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CONTENTS

ESSAYS

5 Is there a role for Adventists in politics?
While we are not of this world, we have a responsibility to mediate
God’s voice in matters with which the world is concerned.
by Jane Sabes

9 Dinosaurs: Questions Christians ask
Within the biblical worldview, how are we to understand the mystery of
dinosaurs?
by Elaine Graham-Kennedy

13 1844: Coincidence or providence?
Several major global movements that started around the year 1844
challenged God’s pivotal truths.
by Ron du Preez

16 Depression: How to detect and defeat it
Ten steps to prevent or overcome depression, a condition that affects
about 14 percent of the world population at any one time.
by Mario Pereyra

DEPARTMENTS

EDITORIAL
3 The test
Ella Smith Simmons

LETTERS
4 PROFILES
Emily Akuno
18 by Hudson E. Kibuuka

20 Jonathan Gallagher
by Bonita Joyner Shields

LOGOS
22 Are you a true disciple of Christ?
by Leah Jordache

VIEWPOINT
24 Ten reasons why I choose to remain an Adventist
by Dan Smith

ACTION REPORT
28 Creation field conference in Portugal
by Miguel A. Nunes

Students in Brazil meet to learn and share
by Charlise Alves

29 Ghana Adventist students host Bible lecture series
by Erik Adjobong

BOOKS
30 Beginnings: Are Science and Scripture Partners in the Search for Origins? (Leonard Brand)
Reviewed by Timothy G. Standish

30 Misión y contextualización: Llevar el mensaje bíblico a un mundo multicultural. (Gerald A. Klingbeil)
Reviewed by Mario Riveros

FIRST PERSON
32 God’s sunshine on stage
by Kay D. Rizzo

OPEN FORUM
34 Where is Hell?
by Ekkehardt Mueller

ET CETERA
35 Paul speaks at the University
by Daniel Denk

INSERT
Interchange
EDITORIAL

The test

Recently, while searching for sermon illustrations and devotional stories, I ran across the following anecdote. It may be a familiar story to some, but it is worth repeating:

In the operating room of a large hospital, a young nurse was completing her first full day of responsibilities. “You’ve only removed 11 sponges, doctor,” she said to the surgeon. “We used 12.” “I removed them all,” the doctor declared. “Well close the incision now.” “No,” the nurse objected. “We used 12 sponges.” “I’ll take full responsibility,” the surgeon said grimly. “Suture!” “You can’t do that!” blazed the nurse. “Think of the patient.” The surgeon smiled, lifted his foot, and showed the nurse the 12th sponge. “You’ll do,” he said. (Today in the Word, April 7, 1992)

You see, it was all a test, a test of the young woman’s integrity. Ellen White reminds us: “The greatest want of the world is the want of those men and women who will not be bought or sold, those who in their inmost souls are true and honest; those who do not fear to call sin by its right name; those whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, those who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.”

Our daily decisions are of great consequence. It is important that we take a stand for right, even when we must stand alone or stand up against those who hold power over us. When you confront your social or professional peers or authority figures, they may not always appreciate immediately. However, if you approach them appropriately, they will generally respect you for your convictions and courage.

I came into the Seventh-day Adventist Church when I was a teenager, a sophomore in a large public high school. Some of you can imagine the teasing and ridicule that came my way when I refused certain foods or declined participation in popular Friday evening and Saturday activities. Yet, many of my peers and teachers often demonstrated a certain admiration for my decisions. In fact, before I graduated, they went out of their way to accommodate my dietary and Sabbath needs in arranging certain events that they knew were important to me. In the final analysis, this was a test of integrity and faith.

A biblical account of a similar test is found in the book of Daniel. In the opening chapter of Daniel, the king instructs the chief of his court officials to teach Daniel and his three companions the language and literature of Babylon. He also assigns them a daily amount of food and wine from his own table. This was to be the young men’s training for three years before they entered the guaranteed careers that awaited them. This 36 month period is just about the amount of time one will spend in college or university today. This was a critical time for these young men. Research shows that persistence in higher education and academic success depend heavily on the student’s ability to assimilate into the new culture—to fit in. So it must have been in Daniel’s time. The temptation is to assimilate into the new culture in order to complete the course of study successfully. But Daniel and his companions stood the test.

When we tell this story, we usually focus on the young men’s refusal to eat the king’s food and drink his wine. We applaud the physical outcomes of their test, often overlooking the intellectual outcomes. While these are central to the biblical lesson, my focus here highlights the declaration found in Daniel 1:17: “To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learn-

Continued on page 4
Appreciation for biblical commitment

As an academician, I have become a regular reader of Dialogue. I deeply appreciate its committed Seventh-day Adventist approach to the issues presented and discussed. At a time when some Christians compromise or water down their convictions, it is refreshing to find a journal that tackles difficult topics and deals with them biblically, without hesitation or apologies. I am particularly interested in the area of Creation/Evolution, which Dialogue addresses quite often. The concept of Intelligent Design is providing additional arguments for those who, like me, believe in Creation as described in the first two chapters of Genesis. It is encouraging to see how some atheistic evolutionists are beginning to assume a defensive stance as science provides increasingly clear evidence of design and of a wonderfully creative Mind behind the intricate fabric of the universe. We look forward to more thought-provoking, faith-affirming articles. Convey my sincere appreciation to the entire team responsible for publishing Dialogue. Thousands of readers need it!

Paul Pichot, Ph.D.
Rector
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Write to us!

We welcome your comments, reactions and questions, but limit your letters to 200 words, please. Write to

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More Adventist involvement needed

I have been following with intense interest the controversy in public high schools in the United States regarding the teaching of Intelligent Design as a viable hypothesis for life’s origins, along with the spontaneous appearance of life. This issue is being discussed in scholarly circles, featured by many media, and has reached the courts in several states in this country. So far the scientific establishment, entrenched in its commitment to chance-led evolutionary scenarios and backed up by clever lawyers, has been able to fend off all challenges. Philosophical naturalism still reigns supreme. Other interpretations of the data are considered non-science or superstition. Where is the Adventist voice in these public discussions? Many Christian scientists have become involved in the Intelligent Design Movement and have published substantial articles and books on the subject. I strongly believe that Seventh-day Adventist researchers and scientists who are committed to Creation have the knowledge and the credibility needed to provide arguments in support of truth. They could do more to bolster public acceptance of a rational belief in intelligent—supremely intelligent—design.

Harold May
Hinsdale, Illinois
U.S.A.

The editors respond:

We agree with your desire to have more committed Adventist scientists involved in these increasingly important discussions. Dialogue does publish in each issue at least one article dealing with Creation issues from a scientific perspective and also reviews relevant books written by Adventist authors on the subject. These are read by thousands of future scientists studying in public universities around the world. You may find earlier articles and reviews published in Dialogue by logging onto our website: http://dialogue.adventist.org.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church also sponsors the Geoscience Research Institute whose qualified scientific staff focus on origins issues. Check their website, which offers many resources for Bible-believing Christians like you: www.grisda.org.

Editorial

Continued from page 3

ing. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds” (NIV).

This pronouncement stands as a promise to you today.

As a Seventh-day Adventist Christian studying, perhaps for the first time, in an educational setting that operates outside your spiritual sphere, you have a grand opportunity to witness for the Lord by standing firmly on your faith, living out its truths and values. Therefore, I urge you to (1) seek God and His righteousness first in all situations, (2) strive for all that is attainable academically with God who is the giver of all knowledge and wisdom as your Teacher, (3) ask for God’s guidance in your life each day, and (4) pray daily for His constant protection as you commit to faithful decisions and actions.

Dare to be a Daniel or a Daniella, even in times of your toughest trials when you may feel that you have been thrown into a lion’s den. Jesus will be there with you. Trust Him. God bless you as you engage in your studies and pursue your dreams.


Ella Smith Simmons (Ed.D., University of Louisville) is a vice-president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A. and chairs the AMiCUS Committee, publisher of Dialogue.
Is there a role for Adventists in politics?

by Jane Sabes

While we are not of this world, we have a responsibility to mediate God’s voice in matters with which the world is concerned.

Abraham, Joseph, Esther, Daniel, Moses. Familiar names to most everyone. But, for a moment, consider how these and other Bible characters were catapulted to center stage. Consider also the significant blessings brought upon the world as a result of their having occupied positions in politics.

Joseph exercised his God-given gift of interpreting dreams when he foretold seven years of prosperity for Egypt followed by an equal number of years of devastating famine. He then crafted a plan by which to safeguard the nation and its inhabitants during these perilous times. Rewarded for his sound advice, Joseph was appointed head of state, second only to the king. “Why did the Lord choose to exalt Joseph so highly among the Egyptians? He might have provided some other way for the accomplishment of His purposes. . . . but He desired to make Joseph a light, and He placed him in the palace of the king that the heavenly illumination might extend far and near. . . . So in Moses also God placed a light beside the throne of the earth’s greatest kingdom, that all who would, might learn of the true and living God.”

Similar to the experience of Joseph and Moses was that of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Seeing in these youth the promise of remarkable ability, Nebuchadnezzar determined that they should be trained to fill important positions in his kingdom. “Behold the Jewish captive [Daniel], calm and self-possessed in the presence of the monarch of the world’s most powerful empire…. The King of kings was about to communicate great truth to the Babylonian monarch.”

And, rewarded for his distinguished service, “the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men. Moreover, at Daniel’s request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court” (Daniel 2:48, 49, NIV).

The Old Testament line-up of godly individuals employed in public service continues with Ezra. His life “among the Jews who remained in Babylon was so unusual that it attracted the favorable notice of King Artaxerxes, with whom he talked freely regarding the power of the God of heaven. . . . So great was the king’s confidence in the integrity of Ezra that he showed him marked favor…. He made him a special representative of the Medo-Persian kingdom, and conferred on him extensive powers.” Likewise, Nehemiah, chief security officer (cupbearer) for King Artaxerxes “was admitted freely to the royal presence. By virtue of his position, and because of his abilities and fidelity, he had become the monarch’s friend and counselor.”

Obadiah, yet another devout believer in the Lord, was appointed governor of King Ahab’s palace (1 Kings 18). He remained faithful to God irrespective of his position with Israel’s most wicked king. Furthermore, because of his trusted position, Obadiah was able to shelter and feed one hundred of God’s prophets during the nation’s three-and-a-half-year famine.

Then there was Esther, who in God’s providence was chosen queen of the Medo-Persian kingdom. In that capacity she alone was able to thwart Haman’s plans to exterminate God’s people. And, for reporting an attempt ed assassination on King Ahasuerus’ life, Esther’s uncle, Mordecai, was given the position formerly occupied by Haman, “elevating him and giving him a seat of honor higher than all the other nobles” (Esther 3:1, NIV).

In contrast to the Old Testament, New Testament writers explore more the kingdom of righteousness. However, it continues to profile people involved in public affairs. One such story is that of Zacchaeus. Luke (19) relates the dramatic change wrought in this man’s life because of his encounter with Christ. And, as a result of their meeting, this once disreputable character now discharges his duties with a clear conscience, yet there is no evidence to suggest that Christ intimidated that Zacchaeus abandon his position as Jericho’s chief tax collector.

Then we have the life of John Wycliffe, a modern-day Christian holding various governmental appointments. Ellen White comments: “While acting as chaplain for the king, he [John Wycliffe] took a bold stand against the payment of tribute claimed by the pope from the English monarch…. The demands of the pope excited great indignation, and Wycliffe’s teaching exerted an influence upon the leading minds of the nation…. Again Wycliffe was called to defend the rights of the English crown against the encroachments of Rome; and being appointed a royal ambassador, he spent two years in the Netherlands…. Soon after his return to England, Wycliffe received from the king the appointment to the rectory of Lutterworth. This was an assurance that the monarch at least had not been displeased with his plain speaking. Wycliffe’s influence was felt in shaping the action of the court, as well as in molding the belief of the nation.”

Throughout the ages, Christ’s followers have influenced those in authority. What these persons held in common were characters beyond reproach, respect for temporal leaders, and responsiveness to God’s voice. Their exemplary lives underscore the value of Christians holding public office.

Irrespective of examples from Scripture, there exists great divergence
of thought with regard to the degree or level of Christian involvement in politics. Believers’ thinking toward the state seems to sway between two extremes. On the one hand are those who, like the Jehovah Witnesses, disassociate themselves from anything political, eschewing any form of political participation, including voting, entering military service, or holding elected office based on their conviction that “all governments are under Satan’s control.” This is in sharp contrast to the Catholic Church which regularly formulates positions on social justice and public policy, staffs an Office of Government Liaison representing the church’s position before the U.S. Congress, and maintains a website by which to inform the laity of positions held by the church on various political issues. Then there are those who occupy positions to the extreme right of the spectrum, laboring to establish Christ’s kingdom as an earthly domain, a modern-day theocracy.

Aliens and strangers
As a church, Seventh-day Adventists manifest ambivalence when it comes to participation in politics, with one exception—in defense of religious liberty. Most problematic seems to be the interpretation and application of five passages of Scripture. The first biblical passage refers to Christians as “aliens and strangers” on planet Earth (Hebrews 11:13-16; Philippians 3:20-21). Similarly, church hymns make reference to God’s people as “pilgrims.” But should these “other world” references lead one to conclude that persons of faith have no moral responsibility toward this present, earthly home?

Christ was challenged on this very point—as to where Christians’ loyalties should lay. The question posed was, “To whom should personal taxes be paid, to God or Caesar?” It was on this occasion that the Master introduced the concept of dual citizenship. He clearly stated that both the earthly and heavenly realms are deserving of our allegiance (Matthew 22:15-22; see also Romans 13). Christians are to adhere to national laws and support national initiatives, when not in violation of conscience, while ever mindful of a higher, a heavenly commission (2 Corinthians 5:20).

God’s role in earthly powers
A second biblical concept with which Christians wrestle is that of distinguishing God’s role in earthly governance from that of our own. Since God’s work is to establish and remove rulers (Daniel 2), doesn’t that then make a Christian’s involvement in the political process unnecessary, even meddlesome?

In fact, it is true that all those in authority—presidents, prime ministers, and kings—rule only at God’s bidding. Consider, for instance, the control God exercised over Babylon’s prideful King Nebuchadnezzar. While out walking one day on the roof of the royal palace, he mused, “Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?” The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, “This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes” (Daniel 4:29-32, NIV). This historical account clearly demonstrates God’s power over earthly potentates.

But the prophet Micah (6:8) calls our attention to our important responsibilities as believers—practicing justice and extending mercy, exercised with utmost humility. Similarly, the prophet Amos (5:24) called out for justice to “roll on like a river, and righteousness like never-failing streams” (NIV). Would it then be conscientious of Good Samaritans to repeatedly encounter victims along the roadside without inquiring as to how to reduce the crime rate? And would it be deemed responsible for Christians to daily dispense bread to the hungry yet not contemplate the nation’s economic policy and methods by which it might be improved? Helping to formulate public policies is one avenue available for Christians to provide evidence of their faith through their works—by exercising concern for others.

Not to be yoked with the unbeliever
A third warning issued by those who would dissuade Christians from seeking public office is that we are not to be yoked with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14-17). The concern is that affiliation with the world will cause one to become spiritually contaminated or to compromise principle.

One theologian weighing in on the application of this biblical principle is
Ronald Thiemann, dean of Harvard University’s Divinity School. He writes that “precisely because a pluralistic society requires conversation and exchange with those who are ‘different,’ public space provides a context within which faith seeks understanding in dialogue with persons holding diverse commitments.” The public square affords a challenging yet rewarding forum for following Christ’s admonition to be wise as serpents yet harmless as doves (Matthew 10:16).

**Kingdom and the world**

The fourth argument posed against Christians entering politics is Christ’s own words: “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36, NIV). Reference is made to Ellen White’s commentary that “the government under which Jesus lived was corrupt and oppressive; on every hand were crying abuses–extortion, intolerance, and grinding cruelty. Yet the Saviour attempted no civil reforms. He attacked no national abuses, nor condemned the national enemies. He did not interfere with the authority or administration of those in power. He who was our example kept aloof from earthly governments. Not because He was indifferent to the woes of men, but because the remedy did not lie in merely human and external means. To be efficient, the cure must reach men individually, and must regenerate the heart.”

No Christian would dispute the fact that humanity cannot be “improved” by legislative means or governmental edicts. Rather, it is a changed heart that transforms character, behavior, situations, and thus, society. But this statement of Ellen White was not intended to limit arenas in which Christians might work and witness.

In fact, we find Ellen White speaking publicly and publishing extensively in favor of the strictly enforced city and town ordinances closing saloons, against the enactment of Sunday laws, against the “sin of slavery,” She also spoke in defense of Seventh-day Adventists during the U.S. Civil War, threatened by the military draft.

Furthermore, she provided the following encouragement to young people contemplating politics as a Christian vocation: “Dear youth: what is the aim and purpose of your life? Are you ambitious for education that you may have a name and a position in the world? Have you thoughts that you dare not express that you may one day stand upon the summit of intellectual greatness; that you may sit in deliberative and legislative councils, and help to enact laws for the nation? There is nothing wrong in these aspirations. You may every one of you make the mark. You should be content with no mean attainments. Aim high, and spare no pain to reach the standard.”

Her life demonstrated that there is a call to Christian involvement in politics born, not of partisanship, but of thoughtful review of the issues and responsible action.

Indeed, there are specific prohibitions offered to Adventists with regard to church involvement in politics: (1) those who “teach the Bible” in the churches and schools are not to express their partiality for or against certain politicians or political issues for it may stir up the minds of others, leading to division in the church; (2) church members are discouraged from voting along party lines “for we do not know whom we are voting for;” (3) members are admonished not to “partake in any political scheme” or political partnerships. Rather, Ellen White reminds us that Adventists are to be governed by elevated and holy principles: (4) members are not to align themselves with politicians unsupportive of religious liberty; (5) Christians are not to wear “political badges” that would in any way lead to division within the church; (6) tithe should not be used to pay anyone for “speckifying on political questions;” and (7) church publications should not exalt influential individuals for they are mere mortals, nor laud their work, as it passes away.

By living exemplary lives, Christians serve as epistles “known and read by everybody” (2 Corinthians 3:2, NIV), for the express purpose of recruiting citizens for Christ’s eternal kingdom.

**Separation of church and state**

Separation of church and state is the fifth and strongest argument urged upon Christians who would seek political posts. But, what might surprise Christians is to learn that most governments share concerns of the religious community when it comes to co-mingling the sacred with the secular. Former U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright wrote, “Most of us do not want our leaders confusing their own will with God’s but neither do we want them to ignore religious and moral principles.”

An honest assessment of church-state relations demonstrates plenteous benefits that religious groups derive from sound political structures—tax exemption of church properties and federal aid to students attending religious institutions of higher learning in the U.S., to name just two. Besides these and other benefits, think about how difficult the work of the church would be without governmental guarantees of civil liberties and the rule of law.

Likewise, consider how impoverished nations would be without God-fearing folk. By maintaining high moral standards, acting on love for one’s neighbor, operating local food banks and extending international disaster relief, Christians exert a positive influence on the social order. “Were those who serve God removed from the earth, and His Spirit withdrawn from among men, this world would be left to desolation and destruction, the fruit of Satan’s dominion. Though the wicked know it not, they owe even the blessings of this life to the presence, in the world, of God’s people whom they despise and oppress.”
Conclusion
Seventh-day Adventists have a vital role to play in the nation’s governing process. When Christians absent themselves from politics, what political scientist David Easton terms “the authoritative allocation of values,” public policy is left to unbelievers: School curriculum is designed, national policy is set, and global determinations are made without offering a Christian, a Seventh-day Adventist perspective. Might those governing interpret our silence as Adventists holding no opinion on issues, that Adventists have nothing to contribute to the discussion?

Granted, the life of faith must be given priority over political matters. As Christians, we are ambassadors, not of a political party, but of Christ’s kingdom. Politics is volatile and if one is not careful, a political point won can be a missed opportunity to reach the hearts of people holding opposing positions. Christians must be ever mindful of their first calling.

Scripture contains many examples of God’s messengers having compromised the position to which they were entrusted. King Saul became so totally absorbed with eradicating his presumed enemy that he failed to lead the nation to God’s ideal. Another example is that of David. God instructed the king not to conduct a census of males of military age for fear that the nation would base its security on the size of the army rather than on reliance on the power of God. Nevertheless, David ordered the headcount, with devastating results. Wisest of all men, King Solomon allowed his nation to degenerate as a direct result of his becoming preoccupied with women. Then there was King Hezekiah who, in welcoming Babylonian representatives, extolled his nation’s economic vitality rather than introducing his visitors to God, the source of these blessings.

“Strong were the temptations surrounding them [Daniel and his three colleagues] in that corrupt and luxurious court. But, “[i]t was not pride or ambition that had brought them into the king’s court, into companionship with those who neither knew nor feared God.” Their faith was strong in the consciousness that God had placed them there where they were, that they were doing His work and meeting the demands of duty.”

Today scores of Adventists serve their countries faithfully as judges, ambassadors, city mayors, ministers in government positions, and other prominent roles. Whether Christians serve as political appointees, government staffers, or private citizens equipped with a voice, a vote, and a prayer (Jeremiah 29:7), may the glory of God radiate through us, promoting justice and well-being, and attracting men and women to Christ’s eternal kingdom.

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Let’s Talk!
Do you want to send a comment or a question to Pastor Jan Paulsen, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church? You can do it through a website: http://www.letstalk.adventist.org
The website’s goal is to foster communication between young Adventists around the world and the office of the General Conference President. You’ll also find useful links and a searchable database of questions and answers on many topics at the same site. Check it out!
Dinosaurs: Questions Christians ask
by Elaine Graham-Kennedy

Within the biblical worldview, how are we to understand the mystery of dinosaurs?

Young Matthew stood entranced at the Fort Worth zoo. He could hardly believe his eyes! There in front of him stood Cera, his favorite dinosaur, from his favorite movie, The Land Before Time. He stared…and stared…and stared. His parents, somewhat appalled that he preferred looking at this mechanical model to all the live animals, insisted it was time to go somewhere, anywhere but here. Sobbing, he pleaded for more time wailing, “but I love her.” Firmly in parental hands, he cried, “Cera, I love you!” as he was led away. Such childhood attachments to dinosaurs may fade with time for many, but some retain a lifelong love for these fascinating creatures.

Children within the Christian community are no exception; however, among the more conservative denominations, there arise a number of theologically based questions that become problematic as the children mature. These may be synthesized into one question: How do dinosaurs fit into a biblical worldview?

Within the biblical worldview, how are we to understand the mystery of dinosaurs?

Did dinosaurs really exist?

A few scattered bones would not be enough to conclude that dinosaurs really existed. However, the record of dinosaur bone material is quite extensive, and the variety of dinosaurs enhances our understanding of these creatures. Well-preserved tracks and eggs with embryos indicate that the dinosaurs were alive, walking around, and breeding. The tracks are the most powerful arguments for their existence.

Rock records all over the world provide us with some fascinating information that may help us answer our questions. Scientists find in these rocks large deposits of dinosaur bone material. This bone material seems to have been replaced by a variety of minerals, preserving them for us to see. Bones that have been turned into rock are called fossils. If there is enough fossilized material available, scientists can reconstruct the animal. By 1990, scientists had reconstructed 197 complete skeletons of dinosaurs. More have been found since then.

As they studied the bones, scientists also developed a classification system from a number of distinctive bone...
structures unique to this group of animals. Consider, for example, that dinosaur skulls have openings not found in reptiles or mammals; the ankle is composed of a simple joint; and the vertebrae are distinctive from those of other organisms. Examination of the structure within the bones suggests that dinosaurs are a unique group of animals, very distinct from mammals and reptiles. Much of the bone structure show cell-by-cell replacement and preservation as they became fossils. Such fine detail in the fossils means that we can observe growth lines and vesicles in the bones. This combination of features is not found in reptiles or mammals and is unique to dinosaurs, though some claim there are similarities between the coelophysids and birds.

Dinosaurs have been classified into two distinct groups based on their pelvic structure. The first group consists of the theropods or carnivorous dinosaurs, and the sauropods, the large-bodied dinosaurs built like suspension bridges with long necks and tails, having pelvic structures similar to reptiles. The second group contains all the other dinosaurs, which have hip structures similar to birds. Despite the similarities to other animals, however, the pelvic structures are unique to dinosaurs.

Problems in the classification system for dinosaurs arise from difficulties in distinguishing genus and species. In 1990, of the 285 genera of dinosaurs, 45 percent were identified from a single bone. Many people are skeptical of such identifications. Researchers are also concerned about the classifications that have been developed for dinosaurs because too many genera have only one species. Researchers suspect that some of these genera are actually species from only one described genus. Despite these difficulties, there is considerable material to suggest that a wide variety of dinosaurs existed.

The features discussed here suggest that dinosaurs were unique creatures and, as such, could well represent a created “kind” as recorded in Genesis. The variety, distribution, and combination of dinosaur traits suggest that cross-breeding is possible, with dogs and flowers as modern examples; however, species variation is much easier to accomplish than the variation found among the dinosaur families as well as the origination of a new class of organisms.

For those who think dinosaur bones are fakes, there are additional data that suggest otherwise. Some of the bone material is found overlying skin impressions. These fossils provide us with additional information about the appearance of these organisms. If the bones are a hoax, someone went to a lot of trouble to include impressions of fossil skin in the deposit.

For these to be a hoax, the hoaxer must also create tracks. The information obtained from the tracks is most interesting. Tracks appear in a variety of sizes and shapes. When the trackway is of sufficient length, the stride and gait of the dinosaur can be determined. Most of the tracks indicate that the dinosaurs were walking rather than running, and the dinosaurs seem to be limping. It is difficult to determine why the dinosaurs were limping. They may have been injured or moving their young or carrying food. Whatever the explanation, the presence of tracks confirms that dinosaurs were actually alive and moving across the ground. It is interesting to note that researchers have not found any dinosaurs stopped “dead in their tracks” yet. Layers of dinosaur bones are found above and below but not with the tracks.

Some of the trackways have large tracks surrounding smaller tracks. This is suggestive of a “herd” of dinosaurs. Some researchers assume that these herds were following a natural migration route through the region. Others might not agree with that conclusion. Within the context of a biblical Earth history, dinosaur movement may reflect survival responses and stress factors related to shifting Earth with rising and falling flood waters.

Finally, evidence exists for breeding
dinosaur populations. Dinosaur nests, eggs, embryos, and juveniles have been reported.10 There are more than 200 egg sites worldwide. Evidence for in situ nests is not as abundant. Embryos and juveniles are quite rare. The existence of these deposits indicates that at least some of the dinosaurs were reproducing.

Researchers cannot always tell which dinosaur laid which eggs. In the early 20th century, eggs found in Mongolia were thought to be laid by Protoceratops, the dominant herbivorous dinosaur in the region.11 Then in the late 1900s, another nest was found with the bones of the small predator, Oviraptor, overlying the eggs. In addition, an Oviraptor embryo was discovered by scanning an egg. The deposits in Mongolia raise many questions. Why would Oviraptor sit on the nest while it was being covered up in a sandstorm? Or did it drown in an inter-dunal pond during a sudden rainstorm? Did Oviraptor sit on the nest because it was warm-blooded? How many oviraptors were sitting on the eggs? How many “nests” were there?

Many questions remain about specific characteristics of dinosaurs, but the large body of data available to us confirms that they did indeed exist.

When did dinosaurs exist?
Evidence for when dinosaurs existed is not so definitive. They occur in the Mesozoic (“mid-life”) layers of the rock record (geologic column). Radiometric dates from the associated volcanic ash and lava layers indicate that they lived between 65 and 225 million years ago, well beyond accepted biblical ages. (According to radiometric dating, the earth is thought to be 4.6-4.7 billion years old.)

The first dinosaur bones in the rock record are found in the same unit, the (Carnian) Triassic Period, on four continents.12 This diverse and widespread appearance of dinosaurs in the fossil record is difficult to explain according to current evolutionary theory. This difficulty is seldom brought to the attention of the public; however, this is not uncommon, as none of us likes to talk about what we don’t know.

It is important to remember that the radiometric dates are not data (hard facts); they are mathematical calculations based on the distribution of radioactive materials in the rocks.13 Time is not measured directly; time is an exponent in the formula for the slope of the line generated by the distribution of the isotopes. That distribution is based on chemical and physical properties within the melted rock body. Consequently, the biblical account of Earth history is equally legitimate as a source of data with regard to time.

In summary, just as scientists believe they have a reliable way to measure time periods in the rock record, many Christians believe they have a reliable source of information (the Bible) regarding the age of life on Earth. Consequently, pinpointing the age of the dinosaurs remains controversial.

Did dinosaurs and human beings live together? How?
The belief that dinosaurs and human beings lived together on this Earth is not based on scientific evidence (there is none), but rather on confidence in the divinely inspired word of God. The belief that God created all living things and that they were good, as well as the belief that there was no “shedding of blood” (predation) on Earth until after human sin, leads many to believe that dinosaurs and people may have lived together peaceably.

It is important to note that not all dinosaurs were of the large, meat-eating varieties.14 Half the dinosaur families were the size of an adult male giraffe (about 23 feet tall) or smaller, some the size of a large dog or wild turkey. In addition, most dinosaurs were herbivores (plant eaters).

Is Satan responsible somehow for the origin of the dinosaurs? Did Satan alter the DNA of some animals to produce the dinosaurs? Are human beings responsible for the origin of the dinosaurs? Did human beings genetically engineer the first dinosaurs? The answer to all these questions in my opinion is “No.” Dinosaurs were distinctive organisms. They had structures and traits that were unique to them. This means that their origin required more than mixing or alteration; it required new information, a creative activity that most Christians believe resides in the power of God alone.

Were the dinosaurs cross-bred from other kinds of animals?
The cross-breeding suggested by some Christians for dinosaurs requires viable offspring from a mix of mammals and reptiles, two distinct phyla. In our world it is not possible to cross-breed phyla. Cross-breeding of species is fairly common; however, there are limits to that kind of breeding.15

So did God really create the dinosaurs?
Why would a loving God create the Tyrannosaurus rex? Did T. rex live in the Garden of Eden? It is reasonable to...
assume, from the data (facts) we have, that God created some basic kind or kinds of dinosaurs. In addition, some variety of theropods, which may have included T. rex, could have existed in the Garden of Eden.

However, given the theological perspective of most Bible-believing Christians, it would be hard to believe that the animals in Eden were carnivores (meat eaters). The alteration of their diet would have occurred after the Fall, just as thorns and thistles appeared after Adam and Eve sinned.

What killed the dinosaurs?

Many theories have been proposed for the demise of the dinosaurs:16 (1) a drastic change in climate due to an asteroid impact or increased volcanism, or both; (2) a break in the food chain; or (3) the evolution of dinosaurs to birds. Many Christians do not believe that dinosaurs evolved into birds, and the evidence for a break in the food chain has proved difficult to document.

 Destruction of the dinosaurs by the Genesis flood fits within the biblical view held by many Christians. Independent of the time issue, the burial of dinosaurs in a variety of water-laid sediments worldwide17 is consistent with the biblical account. Furthermore, given the complexity of the Genesis flood, asteroid impacts and increased volcanism may have played a significant role in the destruction of the Earth and its organisms as well.

If dinosaurs were created by God, why are they extinct?

Lots of organisms that Christians believe were created by God have gone extinct. The marine systems have dramatically changed from that of the pre-Flood world. Insect populations, amphibian, reptilian, and mammalian organisms are radically different. Not everything God created has survived to the present day. This probably was not God’s choice; but rather the result of human sin.

God acted continually throughout the Genesis account of the Flood to save life. Unfortunately, not everything that was saved could survive in the post-Flood world.

Were there any dinosaurs on the ark?

At least half of the families of dinosaurs could have been on the ark. They were certainly small enough. In addition, it is important to remember that not every single species had to be on the ark. Only representative kinds or basic types were needed because we recognize that there is variation within genera (groups of species) at least.

However, it is important to remember that there is no scientific data to support this idea. The belief that dinosaurs were on Noah’s ark is a statement of faith.

Conclusion

Some may think these questions are ridiculous. However, Christians ask such questions because they desire an explanation of nature that makes sense within the biblical account of Earth history. While the answers given here may not altogether satisfy everyone, at least they provide a basis for discussion and further study.

There is much yet to be known about the wonders of God’s creative work—both before and since sin entered into our system—and the divine promise is that we shall know this from the eternal Teacher Himself in the earth made new. Until then, we as Christians are obligated to search and study earth history with divine assistance through the guidance of the biblical account and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

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1844: Coincidence or providence?

by Ron du Preez

Several major global movements that started around the year 1844 challenged God’s pivotal

Were the events that occurred during the year 1844 an accident? Or does this year have a deep significance in the biblical understanding of God’s plan in redemptive history? Seventh-day Adventists would overwhelmingly subscribe to the latter. To them, it is the year in which the 2300-day prophecy of Daniel 8:14 ended. It is the milestone that marks the beginning of the pre-advent judgment in heaven. It is the culmination of the longest time prophecy in the Bible, proclaiming to the world that the end is not far away and that the second coming of Christ is near.

What most of us, including Adventists, fail to understand is that 1844 is significant not only in sacred history, but also in world events of great magnitude that marked the time period around 1844 as an important watershed. But first, let us trace the importance of 1844 to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

From major mistake to mighty message

Around the 1840s, scores of preachers around the world were proclaiming that Jesus was coming soon. Researcher Le Roy Edwin Froom indicates that these preachers, representing a variety of Christian denominations, included whites, blacks, women, as well as child preachers. One peasant girl in Europe was known to have attracted between three thousand and four thousand people as she preached about the end of the world, thus having a profound impact on a large number of people.

In the United States, it was the preaching and writing of William Miller, farmer-turned-preacher, that ignited the passion of both believers and blasphemers. Miller and his associates proclaimed the following basic message: “Just as Jesus Christ’s first advent was foretold in Daniel chapter 9, so His second advent is identified in Daniel 8:14. Since the earth must be the ‘sanctuary’ to be ‘cleansed,’ this will happen by fire when Jesus comes. Starting with 457 B.C., the 2300 day/year prophecy of Daniel 8:14 culminated around 1843-1844. Jesus will come again around that time, so get ready to meet Him! His return will be a literal, visible event preceding the millennium.” This was the crux of the Millerite proclamation.

October 22, 1844 was eventually settled as the day when the 2300-year prophecy would end. That’s the day when this earth would be cleansed by the return of Jesus. Thousands of Millerites, indeed tens of thousands, waited patiently, expectantly, until the clock ushered in that day in 1844. All day they waited, but Jesus did not come, leaving them dismally disappointed! They were forced to face the fearsome fact that something had gone woefully wrong.

A few among the disappointed ones studied the Scripture even more fervently. They soon learned that while the date October 22, 1844, was correct, their understanding of the event was wrong! These believers saw that the sanctuary to be cleansed was not on the earth, but was in heaven. Jesus had entered into the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary to begin a work of judgment. As Ellen White later observed: “The subject of the sanctuary was the key which unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844.”

Ángel Manuel Rodríguez comments: “Having accomplished on earth the work for which He came (John 17:4, 5; 19:30), Christ was ‘taken up . . . into heaven’ (Acts 1:11) ‘to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them’ (Hebrews 7:25), till at His second coming He will appear ‘not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him’ (Hebrews 9:28). Between these two poles, the cross and the Lord’s glorious return, Christ functions as royal priest ‘in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord’ (Hebrews 8:2), the advocate (1 John 2:1) and intercessor for those who believe in Him (Romans 8:34). As our High Priest, Christ is ministering the benefits of His sacrifice to those who draw near to Him, a ministry as essential to our salvation as His atoning death.”

Thus the devastating disappointment of October 22, 1844, became a magnificent message. True, Jesus did not come as the Millerites hoped. But, a small group of disappointed believers discovered new biblical light—the truth that Christ had entered into His final phase of high priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, after which He would come to earth to redeem His people. Thus was born the Seventh-day Adventist Church, with its faith firmly rooted in the soon return of Jesus and with a commitment to preach the whole truth in Jesus. The year 1844 is indeed significant to the birth of Adventism.

But 1844 is of interest in other areas as well. Startling and faith-destructive movements came upon the world scene about the same time, and these provided a challenging backdrop and urgency for the Advent proclamation, calling upon the people of the world to look to the real truth about God and His role in end-time history. We shall examine just three such movements.

The rise of Marxism

In August 1844, Frederick Engels met Karl Marx in Paris, and the two became bonded in friendship and revolutionary struggle—“a life-long association that would change the world,” as one writer noted.

While Bible-believing Christians were preaching that Jesus would soon return to take His people to heaven to
end sin and suffering, and to provide peace and happiness throughout eternity, Marx and Engels were proclaiming that the way to real happiness was to eliminate God from life; that the way to peace and safety was through the principles of socialism and communism; that they could and would provide a release to the captives of the world and an ushering in of a classless and peaceful society on earth. Marx and Engels thus tried to steer human hope away from Christ's second coming to a communistic utopia to which millions were subjugated for most of the past century.

In the context of that challenge, the 1844 Advent movement was charged to proclaim the everlasting gospel of the heavenly sanctuary where all our hope must be anchored.

Dispensationalism and false notions of salvation

While the great Second Advent awakening was taking hold in various countries, a traveling evangelical preacher in Europe, John Nelson Darby, began to promulgate a novel theory regarding the second coming of Jesus. While preaching in Switzerland, Darby came up with the theory of "dispensationalism"—a theory that divides history into seven eras or dispensations, from the age of innocence before the Fall to the age of restoration at the end of time. Although Darby insisted that he got his doctrine of dispensationalism from the study of the Bible alone, between 1843 and 1845 he introduced a striking innovation—the secret rapture. The theory of secret rapture teaches that Christ will come in secret, rapture the saints, and take them to heaven.

A modern commentary to this secret rapture theory is the now world-famous Left Behind series of books, more than 60 million copies of which have been sold worldwide. The authors of these popular books argue that even though millions will be left behind while the Rapture takes place, they will not be without hope. They have a second chance for salvation. In a non-fiction book, Left Behind authors Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins directly promoted the "second chance" theory:

"Uncounted millions of men and women and girls and boys will recognize that, although they missed the Rapture and thus will have to endure the terrors of the Tribulation, yet God is still calling them, wooing them to His side. We believe these 'Tribulation saints' could well number into the billions. And do not forget: Every one of these new believers will have been left behind after the Rapture precisely because he or she had (to that point) rejected God's offer of salvation. Yet even then, the Lord will not give up on them."

That is the most alarming and dangerous part of the rapture theory—the belief that people will have a second chance of salvation. But the Bible nowhere teaches a secret rapture or a second chance for salvation after a person's death. The consistent teaching of Scripture is that the second advent of Jesus takes place as one major event: It will be personal and literal (Acts 1:11), visible and audible (Revelation 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 4:16), glorious and triumphant (Matthew 24:30), cataclysmic (Daniel 2:44; 2 Peter 3:10), and sudden (Matthew 24:38, 39, 42-44). Various signs, some of which have already transpired, will precede this occurrence, in the natural world (Revelation 6:12, 13), in the moral world with increased lawlessness and evil-saturated hearts (Matthew 24:37-39), and, in the religious world, such as false prophets leading many astray (vs. 24).

When all the signs pointing to Jesus' second advent have been fulfilled, then Jesus will return—to gather His people, to resurrect the righteous dead, to transform and receive all the saints, to destroy the evil powers and the wicked, to vindicate God's character, to restore the earth, and to reestablish communion with God! The biblical language concerning the second coming does not allow for any secret rapture.

Nor does the Scripture speak of a second chance for salvation after a person dies. The biblical position is clear: After death, there is no possibility of a second chance; there is only judgment. "As it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrew 9:27, NKJV).

Yet how sinister and how subtle this rapture theory really is. It definitely amounts to an inside infiltration of Christianity, an assault on the precious doctrine of salvation and the Second Coming of Christ.

Is it just an accident, then, that God chose the Advent movement in 1844 to proclaim the real truth about the Second Coming and the judgment about the same time such delusionary doctrines as secret rapture and dispensationalism came on the world scene?

Darwin and the rise of naturalistic evolution

After a five-year scientific trip as a naturalist aboard the ship HMS Beagle, Charles Darwin returned home to England in 1836. The trip led him "to think much about religion" and he began "to disbelieve in Christianity as a divine revelation." Later, Darwin noted: "In June 1842 I first allowed myself the satisfaction of writing a very brief abstract of my theory [of evolution] in pencil in 35 pages; and this was enlarged during the summer of 1844 into one of 230 pages." Thus began Darwin's Origin of Species, a book that revolutionized the scientific thinking and set out to deny the biblical account of creation.

Yet, that very year, 1844, God was bringing to light a long-neglected Bible truth: the Sabbath that celebrates God as the creator. A relatively small denomination, the Seventh Day Baptists of North America, had become deeply concerned in 1843 over the threat of fresh Sunday legislation, which could affect their liberties. So they dedicated themselves to prayer.
and greater activity in behalf of the seventh-day Sabbath, setting aside a day in 1843, and later another in 1844 for fasting and prayer, that God would “arise and plead for his holy Sabbath.”

During the winter of 1844, a certain Mrs. Rachel Oakes, a Seventh Day Baptist of New York, was visiting her daughter in New Hampshire. While there, Mrs. Oakes attended the Washington Christian Church, where a communion service was being conducted by Frederick Wheeler, a Methodist minister, who had accepted the Millerite message. Mrs. Oakes was startled to hear Wheeler say: “All who confess communion with Christ in such a service as this should be ready to obey God and keep His commandments in all things.” When Pastor Wheeler visited the Oakes family shortly afterward, Mrs. Oakes told him she had almost risen to her feet that day in church, to tell him that he better push aside the communion table until he was willing to keep all the commandments of God, including the fourth!

Sincere Frederick Wheeler went home, studied his Bible, and some weeks later accepted the biblical teaching about the sacredness of the seventh-day Sabbath, and preached his first sermon on it around March 1844. Several members of that church embraced the Sabbath truth. Of the 60 or more people in that neighborhood who went through the Great Disappointment of 1844, about 40 accepted the Sabbath doctrine, and later became members of the first Sabbath-keeping Adventist church.

Another Millerite preacher, a Baptist named Thomas Preble, heard of the Sabbath message being proclaimed in New Hampshire, and decided to investigate. He too, in August 1844, embraced the Sabbath truth. About four months after the Great Disappointment, Preble wrote an article about the Sabbath in the Millerite paper, *The Hope of Israel*. Joseph Bates, a retired sea captain read it, accepted the Sabbath, and determined to publish a series of articles about it. From that time onward, Joseph Bates, one of the founding fathers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, became a leader in the proclamation of the Sabbath reform message. As is well-known, this teaching of the seventh-day Sabbath was such a significant issue that it became part of the very name of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Ellen White spoke directly to the importance of Sabbath in upholding the Creator-God. “The infidel supposition, that the events of the first week required seven vast, indefinite periods for their accomplishment, strikes directly at the foundation of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment.”

Is it an accident that God brought a church into being proclaiming the Sabbath truth and the creatorship of God at the same time that Darwin wrote out his evolutionary theory denouncing God’s creative activity? The three angels’ message of Revelation 14 and the Adventist commitment to proclaim it with all seriousness as God’s final warning to the world is no accident. Indeed, it is part of God’s plan for the end times.

Seventh-day Adventist scientist Ariel Roth notes the following challenge: “Our confidence that the Bible is the Word of God does not allow for such alternatives to [biblical] creation as progressive creation, theistic evolution, or naturalistic evolution. We should not yield to fruitless speculation. As the people of the Book, we have a special opportunity to represent the whole Bible, including its creation message, to a world that is a drift on the great question of how life began on earth.”

**Nothing to fear for the future**

In our brief but gripping trip back to the 1840s, we have reviewed the mushrooming of just a few major global movements—Marxism, dispensationalism, and evolution—that challenged God’s pivotal truth for the last days. We could have examined, in addition, other significant events that occurred around 1844, such as the rise of modern spiritism, the beginning of the Bahai religion in the East, and the emergence of existentialist thought in Europe. But truth is never left without its defenders. God, in His grace and providence, has raised up a small but bold band of Bible-believers to discover the truth in all its fullness and make it their priority of global mission and witness. Yes, 1844 and the rise of Adventism is no accident. It is God’s plan to keep the truth alive in the midst of all the delusions that deluged human history just about the same time.

The year 1844 and its pivotal significance can be minimized and forgotten only at our peril. Ellen White’s counsel is timely: “In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.”

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Depression: How to detect and defeat it

by Mario Pereyra

Ten steps to prevent or overcome depression, a condition that affects about 14 percent of the world population at any one time.

Annie, 36, lives with her husband and two children. What she lives can hardly be called life. Most of the day, she is in a state of fear and anxiety. Fear of nothing in particular, but fear nevertheless. She is often tense, wearing a strained and haggard look. At times, she finds herself crying without knowing why. The smile or the laughter of her children makes no great impact on her. At night, she is restless, a victim of insomnia. “It's horrible. It's scary. I'm desperate, I can't take it anymore,” she confided in me. “I'm never in the mood for anything. I can't do things. I don't go anywhere. I don't want to see anyone. I live just lying down, even though I cannot sleep. I just lie there thinking about my problems over and over. Food disgusts me. I've lost 5 kilos in the last few weeks. Sometimes I think that it would be best to just finish with this nightmare.”

Annie is a victim of depression, the most common of all mental disorders and health complaints. Worldwide, as many as 400 million people suffer from depression at any given time, with prevalence estimates ranging from 12 percent to 14 percent of the population. The common symptoms of depression are a low mood, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt, low self-worth, disturbed sleep, lack of appetite, low energy, and poor concentration. At its worst depression can lead to suicide, a tragic fatality associated with the loss of about 850,000 lives each year.

While such a picture is worrisome, what’s worse is that two-thirds of people suffering from depression do not seek treatment, since more than 80 percent of those with clinical depression significantly improve their lives with treatment.

Types of depression
Researchers have suggested different theoretical subtypes of depression. They are:
1. Major depression is a condition in which one feels depressed all the time, has no interest in anything, and suffers from loss of appetite, insomnia, anxiety, fatigue, doubts, and suicidal tendencies.
2. Dysthymic disorder is a more prolonged depression (about a minimum of two years for adults, one year for children and adolescents), with similar symptoms as those for major depression, but with less intensity.
3. Bipolar depression is a condition characterized by the presence of major depressive and manic episodes. It is an abnormal state of mind, expansive or irritable, that can last for a week, with delusions of greatness, absence of sleep, speaking more than usual, scattered thoughts, activism, and psychomotor agitation.
4. Cyclothymia is similar to the bipolar disorder, but of longer duration and less intensity.

Am I depressive?
If you wish to evaluate your mental state, complete the Wang test below. Score your results with the directions at the end of this article.

A decalogue for anti-depression
Two basic ways to combat depression are psychotherapy and pharmacological therapy. For the latter, one should be evaluated by a psychiatrist, who will prescribe appropriate treatment. The most effective psychotherapy is cognitive-behavioral—to enable

Wang Self-Evaluation Test

Instructions
Mark a cross in the box that best indicates your state of being or situation in each of the items in the rows. After completing the test, read the grading instructions that appear at the end of this article to find your status.

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<th>Items</th>
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patients to acquire new abilities in their way of perceiving, understanding, and reacting to difficulties they experience with a view to reducing the gravity and duration of the condition. Among the various ways to achieve this, I would like to suggest 10 steps—what I have termed “A Decalogue for Anti-depression.”

1. Intentionally fight pessimistic thoughts. The most important negative thoughts are known as the “Negative Cognitive Triads” These are: (1) negative thoughts and feelings about oneself; (2) the tendency to interpret the environment in a negative way; and (3) viewing the future in a pessimistic way. For example, Annie was convinced that she was a bad mother and a disastrous wife. She thought that her husband didn’t love her anymore and that he would surely leave her. She also thought that what had happened to her mother would happen to her as well (her mother died depressive).

   How does one fight these thoughts? Two steps will help. First, detect and discover the negative thoughts. Second, confront them with evidences of reality.

   We asked Annie to write down her negative situations in a notebook with four columns. The first three columns were for her description of the event, what she thought and felt according to the situation, and what type of evidence she possessed. She was to write in the last column a positive thought that could replace the negative one. For example, one day she came across a friend who failed to greet her—an event that triggered negative thoughts. Here’s what she wrote down:

Situation
My friend walked right past without greeting me.

What I think and feel.
I think she’s mad at me. That produced fear and rejection.

Evidence
The serious and disagreeable face gesture.

Alternative thought
It could be that she’s not mad at me, instead worried about something more personal.

2. Break the negative ideas circuit. Annie thought that her husband will get tired of her and would abandon her. So she would retract and adopt a disdainful attitude toward him. “If he’s going to leave me, why should I worry about him?” she would say. “Did you hear what he said when he came in? That I will not get better again, like my mother. What he wants is to get rid of me.” Such thoughts may provoke a negative response from her husband, which in turn would reinforce her feelings of rejection and future abandonment. Annie was trapped in a vicious circle that was dragging her down in the depressive pool.

   How does one change these negative ideas? One way is to confront such thoughts with the real situation. In reality, Annie’s husband Omar loved her very much, and was doing everything he could to make her recovery possible. Annie knew that she should preserve her marriage and family, and that she should be more loving and caring. Confronting the negative and reinforcing the positive, Annie could break out of the vicious cycle of negative thoughts without underestimating or devaluing the potential of the positive in her. When the attitudes change, everything changes.

3. Avoid “absolute” thoughts, the all-or-none kind. “Omar will never again love me like before.” “Everything always comes out bad.” Such thoughts and attitudes are typical of depressive patients. The tendency is to judge the experiences, situations, people, and themselves by only two categories of good or bad, always or never, saint or sinner, etc. To change that way of thinking, the most effective method is to introduce nuances in the reasoning with a slant toward the optimistic side. For example, Annie understood that she retained the love of her husband, even though it was true that he found himself a bit tired. She learned to say: “I’m going to come out ahead, with God’s help.” “There are things that I do that come out bad, but there are others that I do well.”

4. Don’t punish or criticize yourself. Another tendency of the depressive person is to be permanently judging or evaluating his or her own actions, emphasizing personal defects and errors. They tend to ignore their virtues and dwell on their weaknesses. This attitude of self-depreciation disables and destroys, whereas the recognition of virtues helps the action and constructs a new future.

5. Take away the tyranny of the “I should.” When “I should” is allowed to grow, it becomes a permanent tyrant, making excessive demands. Instead of “should,” learn to adopt the attitude of “I would prefer.” The former is a tyrannical demand, a failure of which leads to low self-worth and eventually to depression. The latter is an aspiration, a goal to reach at your own pace. If there is a time when duties need to be more flexible, it is when you are depressed.

6. Avoid unpleasant and stressful situations. Like attending funerals, for example. Such events add to the stress of an individual, particularly one with a tendency toward depression.

7. Recognize your value and virtues. Recognizing one’s own capabilities and personal value is part of the road to well being.

8. Learn to enjoy and obtain satisfaction from what you do. Depression results from a failure to enjoy the beauty and the blessings of life. Benjamin Franklin said it well: “The rich man is not he who has it all, but the one who enjoys what he has.” Learning to recognize the good and the beautiful around us is a transcendent jump to the discovery of the happiness of living.

Continued on page 27
Dr. Emily Akuno was born in Kenya, into a family of nine children. Although her father was not a Seventh-day Adventist, Emily’s mother was, and her commitment to Adventist values and lifestyle became part of Emily’s heritage. All of Emily’s education was received in public schools. She obtained her bachelor’s degree in music from Kenyatta University, where she currently serves as professor of music. She holds a master’s degree in music from Northwestern State University in the United States and a Ph.D. from Kingston University, London.

Because of Dr. Akuno’s professional skills and achievement in music, she was elected chairperson of Kenya Music Festival for all educational institutions in the country. She has also served as chairperson of Kenya Music and Cultural Festival for non-academic institutions, and chairperson of the Association of Music Educators of East Africa. She was, until recently, the acting dean of students at Kenyatta University and has headed the Department (later Institute) of Music in the same university for several years.

Professor Akuno, her husband, and two sons are active members of the Nairobi Central Adventist Church.

■ **Professor Akuno, would you please tell us something about your early days.**

My father was a policeman, and his duties often kept him away from home. So Mother was our mentor. She took her faith seriously and conveyed to us a God who loves and cares for us. She was a faithful and active church member. My maternal grandmother was also a Seventh-day Adventist, and I spent a lot of time with her. So, I may claim myself as a third-generation Adventist.

After primary education, I was sent to a prestigious school in Kenya, and that is where I first met music as a subject and studied its fundamentals. From then on, my interest in music kept growing. After secondary education, I knew what my degree course should be: music. And I chose to go to Kenyatta University which had a good music program. After that I went to the United States to do my master’s degree and later to the United Kingdom for doctoral studies.

■ **So your interest in music began when you went to this prestigious secondary school?**

No. That’s where I met music in a formal, academic setting. Long before that, I was involved in the music ministry of my home church, which had three choirs. I was a member of the first one, which would be the equivalent of the Pathfinder choir today. So from the age of five years, I was involved in singing, and I can safely say that I first met music at home and church.

■ **As a Seventh-day Adventist Church member, how do your responsibilities of teaching music relate to your faith?**

I do not look at music as music *per se*, but music as a tool. Within the educational environment, music is a tool that enhances behavior change as well as individual perception of oneself. It is a tool that moves people. That is a challenge to me as an Adventist. How does one use this tool so as to produce the maximum effect for good? As an Adventist, I want to use music to transmit right values. To that extent, I use the gifts that God has given me and teach in such a way that those in my class will be able to make wise and informed decisions on how to use their music talents. My faith also informs me on the kind of music I can participate in, and keeps me focused. This does not mean I do only Christian music, but I let my Christian values impact on how I do music—the sacred as well as the secular, the classical as well as contemporary.

■ **At times music is a controversial subject, particularly as it relates to worship both within the Seventh-day Adventist Church and elsewhere. As a professional, what advice would you generally give on how music should be perceived?**

I go by three principles. First, music should praise God. David says, “make a joyful noise unto God” (Psalms 66:1, KJV). He responded in music for what God had done for him. So good music should be what will be pleasing to...
God and praising God, and it is done with joy and thanksgiving. Second, as Christians we need to be gentle and wise. I love singing and music, and if I go to a church where the music is poor, I feel as if I have missed something in my worship that day. However, whatever I do should not be a stumbling block for the rest. I follow Paul’s counsel that I should not cause others to stumble. Third, music is a language. In one of my books I define music as an expression of a culture. As Christians, we have embraced another culture. Most local cultures, particularly those I know of, may not have originally had the concept of the God in heaven but had some deity worthy of worship. Now that we know the God of heaven, all these other aspects of culture should be subjected to our knowledge of the God of heaven. Using music developed in another culture or language may have overtones that may not portray the same meaning as the original culture in which that particular music was composed. Therefore, I encourage the composition of music in local languages done particularly by those who are well grounded in the gospel.

■ Is your family musically inclined?
   In a way, yes. Although sometimes my younger son asks me why he should have to study music, the reports I get from school indicate that he is quite active in it. The older son did music up to high school, plays saxophone, but he is not studying music in college. I let them make their own choices. I know from research that music training enhances learning in all other areas of study. It also helps one to be emotionally balanced.

■ Can you comment on life in a public university where you have studied and where you now work?
   Entering university life can be a big change for young people as they suddenly find that there are no bells, no serious curfews, little guidance regarding relationships with members of the opposite sex, and for the most part you are on your own. What guided me were the following:
   • Having something useful to do all the time. Being occupied helps keep one away from dangers of temptation.
   • Ensuring that I was at church every Sabbath. We spent the whole day at church in study and fellowship, keeping ourselves busy at the right place with people of similar values.
   • Attending vespers and other worship programs. These may be looked at as routine, but they help one grow spiritually in the right company.
   • Joining different Christian clubs on campus. This provides opportunities to share your faith and be involved in wholesome programs.
   These activities provide fellowship and a support system that keeps one focused on the positive aspects of life. They also give opportunities for young people to dialogue with one another and know who they really are, and even reason with God.

■ What advice would you give to young people interested in pursuing the study of music?
   Begin where you are. Local churches provide many music opportunities. Once you discover your talents and interests, seek out institutions that have quality programs in such areas. Define for yourself the reason why you want to be involved in music. The focus should be on the end objective. Is it to build or break? Will it help in your Christian responsibility to be the light of the world so that you can through music bring a little light where there is darkness? Will it help you uplift Christ? Will it advance spiritual and social concerns that dominate the world today, such as ministering to the emotionally battered ones, or fighting the HIV/AIDS pandemic?

Music should not be an end in itself; it should be a means to make a joyful noise to our God and to share that joy with those around us.

Interview by
Hudson E. Kibuuka

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Jonathan Gallagher
Dialogue with the Adventist liaison
at the United Nations

Dr. Jonathan Gallagher, associate director of the Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL) at the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s world headquarters, serves as the church’s liaison at the United Nations. His primary role is to promote awareness and concern for religious freedom, and to develop cooperative programs of interest to the church and the international community in areas such as health, education, ethics, human rights, and religious liberty.

Dr. Gallagher serves as deputy secretary-general for the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA), chartered in 1893, which disseminates the principles of religious liberty and human rights for all people throughout the world. He is also the editor for the association’s academic journal, Fides et Libertas (Faith and Liberty). In addition, he serves as treasurer of the United Nations Committee on Religion or Belief, a non-governmental organization (NGO).

As an ordained Seventh-day Adventist minister, he pastored for seven years a local church in England—his homeland—, followed by eight years of church administration. He holds a doctorate in divinity from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. Dr. Gallagher is author of seven books and numerous articles. He is married to Ana (nee Gonçalves) and they have two grown children, Paul and Rebekah.

Have you always been an Adventist?
No. That means for me that in contrast to those who have been brought up in the church, I know what the alternatives are. I’ve lived them. And I don’t want to go back to them. I am totally and completely convinced about the Adventist Church, its principles, its values, and its beliefs.

Was there a particular person or event that guided your decision to become an Adventist?
In my last two years of grammar school in England, I had a classmate, Jean-Marc Michel from Mauritius. His stand for creationism during science classes really struck me first. At that time, you didn’t challenge your teachers. When Jean-Marc did, one teacher resorted to the usual mockery: “In our next class, Dr. Michel will lecture on what he thinks is the truth about the origin of the universe, and life as we know it.” Jean-Marc did such a brilliant job that the teacher never asked him to lecture again!

We also had many interesting discussions about the Bible. One day he said, “When Jesus comes back….” I replied, “What do you mean ‘when Jesus comes back?’” He said, “You know, the second coming, the return of Christ….” I said, “Where does the Bible say that?” I thought I knew the Bible. My parents were evangelical free Christians, and I had read the Bible since I was small. But we’d never heard a sermon on the return of Jesus. After he showed me the texts from Scripture, I remember my first feeling was absolute terror. That, then, mutated into a better understanding, and the conviction that it really was true. Actually, my Ph.D. dissertation is on aspects of the second coming.

When did you feel a call to ministry?
I didn’t feel a call right then. Actually, no one who knows me now believes this, but all through my teenage years I was extremely shy and introverted. I don’t feel comfortable speaking in public. But after I became an Adventist, I believed that God wanted me to preach. By that time, however, I was already committed to doing a science degree, so I continued with that. It was during that time that I got married. The conviction then was that I should go to Newbold College, in England. But I wasn’t thinking that I wanted to be a minister. I just thought I should know more about God. The call came later.

What led you into the work of defending religious freedom?
It goes back to concepts about God. I believe that freedom is the highest principle in God’s universe. And for
that reason our ability and right to worship and believe freely are paramount. If you are being compelled to do something against your beliefs, that is the highest violation of human integrity and dignity. It’s part of the whole overarching Great Controversy theme. That’s what Satan accused God of being a tyrant, a dictator, and not granting freedom and the right to choose.

Religious freedom comes down to fairness. I am convinced that God is fair and always will be fair. And we should try to be. Jesus said that persecution would come, but He didn’t say that we should enjoy it, or just roll over and accept it. We should take issue with it. Otherwise, how will people know what the important issues are? There won’t be religious freedom at the end of time. But for the moment, we promote it and defend it. Then, when the end comes, a clear polarization will arise so that people will know what the issues are.

What are some of your responsibilities as deputy secretary-general for the IRLA and treasurer of the United Nations NGO Committee on Religion or Belief?

We set up religious liberty associations around the world, under the umbrella organization of the IRLA. We also represent the IRLA at the United Nations. As the treasurer of the United Nations NGO Committee on Religion or Belief, I attend monthly meetings in New York with ambassadors and other representatives from the NGO community.

Two years ago, we had the opportunity to speak to the Human Rights Commission on behalf of the IRLA. We chose to address the problems of imposing the death penalty for conversion, particularly in Islam. We gave a speech, citing authorities from Islam to say that it’s wrong. The ambassador of Morocco asked for the right of reply. He got up and said, “We would like to thank the IRLA for making it clear that the death penalty for conversion is not part of Islam; is not part of the prophet’s original message; and all these countries that impose it do not represent true Islam.” At that point you think, “We can make a difference.”

Can you share with us an experience that illustrates your work at the UN?

Two come to mind. The first involves an official of the Serbian Permanent Mission to the UN. I went to her and said, “You’ve got this new law that you’re proposing, and it’s a terrible law.” She asked, “What law?” I said, “I can tell you about it.” She said, “No. Give me until tomorrow. I’ll find out about it.” She called back to Belgrade and got the text of the law. I then sat down with her and showed her those things that went against their constitution, as well as against the UN Declaration of Human Rights. She made all these notes and sent them off to Belgrade. The law stopped.

The second involves the IRLA conference that was held in Trinidad in January 2005. We invited the prime minister of Trinidad to speak, and he graciously accepted. We received a courtesy call to have five minutes with him a couple of days prior to the meetings. At the meeting with him, we went around the table and introduced ourselves. He then said, “I see we have some doctors of theology here. So, let me ask them a question.” he said. “What was God’s role in the tsunami?” I got the job of having to explain that one! He’s a Christian, so we started in Revelation with the war in heaven. Then we went back to Genesis, and then we got into the whole Great Controversy theme of Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. After half an hour, his staff were asking, “What is this? It was supposed to be a five-minute courtesy call, and here we have a half-an-hour Bible study going on!”

Those are the opportunities that are available, and I think we should want to take advantage of them.

What counsel would you give Adventist young people about how to best prepare for this type of work?

It’s good to have some basic knowledge of political science, international affairs, and international law. But I think the most important thing is to have an interest in other people—to really care about them. We have to treat everyone as a human being, listen to what they have to say, and consider it. I also think it’s important to want to share who you are, your faith, your principles, your beliefs. But it has to be done in a way that is not obtrusive.

What fuels your passion for religious freedom?

I met a 15-year-old girl on one of my trips to China. I discovered that this girl’s father, an Adventist pastor, had been in prison since she was five years old. She had seen him only on occasional prison visits. I asked her what she wanted most in the world, and she said, “I want my daddy to come home.” That’s when you start experiencing the pain that the violation of religious freedom brings. And that’s why I’m quite happy to see out my time working for religious freedom.

Interview by
Bonita Joyner Shields

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Are you a true disciple of Christ?

by Leah Jordache

As Christians, we claim that Christ is our leader and that we are His disciples. But do we really know what that means?

To understand better what it means to be a disciple of Christ, let's start with a definition and then ask four crucial questions. A simple dictionary definition of disciple is a student or a follower, a convinced adherent of a school or an individual. The questions we want to raise are the who, the why, the where, and the how of discipleship. These define the qualification, motivation, destination, and demonstration of being a disciple.

The who: the qualification of a disciple

To begin with, a disciple of Jesus is a student and follower of Jesus. When Jesus called His first disciples, He said, “Come, follow me; and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19, NIV).

Some may define a disciple in terms of certain qualities or behavioral attributes, such as attending church regularly, paying faithfully tithes and offerings, making healthy lifestyle choices, being well respected in the community, witnessing persuasively on any point of truth, or working for a Christian organization or institution. These attributes may be present in the life of a disciple, but do not necessarily make a disciple. The real key to defining a disciple lies in a relationship.

A true disciple of Jesus is a student, an apprentice actively learning from Jesus through firsthand observation and interaction. A disciple is someone who follows Him and is being shaped and molded by Him to do the kind of work that He does.

It’s easy to find ourselves doing things that we think a disciple should do without really following Him. During the time of Jesus, teacher/student relationship meant that the disciple would follow the rabbi closely, do things as he did, speak as he spoke, imitate him so well that some might even mistake him for his teacher. Initially this might sound like a great goal for those who want to be known as disciples of Jesus. However, it is possible to act like disciples of Christ without really following Him.

The what: the motivation of a disciple

What motivates disciples to follow a particular teacher? What compels them? What is their driving force? In the Jewish community at the time of Jesus, the disciples of well-known rabbis hoped that being associated with the right teacher would give them prestige and standing in their community. Through their personal holiness they hoped to gain influence and prestige of their own, as they would someday become rabbis and have students clamoring to be just like them.

Not so with Christian discipleship. A disciple of Christ should have a different kind of motivation, one that has nothing to do with personal gain or accomplishment. The apostle Paul had a firsthand knowledge of what it meant to be a disciple of Christ. He wrote to the Corinthians that the motive for discipleship is not in one-self, but in Christ: “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again” (2 Corinthians 5:14, 15, NIV).

When we come to Jesus, we accept that He died for us, and we are compelled to live a new life of being saved from sin. This new life is rooted not in ourselves, but in Him and for Him. Thus, a disciple of Christ is someone who is compelled by the love of God to follow Him and to be like Him.

Discipleship goes far beyond obedience, far beyond personal sanctification. Those things come as a natural result of an intimate student/teacher relationship with Christ. They are not the end goal of the discipleship process. If my focus is only on what’s happening to me, then I’m still just living for myself.

Ask someone about his or her relationship with God. You may get a response somewhat like this: “Well, I read my Bible and pray, attend church regularly, listen to spiritual music, do my best to be a good person, avoid indulging in sin, and help others as much as I can. I’m not perfect, but I think I’m headed in the right direction.” But is following Christ simply about our own practices or observances, our own behaviors and philosophy, our own experience and insight? Could there be something more?

If we are going to follow Christ, and if we are going to live for Him, then I would like to propose two philosophic assumptions: (1) If I follow Christ, I must go where He is going; (2) If I live for Christ, I must live for what He lives for.

Paul says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV). Discipleship is precisely that. The old is gone. The new has taken over. New life, new goals, new purpose.
Christian discipleship is a call to belong to Christ in the fullest sense of the word. We now join Him in a new pursuit. As His disciple, His destination is my destination, His motivation is my motivation.

The where: the destination of a disciple

The goal of Christ’s life, His destination, is the reconciliation of the world to God (2 Corinthians 5:18, 19). He leads humanity into a restored relationship with God. As His disciples, our destination must be the same. Paul says that Christ has given us “the ministry of reconciliation” (vs.18). The meaning is clear. Just as Christ gave Himself even to the death of the cross in order to reconcile the world to God, so should our mission be. As disciples, we ought to give ourselves completely for this ministry of reconciliation; we are its custodians, its trustees, and it is our task as disciples to bring back to Him people for whom He laid down His life. This is what Jesus meant in Matthew 28:18-20 when He said, “Go and make disciples of all nations” (NIV). This is our destination, our goal, our purpose as His disciples: to bring others to a restored relationship with God through the knowledge that Christ has accomplished this reconciliation for them.

The how: the demonstration of a disciple

According to 2 Corinthians 5:18, as Jesus’ disciple, I represent Him to the world and convey the message of His reconciliation. I make an appeal on His behalf. My demonstration is His demonstration. So what does my appeal communicate about Him? If I am a disciple of Christ, how must I go about the task of being an ambassador of reconciliation for Him? In the light of how much God was willing to sacrifice, what does that mean for you and me as agents of that reconciliation?

Is it possible that we have forgotten our destination—our commission—to bring the message of reconciliation of God to others. We have been reconciled to God through Christ, therefore as His followers, we implore others, on His behalf, to be reconciled to Him. Christ’s leadership is a pursuit. To follow Him means to follow Him in His pursuit. We are to appeal to the world on Christ’s behalf.

That would mean that any of us who considers discipleship seriously should take an inventory of where we are as “followers of Christ.” Begin answering these questions:

1. Qualification:
   • Am I a follower of Christ?
   • Am I going beyond personal sanctification to follow Christ in His pursuit of reconciling human beings to God?

2. Motivation:
   • Am I compelled by Christ’s love for me?
   • Am I convinced that God has supplied everything I need so I might no longer live for my own purposes, but for His?
   • Am I willing to live for Christ and others instead of simply living for myself?

3. Destination:
   • What is my destination?
   • Where will people end up if they follow where I am leading right now?

4. Demonstration:
   • As an ambassador for Christ, what does my demonstration tell others about God?
   • Is His deep desire and passion for reconciliation visible in my presentation of His appeal?

Remember: “When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same any more. A new life has begun! All these new things are from God who brought us back to himself through what Christ Jesus did. And God has given us the privilege of urging everyone to come into his favor and be reconciled to him. For God was in Christ, restoring the world to himself, no longer counting men’s sins against them but blotting them out. This is the wonderful message he has given us to tell others. We are Christ’s ambassadors” (2 Corinthians 5:17-20, LB).

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Ten reasons why I choose to remain an Adventist

by Dan Smith

In the midst of questions and controversies, the church that follows the teachings of Jesus moves on and will triumph in

Tests are common in life. At school, tests determine one’s grades. In a doctor's office, tests help in the diagnosis and treatment of an illness. A road test is needed to get a driver’s license.

But the ultimate is the Final Test. How is one to pass it? The Final Answer is always grace. However, there's a problem. Whenever God gives grace, He always makes a package deal with this thing we call the "church." The students on my campus will sometimes say, "I'm spiritual, but I'm not religious." That usually means they have had some problem with the church.

Yes, sometimes the church can drive you crazy. Internal politics. Too many rules. Scaring people with stories about persecution in the last days. Legalism. I had a kid with long hair and a T-shirt come to my congregation, waiting for his girlfriend. And supposedly one of my saints told him, “Young man, you can't go into the church dressed like that. You'll have to wait outside.” That usually means they have had some problem with the church.

Yes, sometimes the church can drive you crazy. Internal politics. Too many rules. Scaring people with stories about persecution in the last days. Legalism. I had a kid with long hair and a T-shirt come to my congregation, waiting for his girlfriend. And supposedly one of my saints told him, “Young man, you can't go into the church dressed like that. You'll have to wait outside.” That usually means they have had some problem with the church.

In the midst of questions and controversies, the church that follows the teachings of Jesus moves on and will triumph in

1. He isn't heavy. “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:30).

Someone said to me that Adventism just felt heavy to him. But Jesus says, “Come unto Me, all you who are weary—I will give you rest. My yoke is easy, my burden is light.” If your religion feels heavy to you, you didn't get it from Christ. That verse has become a defining verse for me. And so I had to go through all my Adventism, and take out or spin everything until it felt easy and light.

Charles Swindoll tells a story about a man going through an airport, carrying two heavy suitcases. Another man asks him for the time. He gives him the time, the Lakers score, and the weather in London.

"Your watch can tell you all that? I have to have that watch. I'll give you $100 for it."

"No, it's not for sale."

"$500."

"No, it's one of a kind, my father gave it to me, and I'm going to pass it on to my son."

"$5,000. I have to have that watch. I have the cash right here."

"Oh, all right."

The man, thrilled, puts the watch on and goes off. The first man picks up the suitcases and shouts, “No, wait, don't forget the batteries!”

That is how it happens for so many new Christians. They come into the church, they love grace, the Sabbath rest, heaven, baptism, new friends. Then they get all the laws and rules laid on them, and soon it all feels like those heavy suitcases. But Jesus says, “My yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

2. God is not a thief! “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10).

Satan has been telling lies about God for thousands of years. “God is a thief. He'll cheat you out of life. He'll take all the fun away. Watch out for Him. He's out to steal your life.” But Jesus said, “I am not a thief.” And so I had to go through all my Adventism, every doctrine, and every church standard, and make sure that there was nothing of God being a thief.


When the angels finally were given a chance to say something in the Great Controversy, what were their first three words? “Do not be afraid.” I grew up with fear. Every time I sinned, I was afraid God crossed my name off “The List.” I was afraid of the Judgment, the Last Days, all of it.

But the angels said, “Do not fear. Go find Him—in a manger. He's a baby. You don't have to be afraid of a baby. Don't have to be afraid to get close to God.” So again I had to go through all my Adventism and get rid of all fear. No more fear of being lost. No fear of the judgment. No fear of the Last Days.

When I was in the seminary, one of my brothers sent me tickets to a Chicago Bulls-Portland Trailblazers game. I was from Portland, and we were the world champions. Whenever Chicago scored, 20,000 people stood and cheered. Whenever Portland scored, two of us stood and cheered! It came down to the end of the game,
Chicago stole the ball, and went down and dunked, ahead by one, four seconds to go. Twenty thousand standing, rocking. Two of us sitting! Portland called time out, came back on the court, and Lionel Hollins sank a long shot that went in as the buzzer went off! Two of us standing, rocking! Twenty thousand sitting, stock silent! It was the highlight of my life!

Sometimes it looks like the other side is going to win. Where is God? Why doesn’t He show His power more? Why aren’t millions coming to hear about God? But somehow it’s going to happen. Someday God is going to show His power, and stadiums are going to be full of people coming to hear about God. I don’t want to sleep through it. I’m not afraid.


Everything about God is good news. There can’t be some good news, some bad news, and as long as there is more good than bad, we can give God a C+ and let Him pass. No, it has to be all good news.

Once in Pasadena, California, we went to a wedding. The wedding came right during the seventh game of the playoffs between the Lakers and Portland basketball teams. The moment we got back in the car to go to the reception, our boys turned on the radio. The Lakers were down 15 to the reception, our boys turned on with it.

Finally my wife said, “Dan, we have to go. We’re going to be late.” So I turned it off, and the boys sullenly dragged themselves out of the car. But five minutes into the reception, the buzz began to spread, “Did you hear, the Lakers won! They came back!” In five minutes, everybody heard. Why? Because it was good news.

Maybe the reason the gospel hasn’t gone all around the world yet is that we haven’t been convinced ourselves that we have only Good News!

5. Great joy! “I bring you good news of great joy” (Luke 2:10).

The other night I came home, and my wife happened to be watching Elton John in concert at Madison Square Garden in New York. I had never heard him. I watched as 35,000 people, my age, stood for two hours, singing along, and knew all the words. But I was a little sad, saying to myself, “When is something like this going to happen for God?” Our worship services have to be alive. As Christians, we have to be the most alive people in the world, because the angels said they bring us good news of great joy.

6. A Savior is born! “Today…a Savior has been born to you” (Luke 2:11).

When we get this “church” thing figured right once and for all, it will be totally focused on Christ. Every sermon will be centered on Christ. Every doctrine will flow out of being a follower of Christ. Salvation will be grace alone, because “today…a Savior has been born.”

In 1994, in Rwanda, with all the killing, people began to seek refuge in the churches. One morning, all of a sudden a group forced its way into a Christian church, running from a gang of thugs dressed in fatigues. Their commanding officer ordered all members present to lie down, and then walk up to a picture of Jesus hanging on the wall, spit on it, and say, “Jesus, you are useless. I want nothing to do with you.” Then the minister walked up to the picture, spat on it, and said, “Jesus, you are useless. I want nothing to do with you.” A few leaders in the congregation followed.

Finally one young girl walked up, took her skirt, wiped away all the spit, and said, “Jesus, You are the most important person in my life. I am the one who is useless.” Then she turned to the commander and said, “You can shoot me now!” The officer began to cry, took off his cap, and put it on her. It broke his heart to see someone willing to die for Christ. Our final, last-day church is going to be full of faithful disciples of Christ like that.

7. For all the people. “I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people” (Luke 2:10).

In our last-day church, there will be no walls, no discrimination, no hierarchies. We grew up singing “Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world, Red and yellow, black and white, all are precious in His sight,” but we didn’t do it. In many parts of the world we have allowed unbiblical discrimination and prejudice to guide our decisions, even today. As Adventists we have made progress in social and ethnic issues, but we still have a ways to go.

When he was preaching to a black audience, Pastor H.M.S. Richards, Sr. would sometimes shout, “There will be no black people in heaven.” Silence. “There will be no black people in heaven!” People would begin to get angry. Then he would say, “There will be no brown people either. No white people. Only red people, red in the blood of the Lamb.” All the walls will come tumbling down.


Too many of us have grown up not feeling free. People have kept the Sabbath, given their tithe and offerings, changed their diet, taken off their jewelry, but it didn’t feel free. If your religion doesn’t feel free, then it didn’t come from the Spirit. Because, “where the Spirit…is, there is freedom.”

9. Has to make sense. “Come now, let us reason together”
Everything about the last-day Adventist Church has to be anchored in Scripture, centered in Christ, and make sense. Because it is God’s church, and God has to make sense. We used to say that you couldn’t go to the theater, but you could watch movies at the school gym. No, the place wasn’t the issue. It was what the movie might do to your soul. Everything we say has to make sense, because God is never arbitrary. People have to know that they are making an intentional choice, with their eyes wide open. Choosing is an upgrade, a bigger truth, a better truth.

10. I am not ashamed. “I am not ashamed of the gospel” (Romans 1:16).

As I gradually worked through my Adventism with this list—I finally ended up with a Christianity and Adventism I could be proud of. I refuse to believe anything I have to be ashamed of.

Years ago I did a funeral for a rich family. These people had everything—mansion, yacht, airplane, everything. I was sitting there coveting some of what they had when one of the men in the family came up to me and asked, “Do you believe what you said today during the funeral service?”

“Of course.”

“I don’t. I used to. I wish I could again. Maybe if I had a pastor like you, I could believe again.”

And I was shocked to realize I had been sitting there wishing I had what he had, and he was wishing he had what I had. And I vowed I would never be ashamed again. I am proud to be a Christian, proud to be a Seventh-day Adventist. It has the best picture of God I know. The best package of truth I know. The truest to the Bible I know.

Conclusion

Dick Winn wrote once that if you are unhappy with the church you have some choices. You can stay but just go numb, keep up appearances. Or you can slip out the back door. Or you can get mad, go out the front door. Or you can go “a la carte,” pick and choose your beliefs; you don’t have to throw everything out just because you have some trouble with one part. Keep what works for you!

Or you can stay and work. Make it better. And that’s what I have chosen. I have gone through theological controversies. I had friends of mine leaving the church, even abandoning the ministry. I looked at that. But finally I decided, I am going to stay. If you and I leave, then the other people get to have the final say about what the church becomes. If you leave, you don’t get a vote. So I chose to stay. As long as I have a pulpit or you have your role in the church, we have some say, and we can work to make the Adventist Church all it ought to be.

So stay! Decide today that nothing can drive you out—no hypocrisy, no politics, nothing. Stay. Love the church, because Jesus loves the church, and died for the church.

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* All Scripture quotations in this article are from New International Version.
Depression
Continued from page 17

9. Promote hope. Hopelessness is an essential component of depression. Hopelessness correlates closely with depression, depressive symptoms, and suicidal tendencies. Research on depression treatment indicates that reducing hopelessness is an important predictor of successful outcomes, particularly during the first few weeks of therapy.

How does one fight hopelessness? Developing trust in God, building self-confidence, stimulating personal resources, and mobilizing mental and spiritual strengths create a hopeful atmosphere. Hope is to believe that there is always a way out, that the future will bring better things. That is why we asked Annie, “What will you do after you overcome depression? How will the next day be?” Planning for a future and planning to live with her children, she was able to envision a happy life. Little by little, she saw meaning in life, and light began to dawn. “Never has a night beaten the dawn, and never has a problem beaten hope.”

10. Trust in God. Religious involvement is an important variable that has received attention in recent literature on depression. Several high profile studies indicate that certain aspects of religiousness (e.g., public religious involvement, intrinsic religious motivation) may be inversely related to depressive symptoms. That is, the greater the religious involvement, the fewer the symptoms of depression.

Instructions for grading the Wang Self-Evaluation Test for diagnosis of depression

1. Score items 1, 3, 4, 7, 9, and 10 by giving from left to right 1 point to “Never” column, 2 to “Rarely,” 3 to “Sometimes,” 4 to “Often,” and 5 to “Always.”

2. Score items 2, 5, 6 and 8, by giving from right to left 1 point to “Always”, 2 to “Often,” 3 to “Sometimes,” 4 to “Rarely,” and 5 to “Never.”

3. Place the points of each row at the extreme right. Add up the scores, and multiply the total by 2 to obtain the percentage index.

4. Locate the percentage index number on the Table of Interpretation below.

Table of interpretation
Normal Values:
Up to 40 points
Borderline:
Between 41 and 50
Minimum Depression:
Between 51 and 60
Moderate Depression:
Between 61 and 70
Grave Depression:
More than 71

References
2. Ibid.

FOR FURTHER READING

FOR FURTHER READING
Students in Brazil meet to learn and share

Under the theme “I Choose to Be Faithful,” more than 300 Adventist university students and friends met on the weekend of March 18, 2006, in southern Brazil to learn more about Creation and to share the gift of life with others. The meeting was sponsored by the Adventist Student Association of the West Rio Grande do Sul Mission.

The mayor of the city welcomed the participants, “Passo Fundo is delighted to receive the visit of Christian young people who come to strengthen their faith and express their solidarity with those in need. We deeply appreciate your contribution to the municipal blood bank, thus showing in practical ways your desire to help fellow human beings.” More than 100 of the students and leaders donated blood in support of the Project Life initiative.

Dr. Nahor N. Souza Jr., a specialist in geology and paleontology, was the featured speaker for the series. He spoke on the issues of origins and catastrophism. “The scientific evidence in favor of Creation, as described in the Bible, is becoming stronger with the passing of time,” he stated. “However,” he added, “more important than the knowledge of this evidence is your personal friendship with Jesus and your ability to share His love with others.”

Pastor Areli Barbosa, youth ministries director for the South Brazil Union, also spoke to the group, emphasizing three points:

1. The need to critically filter the information that reaches us at the university and through the media.

Creation field conference in Portugal

Members of the Adventist University Students Association in Portugal participated in a Creation field conference held September 2-5, 2005. The 160 attendees included Adventist teachers and professionals. The conference featured lectures on biogeography, geology, paleontology, and theology presented by members of the Geoscience Research Institute—Raúl Esperante, James Gibson, Jacques Sauvagnat, Ronald Nalin—and other specialists.

A key question that was addressed from various perspectives was: How can Adventist university students and professionals in a secular environment maintain an informed biblical faith while being bombarded by naturalistic evolutionary ideas and secular world-views?

One of the highlights of the meeting was a guided visit to a paleontological park located at the site of an ancient quarry, where long tracks or footprints of various kinds of dinosaurs can be observed at close range.

Reported by Miguel A. Nunes, a university student and leader in Portugal. Email: manunes@gmail.com.
Meetings such as this help students to deepen their Christian convictions and provide them with arguments to defend their faith.

2. This forum allows students to ask critical questions and to expand their circle of Adventist friends.

3. Creationists are becoming more numerous and articulate as they proclaim the reality of a universe exquisitely designed by God.

Pastor Ignacio Kalbematter, president of the South Brazil Union, closed the program encouraging the participants to make a difference in their place of study or work by making Jesus the center of their life and witness.

Charlise Alves reports for the Adventist Student Association of the West Rio Grande do Sul Mission in Brazil.

**Send us your group’s report**

Leaders of Adventist university student associations are invited to send a brief report of their group’s activities and one or two digital photos for publication in Dialogue. Include all relevant information about the student group, describe its main activities, challenges, and plans, and list the name, position, and email address of the report’s author. Send them to Humberto M. Rasi (hrasi@adelphia.net) and to Susana Schulz (schulzs@gc.adventist.org). Thank you!

Ghana Adventist students host Bible lecture series

Under the sponsorship of Ghana National Association of Adventist Students (GNAAS), Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, campus ministry director of Michigan Conference, conducted a week-long Bible lecture series on the theme, “Living Without Fear.” The program was held at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Kumasi, Ghana, in February-March 2006.

The program attracted a daily average of 700 students, with attendance peaking at 1,500 over the weekend. At the close of the series, 37 persons were baptized. Several others are studying the Bible with members of GNAAS. Newly baptized Adventists are given special classes to deepen their understanding of the beliefs and lifestyle they have embraced.

GNAAS was organized in the 1960s with a membership of 13 students. Today the association has more than 500 members in various national campuses. For Dr. Koranteng-Pipim, the 2006 event was a memorable return to the fellowship and to his alma mater where he embraced Adventism.

Preparations for the lectures began early with the organization of several committees and series of spiritual retreats designed to deepen our own commitment to give our best to God. Our slogan was, “If you are not a missionary, you are a mission field.” Substantial funds were needed to organize the program. God answered our solicitations and prayers, allowing us to obtain the financial resources needed. We visited all residences on campus inviting our fellow students and friends to the program. Handbills were distributed and banners were posted. The official campus radio broadcasted the announcements.

The program had a morning session under the theme “One Day at A Time” that was devotional in nature, speaking to the heart, and an evening session focusing on the theme “Living Without Fear,” which spoke to the mind. The speaker showed convincingly that the Advent message is biblical, reasonable, and credible. The Protestant Chaplain of the university Dr. Paul Boafo and his wife were frequent attendees. “These are the messages our campus needs,” he stated, “rather than noise and drumming.”

A major problem that affects all Adventist university students in Ghana are the Saturday lectures and examinations. Because students choose to remain faithful to the Sabbath, many are delayed in their studies. Legal approaches have been tried, but so far unsuccessful. As we continue to pray for divine intervention, we request the prayers of our fellow students for a solution to this serious obstacle to our faith convictions.

Erik Adjapong reports for the Ghana National Association of Adventist Students. His email: askfknust@yahoo.com. Check the website: www.asfknust.8k.com.

Audience at the Great Hall Auditorium listening attentively to the speaker
As a professor of paleontology at Loma Linda University, Leonard Brand leads a productive research program and has published numerous peer-reviewed articles in scientific publications. His first book, *Faith, Reason and Earth History* (Andrews University Press, 1997), masterfully synthesized disparate fields of knowledge and lines of evidence. In *Beginnings* he tackles a challenge at which many have failed: a creationist book that is both technically accurate and accessible to non-scientists. Reading this new book demonstrates the virtue and complexity of such a task.

Literal readings of Scripture do not directly produce a clear understanding of nature’s details; this is particularly true of the fossil record. Brand eschews disproving order in the fossil record or other tenets of geology, but instead compares short-age biblical flood interpretations of the geological evidence with long-age interpretations requiring hundreds of millions of years, showing that both interpretations face significant challenges. Understanding that neither side has all the answers to questions about geology, biology, and time should be a refreshing encouragement to those who believe work still remains for Bible-believing scientists. Perhaps even more interesting—and risky because it has not yet weathered the peer-review process—is Brand’s own “holistic geology” model for interpreting Earth history.

Brand’s clear and succinct logic enables easy understanding of both creationist and Darwinian thinking. Readers wishing to understand evolutionary theory and why someone might find Darwinian explanations compelling will find this very useful. But *Beginnings* is not a perfect book for everyone. Those with more training in science may find some ideas inadequately sketched and nuanced. In addition, occasional clarifying sentences included for less-technical readers may irritate more-advanced readers.

Some statements designed to explain points confuse the issue instead. For example, when discussing development and evolution, different animal body plans used to classify organisms into phyla (major groups) are mentioned, but the examples cited to illustrate different phyla are “reptiles, mammals, birds, etc.” (p. 85). These animal examples are poor choices; all have the same tetrapod vertebrate body plan and are classified within a single phylum, Chordata. This is an unusual slip in an otherwise excellent book.

An editor, David Jarnes reworked the text of *Beginnings* to ensure its readability. How successfully this strategy worked in producing a technically accurate but still accessible book may be a source of debate. In my opinion, *Beginnings* is the best attempt so far at making the technical and philosophical issues that Bible-believing scientists wrestle with both clear and enjoyable to non-technical readers. But those wishing to share a book with more scientifically informed readers would be better served to opt for Brand’s earlier book or one of the other excellent technical treatises available.

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What are the challenges of Christian mission in a multicultural world? How does Christian witness face the problem of contextualization? These and other questions vital to Christian worldview and mission were addressed at a recent conference of concerned church leaders and theologians at River Plate Adventist University in Argentina. Nineteen of the best presentations are now available to those interested in the issues of mission and culture, thanks to the excellent editorial skills of Gerald Klingbell.

The volume has five sections. The first one begins with the methodology of contextualization employed by ancient Jewish translators in the Targumim, with the purpose of explaining the message of the Hebrew Scriptures accessible to a people who no longer spoke Hebrew but rather Aramaic. There are clues that apply to the “daunting task of presenting the eternal gospel to all cultures, to all worldviews, to all people, to all classes, to all cities, to all homes and to all families” (p. 21). In his essay, Carlos H. Cerdá underlines...
interpersonal trust and moral consciousness as key factors for the advancement of mission.

The section on historical studies has George Reid reviewing the early development of Christianity up to the time of Constantine and on to the consolidation of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire. The process leaves us with a warning: “a solemn signal to any form of contextualization in mission not firmly grounded in apostolic values” (p. 89). Stefan Höschele focuses on the phenomenal growth experienced by Adventism in Africa amid a wide diversity of cultures and ethnic and religious backgrounds, searching for a paradigm that may help to adequately interpret African Adventism. Martin G. Klingbeil points to the importance of the person of the missionary, and makes an appeal for intercultural missionaries who “are willing to relate … their own spirituality and missionary task through interaction with the Word, world, worship, and witness” (p. 130).

The third section includes exegetical studies. Ekkehardt Müller reviews the different models of contextualization, and the use of contextualization in the New Testament. He agrees that “a point of contact between message and cultures must be found,” yet asserts that “this also means that the culture may be confronted and judged by the gospel,” and concludes that “contextualization must happen, but the biblical message cannot be abandoned or domesticated” (p. 188). Daniel Rode prefers to speak of contextualization in terms of “adaptation,” which he defines as “Christian social behavior” that adapts itself to the peoples of other cultures in order to reach them with the gospel. He draws missiological principles from the experience of the apostles Paul and Peter, and warns against “over-contextualization” due to ethnic pressure. “True adaptation,” he states, “values each human group without falling into ethnocentrism” (p. 209).

The fourth section includes theological studies. Laurentiu Ionescu asks for a reconsideration of the supposed dichotomy between the Ten Commandments and the Law of Moses, arguing that the Law of Moses is but a contextualized reformulation of the core principles involved in the Ten Commandments. Carmelo Martinez calls attention to the dangers that contextualization entails for theology and mission. He reminds us that theology is never done in an ideological or socio-cultural vacuum, and that the risk is ever present of ending with a message deprived of its biblical contents. Esteban Voth approaches the theme of the uniqueness of Jesus as Son of God and sole Redeemer, taking the incarnation of Christ at a particular time in history as the hermeneutical key to understand Jesus. Miguel Ángel Núñez explores the relationship among contextualization, evangelism, and social action, arguing in favor of a balanced approach that integrates the preaching of the gospel with the care for the people’s concrete needs.

The volume closes with a section of applied studies dealing with the changes confronting families that make the transition to cross-cultural ministry (Cheryl Doss); the need to contextualize and update the presentation of the gospel for young people (Miguel Cáceres); the communication of the biblical message in the context of secular academia (Marcelo Falconier); and the meaning and style of worship taking into consideration cultural adaptation and evangelistic purpose (Daniel Plenc).

The volume, thoughtful and well edited, provides provocative and helpful reading for all those concerned with Christian mission. The issues themselves and the way they are approached transcend denominational concerns and have relevance for Christian mission everywhere.

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1844

Continued from page 15

REFERENCES
FIRST PERSON

God’s sunshine on stage
by Sunshine, as told to Kay D. Rizzo

“Who is this 22-year-old opera star looking so self-assured and glamorous?” I gazed at my publicity photograph on the placard outside the Fuchou Theater. Suddenly remembering where I was, I glanced about nervously to be certain no one was close enough to see my prideful moment. In Communist China it would not do for one, star or otherwise, to appear conceited or self-congratulatory.

To remind myself that the government had granted me the privilege of fame, I eyed the hoard of drab little women bustling about the busy street. Dressed in non-descript uniform trousers and tops, they scurried home to their families after a long, boring day working in factory production lines. While the fashions of Paris, London, and New York were but a distant dream for most women of China, I did wear the finest and newest dress styles available. I paused to finger my carefully manicured nails and scolded myself for my prideful thoughts. “That could be me!”

It was a good time to be one of the reigning operatic divas in Southern China. During Madame Mao’s reign of power, Chinese opera had been limited to a handful of restrictive operas that spouted the revolution’s propaganda. With the shift in the government’s political power, audiences were once again, allowed to hear the traditional Chinese operas, which had earlier been considered decadent, dangerous, and bourgeois. Along with singing the arias of ancient fairy tales set to music, I tried not to think about the opening ceremonies that worshipped and honored the ancient gods.

I straddled two very different worlds. Haunting memories flashed through my brain: my peace-loving Grandpa Sui, a Christian pastor, beaten and humiliated by the Red Guard; our home being pillaged until there was little left to take; my gentle physician father betrayed by a colleague and exiled to the mountain region of southern China. Tears welled up in my eyes as I remembered watching my mother take my three older sisters to live with her family in Shaobian while I stayed behind with my father. I recalled chasing rats in the rice paddies; peering through a crack in the wall as my father operated by lantern. The jumble of memories left me exhausted and missing my family.

I’d been alone since my early teens when I went to live in the barracks at the school for performing arts on Fosham. With Papa still in exile, Grandpa Sui gathered us together the day I left to live in the city. He offered a prayer for me: that I would be safe, that I would never forget my family and would always remember my spiritual heritage. Over the years, I’d been kept safe. And whenever allowed, I returned home to visit my family. As for my grandfather’s third request, I’d quickly abandoned my family’s faith and assimilated into my celebrated lifestyle. During my visits home, I regaled my family with stories about the glamorous parties, the famous people I met, and the lavish banquets I attended. I didn’t dwell on the barbequed dog and fricasseed cat I enjoyed or the story content of the operas in which I starred. And while my sisters acted impressed with my success, my grandfather didn’t try to hide his sadness.

“You know how you were raised, my child. You know.”

My mother’s admonitions focused on my love life. “Remember Zhao Yang, the entire Shao family will one day emigrate from China. Please don’t fall in love with a man who will prevent you from going with us.”

There had been boys I’d admired in my teenage years, and once I’d become famous, men who admired me, but always I remembered my mother’s warning. This decision, along with the backstage politics that accompanied the outsized egos of artistic talent, left me no one in whom to confide, no one to trust. On stage I shone; off stage I wilted from loneliness.

On one visit home, I found a Chinese translation of the book, The Desire of Ages, and began reading it. I appreciated the way the author personalized Jesus. At the end of my holiday, my mother insisted I take the book with me, along with a Chinese Bible. “They’re light. They’ll be easy to carry with you.” I had known that the family listened to Christian short wave broadcasts out of Hong Kong. Feeling a mixture of loneliness, adventure, and rebellion, I purchased a combination cassette tape deck—many members of the opera troupe listened to the tapes of more famous operatic stars on casette—and portable radio, and began secretly listening to the broadcasts as well. In my mind, the truths I heard wrestled with my desire to continue my fast and glamorous lifestyle. My three sisters had been baptized, and I knew that nothing would please my family more than for me to give my heart to God as well. Unfortunately, knowing their wishes and fulfilling them were far apart.

One day I was pleased and surprised to receive a letter from one of my grandfather’s friends, Pastor Liang. The letter invited me to be baptized. I ignored it. I wasn’t ready to give the control of my life over to a Being no one in my circle of friends believed existed. Upon returning from our next tour, I found another letter...
from Pastor Liang. He told me of a baptism he was holding on a special day and invited me to join. When I checked my schedule, I was relieved that the troupe would be far away from Guangzhou on the weekend he mentioned.

In the summer of 1983, more to please my parents than myself, I decided to become a Christian and was baptized by Pastor Liang. At home, my family rejoiced. In a letter Mama wrote, “Finally our baby girl was baptized. We are all Christians now. Now we just needed to wait patiently for the day we can move to Hong Kong and all be together again.”

While my baptism pleased my parents, I still had no personal relationship with God. My lifestyle remained the same, and my discontent intensified. Early one morning while in Guangzhou I wandered about the city with nothing to do. I found myself inside the church where I’d been baptized. Quietly I slipped into the back row, buried my face in my arms and wept. “Oh God, if You are truly who my parents say You are, please do something in my life.”

Suddenly a pair of hands cupped my head and a female voice spoke in English. I couldn’t understand her words but I knew she was praying for me. Having grown up in a society where one seldom smiles or talks to strangers, I froze. The Holy Spirit penetrated my defenses, and my heart broke.

“O.K. Lord, take me. I’m Yours.” The heavy burden of guilt and shame slid from my shoulders. I felt free for the first time in my life.

At home my mother faithfully worked the political system until she got visas for each of our family members to immigrate to Hong Kong, except mine. At first my troupe leader refused to allow me to leave. Mama persisted. When it happened, it happened fast. One night I was singing on stage and the next I was on my way to a strange new life. I hadn’t been in Hong Kong long before I realized I needed to learn English. So I enrolled in evening classes, and during the day searched for employment. My older sister Li Xin found work at Uncle Tang’s school while I landed a job selling books at the Adventist Book Center. This allowed our family to move from our relatives’ small apartment into a nearby apartment.

But I missed my music. I would ride one of the double-decker buses past the neon-lit nightclubs and hear women singing to the patrons. Singing in a bar or nightclub would be a cushy job and I could make lots of money—fast, I reasoned. When I broached the subject with my parents they didn’t mince words. Stirrings of rebellion rumbled in my heart. I was an adult! I’d been on my own since I was barely fourteen-years old. I prayed God would change their minds. But God didn’t change their minds; He changed mine.

A few days later I was invited to work with the Seventh-day Adventist radio broadcasting team. I would have my own program, Melody in My Heart. I jumped at the chance. This was when I acquired my Anglicized nickname Sunshine, and where I would meet the person who forever changed my life.

Following the student protest at Tiananmen Square, the U.S. consulate extracted all American citizens from Mainland China, including a young American teacher named Roger Stahl. Soon after we met he volunteered to tutor me in English. A romance blossomed, and in time we chose to marry and move to the United States where his parents lived.

From a performing artist behind the Bamboo Curtain to a Christian wife and the mother of a darling daughter, I am still singing for my Lord. It’s been a miraculous journey. At each turn in the road, I could hear my grandfather’s voice quoting the Bible. “In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.” And now, while Roger teaches English in a university in Mainland China, God uses my voice and my story to praise His name in many countries of the world.
Where is hell?

A Christian friend has been discussing with me the concept of hell. She is convinced of its existence and very fearful of an eternally burning punishment for her sins. What does the Bible teach on this subject?

Over the centuries, Christians have preached about an ever-burning hell, and some have used their vivid imagination to portray horrible descriptions of persons suffering tremendous pain without being granted the mercy of being able to die. The result was that some people were terrified and followed God out of fear, while others completely turned away from God. What does the Bible really teach about hell?

First, Scripture does speak about hell. But when we interpret the Bible, we should not read back into it our own ideas or our cultural bias. We have to listen to Scripture on its own terms. When Jesus spoke about hell, He was positioning it as punishment for unrepentant sinners, a punishment that will end in eternal fire and destruction (John 3:16; Matthew 7:13, 14; 25:31, 32, 41). Destruction/eternal fire is a future event connected to Christ’s second coming. Therefore, “hell” still lies in the future.

Second, some Bible translators have rendered various words as hell that in reality have other meanings. The Hebrew sheol and the related Greek term hades are the realm of the dead who are in the grave. Jacob expected to go down to sheol/the grave, to his son Joseph (Genesis 37:35). He did not expect his godly son to be in hell and go there himself. God brings down to sheol/the grave and raises up (1 Samuel 2:6). This does not fit the common Christian understanding of hell. In sheol/the grave there is no activity, no planning, and no knowledge (Ecclesiastes 9:10). There is no fire, neither is there torment. The righteous and the unrighteous are found there. In hades there is decay. Jesus was the exception (Acts 2:27, 31). Sheol and hades are the place of the dead, but not hell.

“To cast in tartaros” occurs in 2 Peter 2:4 only and is the abode of the fallen angels. It is not used to describe the place of the dead or a hell in which people are cast after their death.

Gehenna is the hell about which Jesus spoke. It is the future place of punishment of the unrighteous. It is associated with fire (Mark 9:43). This fire comes at the end of time as a judgment of God against sinners, and Satan (Matthew 25:41). Until then, people “sleep” in their graves. Revelation 20:9, 10, and 15 talks about the lake of fire in which the unrighteous are burned up. Since gehenna is associated with fire and is a future event, associated with judgment, it is best to understand hell in the context of Revelation 20. This is the hell Jesus warned us about.

Third, does the future hell last “for ever and ever” (Revelation 20:10, NIV)? The term forever/eternal/everlasting as used in Scripture is broader than the English word. It may describe (a) something or someone existing without beginning and without end (in connection with God); (b) something or someone with beginning but without end (the eternal life of the redeemed, see John 5:24; Revelation 21:3, 4); and (c) something or someone with beginning and with end in the sense of “for some time” (Exodus 21:5, 6; Jonah 1:17; 2:6). In connection with hell, forever must be understood in the third way. Why? Although the unrighteous suffer “hell” for a limited time only, the results are eternal. Fire devours them (Revelation 20:9). This is the second death (Revelation 20:14, 15). The unquenchable fire of Matthew 3:12 cannot be extinguished until its work is done and everything is burned up (Matthew 13:40-42; Jeremiah 17:27).

Finally, eternal life is available only for those who belong to Jesus. It is not granted to those who have made a decision against Jesus and God. Furthermore, Satan also will be destroyed and eliminated completely in the fires of hell (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

So, Scripture speaks about hell, but hell is still future and is limited in time. God is not immoral. On the contrary, He is a God of love and justice and in His kingdom there will be no more sorrow, pain, tears, or death (Revelation 21:3, 4).

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Men and women of the university, I see that in every way you are very religious. As I walked around the university, I observed carefully your objects of worship. I saw your altar called the stadium where many of you worship the sports deity. I saw the science building where many place their faith for the salvation of mankind. I found your altar to the fine arts where artistic expression and performance seem to reign supreme without subservience to any greater power. I walked through your residence halls and observed your sex goddess posters and beer can pyramids. Yet as I walked with some of you and saw the emptiness in your eyes and sensed the aching in your hearts, I perceived that in your heart is yet another altar, an altar to the unknown God who you suspect may be there. You have a sense that there is something more than these humanistic and self-indulgent gods. What you long for as something unknown, I want to declare to you now.

This God I am speaking of is your personal creator. He is not a fabrication or invention of mankind. He is not a part of creation; he stands above it. He is greater and more powerful than you have ever dreamed. This God has given you your life, and has set the boundaries of your life. The longing for eternity in your heart was placed there by him. You may try to grope for him, but he is already intimately involved in the creation. It is his creative work in you, his image, that makes it possible for you to engage in athletic activities, scientific endeavor, artistic expression, and even playfulness and sexual pleasure.

But this God is calling you to repent. You have worshiped your own creativity instead of acknowledging him as your creator. You have forgotten the giver of the gifts. You have rebelled against your creator and gone your own way of self-indulgence and self-worship. As a result you have perverted the gifts of life and creativity. You have abused your sexuality through careless indulgence. You have chosen the way of futility and death. God calls you to turn from serving these false gods and to bring glory to the living and true God, your creator.

God has sent his son, Jesus Christ, into the world to save and judge the world. The man Jesus has come to set things right, to bring justice, to call us back as a warning before judgment. By his death he offers a way back to God, to save us from self-destruction. By his resurrection he has shown that he has come with power to save and judge the world. As a result, this Jesus has become the pivotal point in history, the central issue for us today, either the stepping stone or the stumbling block. He offers reconciliation with the creator and he alone can give it.

This paraphrase of Acts 17:22-31 was written by Daniel Denk and is printed here with his permission.
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