rectified until we are glorified at the Second Coming.

(9) DEATH
– Some believe death is a temporary sleep awaiting the Second Coming, while others believe death is the blink of an eye until you go to heaven or hell.

(10) REDEMPTION
– All Christians believe we have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Some consider this to be a done deal, while others believe it is an ongoing process.

(11) PROPHETS
– Christians believe God sent His prophets and will again in the last days, with young men and women prophesying even in dreams. Some churches claim a special prophet has been sent to them, such as Ellen G. White in Adventism.

(12) BIBLE
– God gave us His Word in Scripture. There are many translations, but some people believe the King James is the only Bible to be trusted.
God warned not to add to this book, and when other Bibles appear, such as the Book of Mormon or the new homosexual Bible known as the “Queen James,” which alters the original intent of the salvation principles outlined in Column 1, this disqualifies followers of these Bibles from the privilege of being called Christians.

(13) PRAYER
– Christians call upon God in prayer to help them and the world around them. Some believe in kneeling only in prayer, others are comfortable in standing. Some believe “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thes. 5:17) is God’s plan that we be in a constant state of prayer.

(14) HEALTH –
Some Christians believe in the Biblical doctrine of abstaining from unclean foods, alcohol, tobacco, drugs and harmful substances, including “dead” foods. Others ignore physical health to concentrate on spiritual health. Some believe in the 8 laws of health (nutrition, exercise, water, sunshine, temperance, fresh air, proper rest, and trust in Divine power), while others choose to get their healing from faith healers without lifestyle changes. Some believe in doctors, others believe in prayer. This is the doctrinal category with the widest range of beliefs for Christians.

(15) INCARNATION
– Most Christians believe God sent His Son to be born of a virgin known as Mary. Others believe she was not a virgin. Some believe Mary had an “immaculate nature” in order to be the mother of God.

(16) SINLESS LIFE OF JESUS
– Some Christians believe Jesus came in the nature of Adam before the fall in order to be able to live this sinless life. Others believe Jesus took our sinful nature, and combined with the Holy Spirit, overcame as we overcome, never once using an unfair advantage in order to be the true Savior of the world. Some believe He could not have failed His mission, while others believe He could have failed and that God risked everything.

(17) CRUCIFICATION
– Most Christians believe Jesus was nailed to a cross, others believe it was a stake.

(18) RESURRECTION
– Some believe He rose after 3 days in the grave, while others believe in a slightly different timeline, but all believe this is the great hope of Christianity.

(19) BAPTISM
– Some Christians believe in baptism by immersion, others by sprinkling, while still others believe in baptizing babies.

(20) SECOND COMING
– Most believe that day is soon when our natures will be glorified and we will be with the Godhead for eternity. Jesus counsels us not to set dates.

(21) HEAVEN
– Some believe we will go to heaven for 1,000 years and then return to this earth made new, where this planet will be the new headquarters of heaven where the Godhead resides. Others believe when we go to heaven we stay in heaven.

(22) HELL
– Some believe in an eternal burning fire, where Satan and his angels are in charge of torturing the eternally lost. Others believe hellfire is short-lived, and that to give Satan eternal life is in error doctrinally as it is the effect of the punishment that is eternal and only the saved experience eternal life.

(23) ETERNAL LIFE
– Some believe we have been in Christ from eternity and continue on in eternity through death’s sleep as a believer in Jesus. Others believe eternity begins at death or at the Second Coming.

**Column 3: Tradition**

If there is no salvation forthcoming from our understanding of doctrine, even farther removed from salvation issues is the passionate subject of tradition. There is not a church in the land which is not steeped in various forms of tradition. Column 3 is where most of the internal troubles in a church arise. Tradition is man-made, and Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for their traditions. However, not all tradition is bad. For many it is a comfort zone. Outside of the church, we experience pleasant traditions such as Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter, none of which are Biblical holy days. Birthdays and anniversaries, reunions and commemorations are among many traditions which make life more pleasant. Sporting games, parades, festivals and political traditions abound and shape our life. Church traditions can be nice or cause judgemental attitudes to arise. At best they need to be recognized for what they are, and that is simply a non-salvation tradition. Church traditions can be accurately described as “religion.”

**ENTERTAINMENT**

– Heading the list of tradition is how a church views its members’ behaviour in their spare time apart from worship. Jesus attended weddings and various dinners of recreation, which He turned into spiritual blessings for attendees. Nowhere in the Bible is found an explicit list of how to behave or what to attend other than following general Christian guidelines of “Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, if there be any virtue or praise, think on these things” (Ph il. 4:8). Because each Christian is in various degrees of sanctification, what is good for one might be uncomfortable for another. Member A playing a friendly game of cards might be taking a major step forward from the days when he attended the casinos as a card shark, yet he may be looked down upon as a sinner by Member B. Dancing for exercise or with your life partner may be looked upon as a sin by Member A, but to Member B, who used to be a professional night club dancer, it is a relief to finally discover purity. Music with drums might be a great offence to Member A, but to Member B, Christian lyrics with gentle beats is a welcome relief compared to his days of playing in a rock band singing illicit lyrics about sex, drugs, violence and evil deeds. And the list goes on forever for there is no beginning nor end as to how members view life in general and why they believe everyone should act according to their own personal lifestyle choices.

**DIET**

– This is a category owned almost exclusively by the Seventh-day Adventists, for most churches generally do not pay attention to how one eats. Adventists, however, are divided into many camps when it comes to eating. Potlucks are almost exclusively vegetarian, which is somewhat hypocritical considering the vast majority of Adventists are non-vegetarian. Luncheons are conducted this way out of respect of offending their vegetarian members, but more likely due to the fact that Ellen White strongly recommended the vegetarian diet. Vegetarianism is not Biblical unless one digs extremely deep to conclude that prior to sin, the world was in a vegetarian state and since we are going from Eden lost to Eden restored, why not eat vegetarian now? A myriad of health positives can be found in medical literature promoting the vegetarian lifestyle, yet it is traditional peer pressure which results in Adventist public gatherings being vegetarian. As a vegetarian, I embrace this tradition. Diet is like a gunman in the old Wild West. One day he would meet somebody with a faster draw. Diet invites extremes, such as dairy-free, gluten-free, organic, eating five hours apart, two meals per day, no combining fruit and vegetables, eating fruit alone, eat like a king at breakfast and a pauper at night, fasting—all good things on their own, but not to be hoisted upon church members accompanied by judgemental attitudes. If a church member eats in moderation and avoids unclean foods, he should be good by Biblical standards.

**DRESS**

– If the Biblical example were to be followed, men would be wearing robes along with women, both attired in sandals. Of course, the Bible does not counsel what clothes to wear, other than offering Christian principles of modesty and promoting inward purity and beauty. The jewellery issue has long been a bugaboo within Adventism, and surely there are members along the way who have faced church scorn and even discipline over the adorning of jewels. One has to dig mighty deep to eliminate Biblical jewellery out of attire. Women see men wearing ties for no other reason than decoration, yet they are deemed by some as being unable to wear decorations themselves. The Old Testament is full of examples of the bride being adorned with jewels, beginning with the Song of Solomon, which many liken to Christ and His bride, symbolically. Jewels abounded in the sanctuary garb of the Priest. Queen Esther was adorned. To prove one should refrain from jewellery, Adventists look to the earthly sanctuary on the Day of Atonement, when the Lord commanded all comers to remove any trinkets and bracelets from their bodies while they stood in the presence of Holiness. One could make an argument that we are living in the Anti-typical Day of Atonement, and we should be living as if on holy ground at all times. However, ask 100 Adventists what the Anti-typical Day of Atonement is, and you will draw a blank from 99 of them. So, refraining from wearing jewellery is a strong Adventist
tradition not easily found within the pages of the Bible.

COMMUNION

- The Lord sat in on one communion service with His disciples and originated the ordinance as Biblical and to be followed. The way churches conduct communion is pure tradition, such as partaking of Communion Service like clockwork every thirteen weeks. Some churches have communion every day, others every week, while others once per year. The frequency of communion is traditional and what defines individual church preferences. Some use fermented grape juice, of which a Biblical case could be made against, but most use unfermented. Some use unleavened bread, others leavened bread (again a Biblical case could be made against), while others now use gluten-free communion bread. Adventists believe in foot washing as part of communion, as did a number of early Christian churches, but one would be hard pressed to biblically prove the literal washing of feet should accompany each communion as opposed to the lessons gleaned from a symbolic washing of servitude, thus foot washing is an Adventist tradition.

BAPTISM

- The Biblical account is quite clear. The eunuch whom Philip baptized confirmed he believed in Jesus, and it was sufficient to find water to perform the ordinance. Baptisms conducted by the disciples of Jesus were based upon belief in Christ. Answering affirmative to 27 doctrinal beliefs and being immersed in Bible studies for months leading up to baptism ensure future members of the Adventist Church will be grounded, but it is tradition when compared with Biblical baptism requirements. To make jewellery a qualifying issue of baptism is tradition. It would be biblical if Adventists were to conduct baptisms into Christ followed some time later by ascent into the Adventist faith. Who knows, this might stem the tide of 33% of all newly baptized members leaving the faith.

TITHING

- Giving a tithe or 10% to the cause of God is biblical. Giving 10% of your income to the headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist church is a good idea if you wish to have an Adventist church for your grandchildren to attend, but it has to be qualified as a necessary tradition in order to keep the church growing. Members who cannot hold office because they don’t pay a regular tithe, or who are frowned upon by church leaders for not paying their tithe, are victims of tradition. Biblically, believers are asked to support God’s cause by paying 10% of their income to gospel related causes, whatever they may be. It is biblical that 10% of our income is not our own. It is tradition to faithfully place this tithe into the local Seventh-day Adventist coffers, one that is a privilege and pleasure to most, and a position that God promises to bless you for. We should not judge others who choose to go a different route with their tithe, as long as it is going into furtherance of the gospel.

WORSHIP

- Tradition, tradition, tradition. Biblically, we are to gather on a weekly cycle in respect and awe to God to offer our praise and prayers. How we physically go about worship is perhaps the biggest form of judgement there is, not only in Adventist churches but everywhere. Older members traditionally prefer the conservative, quiet service. Youth tend to like it louder and casual. Biblically, in worship there were high sounding cymbals, many instruments, lifting of holy hands and dancing to the Lord. Let each gather in the manner which suits their personal needs. To judge others over their form of worship based on anything but the Bible is tradition at its best.

SABBATH OBSERVANCE – In speaking of 7th day observance, “Turn away from doing thy pleasure on My holy day” (Is. 58:13). In the ancient Hebrew, the word pleasure is synonymous with earning a living. Various Bible translations urge us to break the pattern we are accustomed to during the week. The bottom line is whether your activity is directly or indirectly related to earning dollars and whether you are repeating weekday habits of behaviour. The Bible is clear that Sabbath hours are set aside as holy time to commune with God, and any activities that ignore this principle do not call for punishment upon the offender but identify that one is robbing himself of a special Sabbath blessing which hours are non-recoverable. The Sabbath is recharge time, so why ignore the very blessing it contains? Sabbath-keepers can get fanatical to the place where if one shoe is polished as the sun sets then they leave the other one unpolished, or no meal can be baked or prepared on Sabbath and let the dishes pile up as they may; no restaurant meal can be ordered; and the list goes on into Pharisee territory. The fourth command is clear: conduct no labor for gain like you do the other six days, neither you nor your hired hands. There is a reason the Bible is not full of particulars on how to keep the Sabbath. The Pharisees made the rules. The carnal, legalistic heart is more prone to follow the Pharisee example than the Bible when it comes to keeping the Sabbath, and that is pure tradition.

ELLEN G. WHITE
If you believe in the book of Joel then you know there will be prophetic illumination past Bible days and near the close of time. Seventh-day Adventists believe this means one prophet for one church. No one can doubt God’s marvellous outpouring of His Spirit upon Ellen White. Think of what goes into writing a book today, and then imagine a person writing five volumes of approximately 800 pages each, handwritten, highly spiritual, very accurate, and withstanding the scrutiny of time. This is what Ellen White did during the late 1800’s and into the 1900’s, mostly while in very poor health and by using quill and ink. Ellen White was given an inspirational gift to discern which of the many natural healing methods available during her time were valid as well as a new way of looking at education. When no church would say it, she recognized the Beastly power of Revelation during an era when theologians were stating the Reformers were dead wrong in identifying Rome as the anti-Christ due to the fact the Papacy was for intents and purposes dead. Perhaps her greatest attribute was that when God showed her a truth, she held steadfast to it regardless if her husband and the entire church objected (e.g., the Trinity position). However, she never considered herself to be a theologian, avoided these controversies, and she never regarded her writings to be on an equal plain with Scripture.

If you believe in the book of Joel, then you must believe God planned for last day prophets. Here is where Adventists step in. Each new step in the church seems to be measured by what Ellen White wrote. The way we eat, dress, worship, and conduct church business fall into this category. Letters she wrote to individuals are used to counsel and rebuke folks today. If the writings of White were on a plateau with the Bible, then surely hers would be a 67th book of it. To take the writings of Ellen White and use them as the final standard of church members’ behaviour, or to be the final decision maker on church doctrine borders on cultism. The Lutherans go no further than a Martin Luther understanding of things, and ditto for the Mennonites with the writings of Menno Simon. Adventists have proven they will not go a step further than where Ellen White left off in all matters. She would not have wanted the light to stop shining brighter unto the glorious day. She held the Bible at one of her final sermons and said “Brethren, I highly recommend this book.”

Recently, I had a former SDA show me a quote where Ellen White mentioned how much she enjoyed eating oysters as a proof text that unclean foods are not Biblical. This line of reasoning must disappear. If White indeed ate oysters, then this is not to be my guideline as to whether I should abandon my understanding of doctrine. Ellen was human, not divine, a woman who grew in grace. She appeared at times stern in writing to individuals, and she softened up considerably as the years rolled by. Steps to Christ is a beloved book on righteousness by faith, a book she did not write as a young lady. Adventists should not be so concerned about defending her every early statement, as much as being blessed by what they know she wrote which is in harmony with Scripture and enlightens. To determine one’s complete lifestyle according to the writings of Ellen White may be valuable, enjoyable, and healthy, but it is strictly tradition. Many are happy to do so. They need to avoid hoisting Ellen’s lifestyle as being biblical upon other Christians operating within Adventism. It is safe to assume that without the writings of Ellen White to guide the SDA church, it would have never survived its various upheavals and challenges during the past century and a half. It remains a challenge to accept the manifold blessings of God’s chosen servant, while avoiding following tradition.

Traditions—and adhering to them as necessary Biblical injunctions—invite judgement. To equate keeping of tradition (no matter how sacred a cow it may be within the church) with going to heaven is a false precept. To equate the understanding of doctrine as a salvation issue is also a false precept. To embrace the tenets of salvation found in column 1 is a salvation concept. In these very last days, knowing valuable doctrine will alert us to what is going on around us. By the time Jesus returns, all believers will be gathered together in one camp, those who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, the revealer of all truth. It is a promise we can rest upon.

If measured against the formula of the 3 columns, almost all hot potato controversies are non-salvation issues in God’s eyes. A few items in the news of late will itemize these issues. The SDA North American Division allows the ordination of a woman president against the wishes of the World Church (doctrinal); an SDA pastor is fired because he signed the marriage papers for his step-daughter’s gay wedding (non-Christian issue); Florida Hospital agrees for restaurant to sell pork on its premises (doctrinal). Each of these stories evokes passion, an opinion and defending of the faith. None of the characters involved in these news stories has their salvation at stake. The day one gets upon a roof top and shouts to the world that God doesn’t exist, takes out billboards and wears the t-shirt, it is safe to assume they have salvation issues.
Loma Linda University Graduates Continue Legacy of Medical Service in Chad

By Richard Hart, February 28, 2014

Dr. Richard Hart, president of Loma Linda University, originally shared this story in the February 2014 edition of his monthly newsletter, Notes from the President. It is reprinted here with permission. --The Editors

Living our mission

We had spent the night in a Lutheran mission guesthouse in the capital city of Ndjamena. Now we were loading into two rigs for an eight-hour ride south to Bere Adventist Hospital, a name that has become known to many. After the dry and sparse camel country of central Tchad (Chad), we slowed through the potholes and detours of the southern goat and sheep country. Our crowded seats became more and more uncomfortable as my mind went back to my first visit to Bere, some 12 years before. It was called Bere Health Center back then, and despite my many years of visiting facilities like this at the ends of the world’s roads, I still remember my discouragement at the first sight of the worn-out buildings, broken beds, dirty surroundings, and desperate patients.

Why do we do this, I wondered? Does God really expect His children to serve in such difficult settings? Could we even find a doctor who would work here? How would we support him or her? Is it safe? Do the people and government even want us? Those are all valid questions, ones we cannot and should not ignore.

Through the first half of the 1900s, the Adventist church started an average of two new mission hospitals a year in developing countries, mostly by Loma Linda graduates. Our graduates were called—driven, really—to do this. It was one of those primal urges—there was no river too deep nor hurdle too high to keep them from taking up this challenge. SO THEY WENT—TO EVERY CORNER OF THE WORLD.

But that was then and this is now! Do we still have that type of graduate? Is the need still justified? The issues are surely different in today’s world. Really? We still have more than half the world’s population surviving on no or minimal access to health care. Life expectancy at birth is under 50 years in many countries, with people dying from preventable diseases—millions alone from the big three infections of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis.

It was only because of the confidence I had in Loma Linda and its graduates that I was even in Tchad. Experience had taught me that they would still go. Not only were they willing, you could not hold them back. One of those intrepid young physicians was just across the border in Cameroon during my first visit, held up by some immigration irregularity. James Appel finally made it to Bere, and many of you know the story of how he started with a solitary commitment and amazing courage. James gradually grew Bere Adventist Hospital into one of the busiest hospitals in the country. It was here he fell in love with a Danish nurse volunteer, Sarah, and their combined commitment to serve in Tchad has been an inspiration to many.

After some six years at Bere, James and Sarah indicated they wanted to pioneer another institution, take on another challenge. That raised two fundamental questions—could we support another hospital in Tchad? And who in the world would carry on at Bere? Though the hospital was now full, with a reputation that reached across national borders, it was still isolated, desperately hot much of the year, with intermittent power and non-potable water. My confidence in our grads was confirmed once again when another young couple stepped forward and said “Here we are, send us.” Olen and Danae Netteburg had met at Loma Linda, fell in love during their latter years here, married, and went into their residencies—he in emergency medicine, and she in obstetrics/gynecology. Now they were looking for their own challenge, their own destiny. I encouraged them to visit Bere to make sure. The visit didn’t shake them and plans were made to move to Bere about three years ago. Meanwhile James and Sarah prepared to start a new ambulatory surgery center in Moundou, the economic capital of Tchad, but a city with limited health care and little church presence.

As the workload expanded at Bere, Danae invited her dad, Rollin Bland—another LLU School of Medicine alumnus—to join them. Rollin
and his wife, Dolores, had worked years before in Nigeria, so they knew some of what they were getting into. These three physicians, Olen, Danae, and Rollin, along with their growing support staff, have continued to grow Bere’s reputation. And this past year, a generous donor added more than 20 new preformed buildings to serve as staff homes, guest rooms, classrooms, operating rooms, and delivery suites, etc. The capacity of Bere Adventist Hospital is now taking a giant leap forward to meet the growing needs of southern Tchad.

Our recent visit in late January was to hold board meetings for Adventist Health International–Tchad, dedicate the growing facility at Moundou, lay plans for the future of both institutions, and encourage our team on the ground. As usually happens, a successful hospital has added collateral programs. Rural health education programs are underway, led by LLU School of Public Health alumni. Gary and Wendy Roberts moved to Bere after James and Sarah were established and started a church planting and Bible training program. Gary brought his Cessna 172, built a hangar and airstrip, and now covers a wide swath of central Africa with his ministry. Both a primary and a secondary school are now also thriving at Bere—still basic by most standards, but providing daily Christian education for more than 600 students. It was my privilege to preach in the Bere church, where the benches are crowded, the youth are active, and God is glorified.

Unspeakable tragedies

But great successes are often accompanied by great sacrifice and pain. And Bere is no exception. Caleb Roberts died from malaria at age 4, and then two years ago, Adam Appel, one of James and Sarah’s twins, also died of malaria. Since then we have also lost Minnie Pardillo, a volunteer social worker from the Philippines. These great tragedies tear at the heart, making one question everything about serving abroad. It makes one angry at malaria, that great killer of so many even today. One also gets lost in the “what if?” questions.

It is with profound respect that we recognize what those simple graves in Bere mean, not only to their own families, but also to all of us. While death lingers so close in places like Bere for the local people, somehow it shouldn’t touch us. But it did. All of us. So while Wendy and Gary, and James and Sarah, carry on in Tchad, occasionally blinking back tears, we all must carry the burden of the world’s suffering. The needs have not gone away. The gospel call is as alive and urgent today as it was back then. And God doesn’t say to only go where it is safe. I imagine the Apostle Paul had trouble getting travel insurance for his voyages so long ago.

Our Adventist Health Interational–Tchad board meetings went well. Plans are being made to strengthen each institution and lay bold plans for the future. Another LLU School of Medicine grad, Scott Gardner, has come to take over the Moundou Adventist Surgery Center. Along with his wife, Bekki, they are stepping into James and Sarah’s shoes, while the Appels have set their hearts on yet another new site, far to the northeast of Tchad, where Islam is prevailing and the Darfur refugees from Sudan seek safety. James has been invited by a prominent Muslim family to start a new health care facility there at a place called Abougoudam, a name not found on any map!

So is rural Tchad worth the energy and time of five Loma Linda physicians? Have they found meaning in what they do? I can assure you that they don’t question their own involvement. They have chosen to be there, chosen to serve in this way. And the steady stream of other Loma Linda students and graduates who pass through Bere, and now Moundou, leave with a profound respect for their example of selfless service. Join me in holding up these families in our prayers.

Cordially yours,

Richard Hart
Psalm 119, Hebrew

by Debbonnaire Kovacs
Submitted February 20, 2014

I don’t know how long the lectionary will stay in Psalm 119, so I make no promises about continuing this, but this week’s passage is the fifth stanza, starting with the Hebrew letter he. Our fifth letter in English being e, (I have no idea whether that corresponds at all to he) I thought it might be easy enough to try it again. (This time, though, I’ll only start the couplet with e, not the second lines.) So here goes:

Educate me, O Lord, in the way of your statutes, And I shall keep it to the end. Elucidate it to me with understanding, and I shall keep your law; I shall keep it with all my heart. Enable me to go in the path of your commandments, For that is my desire. Elevate my heart toward your decrees And not toward unjust gain. Eyes must not watch what is worthless; Give me life in your ways. Execute your promise to your servant, Which you make to those who fear you. Eliminate the reproach I dread, Because your judgments are good. Ever I long for your commandments; In your righteousness preserve my life. Psalm 119:34-40

If you compare my version with the Bible, you’ll see that the first one was a no-brainer—after that, some are a reach, to say the least. But I do recommend such exercises to increase one’s participation in the Word, and thus increase its depth in the soul.

In a sort of postscript, I would add that it could be because of verse 36 that this portion was included in this week’s readings. The theme is love, mercy, and justice for the poor and marginalized. Go here to read and contemplate more.