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**The ecological cost
of what we eat**

**To church
or not to church?**

**The Christian
and politics:
Peril or opportunity?**



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EDITORIAL

I found Faith in Singapore

Who would ever have thought that a volcano on the remote coast of an isolated island might impact people around the whole world? When Eyjafjallajökull volcano in Iceland began ejecting its particle plume 30,000 feet high, it was blasting right into the path of the jet stream that then dispersed ash and silica across the upper atmosphere. Air travel to and from Europe was abruptly shut down, causing the greatest interruption of air-traffic since World War II. The “lockdown” of air-space grounded thousands of flights and millions of people as far away as Australia. Stranded groups of students returning from Easter break, tourists who had by then run out of money, retirees with health problems, ordinary people who needed to be at work, and high-paid business consultants were all trapped in limbo together as airports turned into campgrounds. Some slowly made their way home by car, train, or boat. British comedian John Cleese paid £3,300 pounds (nearly U.S. \$5,000) for a cab ride from Oslo to Brussels, while pinstriped chaps in Dunkirk, France, bought “pink kiddie bicycles in order to claim ferry spaces designated for cyclists only.”



Businesses lost more than a billion dollars. But kindness and new connections also emerged from the chaos. Caring Kiwis opened their homes and hearts on a Facebook page called “Stranded in New Zealand” through hundreds of postings such as: “Anyone stranded in Christchurch is more than welcome to bunk down out of the cold with us. Big warm house so plenty of room.”

As the volcano was just beginning its worrisome cough, I got stuck in Mumbai airport in a lockdown of my own and had to wait 25 hours before I could take the first available flight to Singapore, where I hoped to rebook the rest of my itinerary. That meant it would be four nights straight since I last slept in a bed. I had no option but to wait it out in the Mumbai airport transit area. I had my toothbrush but none of my luggage, and I knew no one in Singapore. I tried to book a hotel in Singapore using my cell phone, but failed. Then my colleague Falvo Fowler e-mailed me a contact in Singapore who, he said, had her iPhone “surgically implanted” and would be sure to respond. On the tarmac, before the plane took off from Mumbai, I got an e-mail with red text saying, “I will be at the airport waiting for you.” I quickly e-mailed back my photo and a big thanks.

What a welcome sight it was for me to see someone outside baggage claim, waving a sheet of paper with my name. And that’s how I found Faith in Singapore. Faith Toh took me to church that Sabbath morning, and then to where she’d booked me a room. We had several meals together, and I learned more about the podcast for the Daily CQ (Collegiate Quarterly) and other programs by Studio Elpizo where she is a radio announcer and producer. I confided over lunch that I love to shop for shoes, and she revealed that her weakness was technology gadgets. She taught me about Twitter and growing crops in a co-op farm with your friends—on a virtual farm

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Editorial

Continued from page 3

that is, on the iPhone. In the midst of a week-long ordeal of botched travel, in a strange city halfway round the world from home, my faith in God was strengthened, and I thanked God for Faith—this techno-savvy professional, as endearing to me as a younger sister in her enthusiasm and warmth.

We are all interconnected, irrespective of race, language, religion, or national origin. The volcano, and those many times and events where everything goes wrong in life, is when we become aware of our connections, and the possibilities for new relationships. Martin Buber, in *Ich and Du* (I and Thou), wrote that human life finds its meaning in relationships, and that all such relationships ultimately bring us into a relationship with God. The main obstacle to experiencing a meaningful life and existence is that too many of our relationships are one-sided monologues of what Buber characterized as I-It (Ich-Es), where the other person is depersonalized into a thing—an It. We yell at each other, rather than really see the other person or recognize our shared humanity. What I think or what I want matters, and nothing else. The other person is an object for me to exploit: a thing, an It. The problem is, an I-It relationship devalues me as much as it degrades the other.

Meaning and happiness can be experienced only in relationships where both individuals matter as human beings. It is in these I-Thou relationships that authentic dialogue can blossom. One cannot have a genuine relationship with God short of having an I-Thou relationship with Him, or others. They are related. When I found Faith in Singapore, meeting her strengthened my faith and connection to God as well. I experienced God's care and closeness to me in my time of need as well as in her solicitude.

That's the point. Relationship is at the core of Christian faith. Because God is relational, He stretched from heaven to earth and reached across the alienation of time and place and even death to lovingly bond a connection to us forever through Christ. Whether you are in need or fullness today, God is there, open to connect in fellowship.



Faith with her “surgically-implanted” iPhone, in Studio Elpizo.

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Lisa M. Beardsley

— Lisa M. Beardsley, Editor-in-Chief

The ecological cost of what we eat

by Raymond Romand

A case for wise choices that would help the climate as well as your waistline.

Is there a link between our eating habits and the ecological future of our planet – and if so, what is our responsibility? The question may seem academic and somewhat irrelevant, but in the face of today's pressing needs, it is not. Wherever you may live, look around, and the issue becomes clear. In some parts of the world, people live as though the resources to satisfy their needs are limitless and they have a right to meet those needs, while in other parts of the world, people struggle to meet the real needs of basic survival. The first case involves an excess and so produces waste; in the second, there is simply not enough. Jeffrey Sachs, professor of health policy and management, Columbia University, and special counselor to Ban Ki-Moon, the U.N. Secretary General, argues that if no changes are made to how we manage the planet, "the world is likely to experience growing conflict between the haves and the have-nots, intensifying environmental catastrophes and downturns in living standards caused by interlocking crises of energy, water, food and conflict."¹

Today's world is a highly interconnected network driven by the exchange of ideas, information, and people. No one can be ignorant or should be indifferent to events occurring around the world; for better or worse, we are increasingly inter-dependent.² This article deals with only one aspect of that inter-dependency: food. We shall look at modifications to diet during the past 50 years and their impact upon human life, both as short-term consequences and as longer, more profound effects upon nature and people. We will turn our

study mostly on the cost of an animal protein-based diet, which can be measured by its impact on agriculture, ecology, water consumption, and health.

The agricultural cost

Consider products of animal origin, particularly from intensively reared cattle, fed in part on food made from soya. On average, each European consumes 87 kg of meat (124 kg in the U.S.A.), and 250 eggs per year. To produce this food requires the equivalent of 400 m² of soya cultivation. The land required for this for each European consumer corresponds to a surface the size of a basketball court! Countries such as China and the U.S.A., having limited areas of cultivation, target their expansion in South American countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, and Paraguay. In Europe, the majority of the soya used comes from the U.S.A. or Brazil. In 2005, Brazil exported 49 percent of its soya production to the European Union.³ The Brazilian government allowed the appropriation of necessary land, while international creditors guaranteed the lowest possible costs to the producers of soya. This, of course, was good news for the Brazilians involved in agricultural production.

But the enormous production of soya to support the meat demands of the Western world has its effect upon ecology and the environment. Nature has its own laws, often cyclic, and cannot escape limitless and constant exploitation. In order to maintain a maximum of soy production, techniques must be introduced that in the short term overcome seasonal

constraints, but at the cost of the consumption of energy, water, space, and other valuable natural resources. A continued high rate of use of these commodities could cause unpredictable consequences for the future.

In 2005, Brazil exported 34 percent of its beef production to Europe. The cattle were doubtless fed in part on soya, and the supply of soya was ensured by utilizing a part of the Amazon rainforest for soya cultivation. The effect on the forests was observed by satellite observations.⁴ Even the meat that is proudly declared in French supermarkets as being "Of French Origin" is likely from cattle fed partly on soya cultivated in other countries.

Such meat production goes on utilizing a vast amount of soya, while in many parts of the world, people are suffering famine and hardship. Meanwhile, an irreplaceable ecosystem such as the primary rainforest of the Amazon Basin is being destroyed. Equally affected is the Amazon Basin that produces the majority of its own rainwater through a complex cycle exclusive to the regions of tropical forests.

Many financial interests are driving the daily reduction in the surface area of the rainforest, such as the increase in industrial culture, the extension of ranches, and the increase in forestry activities. Recently, a climate, energy and environment specialist remarked, "For the world's markets, the forests are of more value dead than alive."⁵ During the past 40 years, close to 20 percent of the Amazonian rainforest has disappeared. This is more than was destroyed since the arrival of the

first Europeans 450 years ago. Half of this wood is destined principally for export to the U.S.A. and 28 percent goes to Europe.⁶

The long-term ecological cost

Amazonian rainforest destruction may seem to be “an affair for the ecologists,” but it should deeply concern us all. This ecosystem, like others, renders service to all of humankind by furnishing products like medicinal plants and wood for local home construction. The ecosystem also supports other economic mechanisms that are often underestimated: the filtration of water, climatic regulation, the control of flooding, the creation of soils, and the well-being of local populations.⁷ The destruction of the rainforests is undertaken irresponsibly for the planting of large surfaces of soya monoculture in Brazil or palm trees in Malaysia and Indonesia.⁸ After cultivating a plot of land for several years, cultivation moves to a new area

in search of fertile fields. Once the forest has been cut down and burned, the impoverished soil is completely exhausted in as little as two or three years. Then it is oxidized by the sun and its remaining nutrients are washed out by the tropical rainfall. The result is rapid erosion of the soil, sediment deposits in both the rivers and zones normally flooded by the rains, and pollution of the land surface by pesticides and fertilizers with disastrous consequences for the biosphere, flora, and fauna.⁹

In 1970, hundreds of thousands of people were moved from the states of Parana and Rio Grande do Sul because of soya production. A large proportion of these populations relocated to the Amazon basin, where they were encouraged to cultivate land reclaimed from the forest and subsequently burned. This activity strongly accelerated the degradation of the primary forest, with the long-term consequences for the entire planet that

for the present can only be described and not accurately measured. The same problem is also noticed in tropical Africa and in Southeast Asia.¹⁰

The energy cost

An animal-based diet also makes its demand to grow agricultural products outside of the natural cycle. Such a demand has created its own energy cost—a huge problem for world agriculture.¹¹ The Western diet, with its high protein content (meats, milk products, etc.) is energy expensive.¹² For example, 13 kg of cereals (or 30 kg of forage) are required to obtain one kg of beef. Clearly, a high-protein diet is not profitable from an economic point of view. From an energy point of view, a high-protein diet requires a land surface greater than that for a lacto-vegetarian diet and much more energy.¹³ The cultivation of most green products, such as grains, fruits or vegetables, requires two calories of fossil-fuel energy per one calorie of food energy, while the ratio for beef can be as high as 80 to 1.¹⁴ Knowing that the world’s population will grow beyond nine billion by 2075¹⁵ and that the land available for agriculture is limited, this poses a grave problem.

What is the answer? Some would recommend,¹⁶ particularly in countries with dense populations, an increase in the agricultural output by using chemical fertilizers. Unfortunately, rising oil prices have had a strong effect upon the cost of fertilizers, effectively minimizing their use.¹⁷ Moreover, oil reserves are not inexhaustible.¹⁸

The water cost

Animal protein has its cost in terms of water use as well. Consider the case of a hamburger versus an apple. The average hamburger has an energy value of 245 kcal, while that of an apple may be 50 kcal. A hamburger meal consists of a bun, some salad, and meat. The production of these elements will require an investment of 2,400 liters of water, whereas

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one apple requires only 70 liters! Furthermore, the volume of water needed for products in the hamburger sequence has grown by six times since 1990 because of the increased demand for these products in that time period.¹⁹ One kg of animal protein requires 100 times the amount of water used in the production of 1 kg of vegetable equivalent.²⁰ This has created a keen competition for access to water between different users: agriculture, energy, industry, and domestic.²¹

The health cost

The health cost of consuming meat and saturated fat food is well noted in the increase in illnesses such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes mellitus, obesity, and some cancers.²² According to the World Health Organization, 1.6 billion adults worldwide are either overweight or obese. The problem is not limited to the West alone. It is also on the increase in developing countries where an increase in animal-based protein diet is observed. Alternately, it has been shown that in many Mediterranean countries, a diet containing a relatively high proportion of cereals, vegetables, and fruits and a meat consumption far lower than in northern Europe, is associated with markedly lower rates of chronic diseases.²³ Moreover, practices aimed at more-intensive production of any kind of meat can incur a cost in public health through use of food-borne illness, irradiation, the use of antibiotics and growth hormones, lending a greater and more sinister credibility to “we are what we eat.”

Does a vegetarian diet require energy?

Although the cost of producing green products is much lower than that of producing meat, the cost in energy for the production of fruit and vegetables is surprising. The principal costs include fertilizers, phytosanitary treatments to prevent the spread of plant diseases and pests, irrigation,

energy used by agricultural machinery, stocking, packaging, manpower, and the cost of transportation. The book *Eating Oil*²⁴ shows the relation between various diets and the consumption of fossil fuels.²⁵ We have heard of the “green revolution” which, since the 1950s, has promoted a large increase in agricultural production.²⁶ Yet this prodigious progression has come at a price that only now we are beginning to truly appreciate. Prior to the green revolution, most of our food, whether vegetable products or those of animal origin, with cattle essentially grazing on natural vegetation, resulted from the natural photosynthetic process of capturing solar energy. However, with the advent of the green revolution, everything changed, particularly with respect to energy. Now the food found in supermarkets and its price are decided less by the sun than by petrol.²⁷

In the United States, statistics for 1994 indicate that annual food production and distribution for an individual required 1,500 liters of petrol. The figures are comparable for Europe today. This energy can be viewed as follows: 31 percent for the manufacture of non-organic fertilizers necessary for intensive cultivation, 19 percent for agricultural machinery, 16 percent for transport, 13 percent for irrigation, with the remainder being divided between the production costs for pesticides and the storage of harvest. This cost in energy does not include that of packaging, rapid transport to the distributors, the cooling systems involved, transformation of primary foodstuffs, or additives to the cooking. Supermarkets seem so natural, and yet what an accumulated energy they require!

If fossil fuels were inexhaustible, we could continue consuming them as we are. Unfortunately, fuels do have limitations. According to reputable predictions, the known fossil reserves will be depleted in 40 to 70 years.²⁸

Conclusion: What should we do?

The discussion thus far emphasizes the complex interrelations between many macroeconomic factors in the feeding of populations, while explaining the interdependence found at energy and ecology levels. The manner by which we feed ourselves has consequences, whether ecological or energetic, for the entire planet. As Christians and citizens, we should be concerned and ask ourselves the question: How should we react? Action can be undertaken on two fronts, individual and collective. As individuals, we can take simple measures of personal discipline: Why not leave the car in the garage and walk, or cycle those few kilometers to work, to the shop, school, or elsewhere? Why not replace the consumption of animal products with foods having a smaller carbon footprint, which is not only healthier in serving the waistline but also serving the climate.²⁹

These two simple suggestions present several interesting ideas from an economic and energy resources point of view, including the preservation of natural landscapes and the slowing of

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global warming. They also propose a way to improve personal well-being and cardiovascular health at a low cost. One could go a little further by trying to consume only those products that are available in season, thus avoiding energy wastage by not buying products from other continents and supporting organic agriculture and that of small, local producers. Even if their products are not perfect, they consume less energy than those produced far away.

Sooner or later, this kind of engagement will have its effect on ecology. We can have a positive influence on our environment and the health of the planet.

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Pontius' Puddle



To church or not to church?

by Chantal J. Klingbeil and
Gerald A. Klingbeil

Church is about our need to stick together, to learn to get along while still here on earth, and it is about service to the world around us.

Why church is still God's ideal for the 21st century

Who needs a local church—in an age of virtual communities, tweeting, or social networks, where the best of Adventist (or other) preaching is just a click away? What is church, anyway—just a building, often dated, with pews, high ceilings, and stained glass windows—or is there something more to church that goes beyond walls, organizational diagrams, and creeds? And beyond all these profound questions, on a more personal level, why should I have to join or commit to a church—would my personal relationship with Jesus not suffice?

We would like to answer these questions biblically and theologically. Let's begin by quickly tracing the origins of the whole church concept.

What is church?

We normally associate the term *church* with Jesus and early Christianity. It is true that an obvious change occurred in the definition of the people of God from a principally ethnic angle toward a more inclusive perspective crossing ethnic boundaries in New Testament times. However, the concept of church is not a New Testament invention. Let's work our way backward from the New Testament to the Old Testament concept of church.¹

The standard lexica provide a good summary of the usage of the Greek

terms *ekklesia* (“church”) and *synagoge* (“synagogue”) in the context of the New Testament. The word *ekklesia* is derived from the combination of the preposition *ek* and the verb *kaleo* “to call out,” was mostly connected to official summons in classical Greek, and appeared generally in political or highly structured contexts. On the other hand, *synagoge* had a much broader sense and referred to the collecting or bringing together of things and people.

The idea of collecting or calling out goes back to Old Testament times, where we can trace our spiritual roots back to an old man who was called out of the land of Ur and directed to a new land (Genesis 12:1-3). Notice that the first “church” is not a manmade structure or invention. God calls a man and promises to make him a family. This family in turn was to become a blessing to the entire world. God made the impossible possible and gave the old man Abraham many descendents. Years later He called them again—this time out of Egypt, where they had been slaves. A new creation takes place, forming, for the first time, a people.² The New Testament calls the Israelites the “church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38, KJV). We know that this church was far from perfect, with moaners, idolaters, thieves, gluttons, and leader-bashers among them. But God quietly set about purifying and cleansing—individually and col-

lectively. God's phenomenal patience stretched on through the major and minor prophets. God was calling His Old Testament church to experience His salvation personally and extend the invitation (Isa. 56:7). Finally God called His church again. This time God's Word was Jesus (John 1:1-3).

In Jesus, God again called people. Taking up where the Israel church had left off, Jesus began training 12 disciples. These men turned the then known world upside down for Christ. Satan tried to stamp out the fledgling church with persecution. But instead of this destroying the church, *the church* went global. Next, Satan tried smothering Christ's vital life-blood within the church through manmade teachings during the Dark Ages. God kept the embers glowing in Waldensian mountain hideouts for long years, gently fanning the truth embers into the wildfire of the Reformation.

But then, gradually, the church again forgot its divine calling and settled back into complacency. And once again in the 1800s, God called a small group of young people (practically all under the age of 30) and helped them to rediscover special truths. God gave this small group gifts and the great job of telling the world of Jesus' soon return. And this is where we meet history, because right from its beginnings, the church has never been about structures, buildings, and pews.

The church has always been about people. *We are the church*. The church is the community of believers who have heard the call of Jesus.

Images of Church

So what makes church, and particularly the Seventh-day Adventist Church, different from any other club or online community? As understood by the New Testament authors, the church is made up of people who interact with one another and together form something new that goes beyond the sum of the individual members. In order to help us see the big picture, God has painted His blueprints for His church in metaphoric language. Metaphors are not mathematical formulas but living, conceptual entities (which in the case of Scripture are also literary). They are often characterized by a multiplicity of meanings and require an existential and experimental response, particularly within the context of faith and Scripture. They help us, the readers or listeners, to grasp a particular concept that is often highly abstract or may be entirely new.

The Epistle to the Ephesians contains a number of metaphors that are relevant for us. *Family* (1:5, 11, 17, 18b; 2:18, 19; 3:14; 4:6, 14; 5:1, 23, 24, 25; 6:6, 9), *buildings* (2:20, 21, 22; 3:17; 4:12) and *body* (1:10, 23; 2:1, 5, 6, 10, 11, 15, 16; 3:6, 10; 4:3, 4, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 22, 24; 5:8, 23, 27, 29, 32; 6:13, 14, 15, 16, 17) are clearly the most important and appear also elsewhere in the New Testament in contexts that are important for our study of the church.³ All of these metaphors go back to the Old Testament.

Family

Adam is called “Adam, (son) of God” in Luke’s genealogy of Jesus (Luke 3:38). Jesus is not only a descendent of David, the true Messiah for the Jewish nation, but He is, through His incarnation, part and parcel of universal humanity that is related by creation sonship to the creator. The sonship of

Israel is also referred to in other contexts, for instance Deuteronomy 14:1; 32:5, 19; Isaiah 1:2; 43:6; 45:11; 63:8; Jeremiah 3:14, 19, 22; and Hosea 2:1 and 11:1.⁴ Other references underline the parental character of God, a crucial element of the family metaphor, involving both fatherly⁵ and motherly characteristics.⁶ God’s motherly characteristics involve birthing experiences (e.g., Isaiah 1:2; 42:14; 46:3) and the compassion so typical of a mother (Isaiah 49:15).

Connected to the family metaphor, we can also look at the larger socio-economic context of ancient Israelite society. The Hebrew “people” must not be confused with the modern concept of “nation” that has characterized the past 150 years of Western culture. The clan and the tribe, based upon the extended family, played a vital role in ancient Mediterranean societies, including Israel.⁷ Interestingly, up to this day, clan and tribal loyalties are far more important than national interests. While there may be an ethnic component to the concept of tribe, recent anthropological research has shown that clans and tribes in the ancient world were not exclusively based on ethnic considerations, but often focused on common worldviews or ideological premises.⁸

The church in the New Testament picks up where the family, clan, and tribe of the Old Testament left off: a group, not based upon ethnicity, but sharing similar values and worldviews. One should also not forget that in the Old Testament people who did not belong to a particular group based on their ethnic background could become members of that group. Rahab is incorporated into Israel’s tribal system (Joshua 2; 6:17-25) as is Ruth (Ruth 1:16-22). The social institution of the “newcomer, sojourner” is known widely in the Old Testament. The Mosaic law concerning the stranger is very proactive and requires special protection and care. The reasoning in Leviticus 19:34 is very clear: “The stranger who dwells

among you shall be to you as one born among you, and *you shall love him as yourself*; for *you were strangers* in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God” (NKJV). Respect, tolerance and an inclusive future are part of the metaphoric blueprint for God’s church.

Buildings

There is another metaphor used for church that we often confuse with the real thing. Paul refers to the church as a building. The Epistle to the Ephesians contains a number of these references, but notice the nuances: We (i.e., the church) are *God’s house* (2:20, 22), built upon the *foundation* of the apostles and prophets (2:20). Jesus Christ is the living *door* (or gate, John 10:9), the *cornerstone* of this living building (Ephesians 2:20) that is God’s *holy temple* (2:21). This is really mind-boggling: the metaphor transcends actual buildings and reminds us that church involves us individually. God wants to use you and me to build up the church as a living temple, a place of refuge, a living organism that, yes, meets in buildings, but goes beyond a place of worship. Can you imagine what kind of building God could have built with perfect building blocks? But he chose not to. He chose you and me, imperfect to the core, but willing to be molded to become part of “God’s house.”

Body

Another important church metaphor involves the body (1 Corinthians 12:12-23) and emphasizes the interconnectedness of its members and their different functions. With Christ as its head (Ephesians 1:10; 4:15; 5:23), this metaphor constitutes one of the major metaphors for the church.

Being part of a body is so much more than checking in on Facebook when I feel like it. In a culture of absolute individualism, this idea of church may be the most difficult for us to understand—and accept.⁹ The story of Achan (Joshua 7:1-5) and the result

of his actions clearly reflect the body imagery where the well-being (or lack thereof) of one member affects the entire body.

On the other hand, the faithfulness of one member of the body results in multiple blessings for the rest of the group, as can be seen in the ministry of the judges or the summary statement of some of the kings of Judah who, due to their actions, caused God to bless His people.¹⁰ In our world, full of dysfunctional relationships, church is the place where we belong unconditionally and where we learn how to give, take, and live with people we may not choose to hang out with. As part of the body of Christ, we are intricately connected to one another. Your pain and loss is directly or indirectly my pain and loss. I need to be more sensitive toward you. God's idea of church is not all about me trying to find my unique way to heaven. Church is about our need to stick together, to learn to get along while still here on earth—and it is about service to the world around us.

Why do I need church?

Church refines us: In a world where everything is meant to be instant, and perseverance and endurance seem very old-fashioned outside of the world of sports, church is the place where God can refine us. The word *remnant* means “that which remains.” Gold is all that is left of the large quantities of ore fed into the smelting ovens. All impurities have been burned away—only pure gold remains.

God has a special job for the end-time church: God has always had a remnant throughout history. During times of apostasy in Israel, there was always a remnant. Later, the Protestant Reformation called a remnant out of the old decayed church system. We often refer to the Seventh-day Adventist Church as the remnant church. Biblically speaking, that is what we are (Revelation 12:17). But hiding behind a name does not make us a remnant. God's purifying system quietly and

individually continues in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. God is still sorting the gold from the dross. God has promised to take the church through the purifying process with or without us. By being part of the church, I invite God to refine me so that I become part of the remnant.

Church makes you a part of something big: It is so much bigger than the w(orld)w(ide)w(eb). The idea of church reaches back to the creation story and forward into eternity. It helps us to overcome the increasing perception of isolation that eats up entire communities in the Western world. We are not alone, but are part of something bigger. This is a key concept that needs to be emphasized. Community is not an option, but a *must* in order to survive the crisis lying before us. In this context, it is important to note that the last book of the Bible, describing scenes both on earth and in heaven, mostly utilizes group imagery, emphasizing the concept of community¹¹ rather than rugged individualism.

Church, like salvation, is not a man-made idea, but it is God's idea. Through both the Old and New Testament, as well as in church history, God has been calling individuals to come and be part of a community that He is refining. This community — His church — has been called into existence to extend the invitation to follow the Lamb to people of “every nation, tribe, language, and people” (Revelation 14:6, NIV). It reminds us that together we can prepare to be a part of the heavenly community. Church is definitely the place to be!

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The Christian and politics: Peril or opportunity?

by John Wesley Taylor V

A case for living a life like Christ,
of Christ, and for Christ in every way.

How should a Christian relate to politics? Should the believer, for example, become involved in social causes, engage in political activism, or practice civil disobedience? Should a Christian vote, join a political party, or campaign for a person or party? Should he or she become an elected or appointed government official or seek to legislate morality?

In this article, we will first seek to identify a framework for the Christian's stance on politics. Then we will consider how the biblical perspective might relate to a number of sociopolitical issues.

A biblical framework

We begin with perhaps the most fundamental question: How should a Christian relate to politics? A number of perspectives have been offered regarding this relationship. These might be defined as (1) rejection, (2) paradox, (3) critical collaboration, (4) synthesis, and (5) imposition.¹ While each of these positions (summarized in Figure 1) may be an appropriate response in a specific circumstance, it would seem helpful to identify a unifying framework for the Christian position.

Such an overarching response might be described as the position of *Lordship*—the recognition that Jesus Christ is Lord of all (see Acts 10:36; 1 Corinthians 1:2), and that human society in each of its dimensions must be cognizant of His sovereignty (see Figure 3). This acknowledgement of the Lordship of Christ extends to the political arena (see Colossians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 10:31). Consequently,

the believer does not possess dual citizenship, but rather is a citizen of the *encompassing kingdom* of God (see Psalm 47:8).

At the same time, the Christian recognizes that humanity is embroiled in the cosmic conflict between good and evil, between Christ and Satan (see Genesis 3; Revelation 12:17). This great controversy perspective acknowledges manifestations of both good and evil in each aspect of society, including politics. Consequently, in the Christian worldview, evil is opposed, yet human culture is affirmed and elevated, by the grace of God.

In any aspect of life, it is vital to consider biblical principles when formulating a Christian position. Throughout Scripture, various passages present guiding principles regarding the relationship of the Christian and politics (see Figure 3). We also find the case of individuals—such as Joseph, Moses, Deborah, David, Elisha, Daniel, Nehemiah, Mordecai, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, and Jesus Christ, who exemplified these principles in action. We will build on these principles and cases as we now turn to specific sociopolitical issues.

Involvement in social causes

As Christians, we cannot ignore pressing social needs. Following in the footsteps of Jesus, we must provide assistance to the economically deprived, bring freedom to the oppressed, protect the vulnerable and powerless, and provide a voice for the marginalized and neglected (see Matthew 25:36; Luke 4:18). As stewards of the earth (Genesis 2:15;

Revelation 11:18), we must work to protect God's creation and improve the lives of others. In essence, we must love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:39).

This involvement, however, is not limited to feeding the hungry and meeting the needs of the sick, as important as that is. As Adventists, we must also use our influence to raise the sensitivity of society and become a catalyst for action. We must seek to redress wrongs so that the disadvantaged members of our communities may have an opportunity to regain their self-sufficiency and self-worth.²

Furthermore, as Adventists, we must focus attention not only on individuals, but on the larger society. We must not simply “operate ‘ambulances’ to pick up the bloody victims of destructive social structures,”³ but rather, endeavor to change the structures themselves, building positive alternatives to existing evil. It is through this engagement with a hurting world that we catapult the message of Christ into mainstream culture.

Engagement in political activism

As Adventists, we must beware of passivity. We have been called to make a difference (see Matthew 5:13-15). Furthermore, a believer who does not speak out against wrong shares to a certain extent the guilt of those who commit the wrong (see Ezekiel 3:17-19). God does not expect believers to withdraw from society and leave sociopolitical control in the hands of the ungodly (see Proverbs 29:2). Ironically, “doing nothing” is in itself a political action, an abdication which

opens the way for political control by those who do not espouse Christian values.

It seems clear that the Christian has a responsibility where moral issues are involved—such as the legalizing of same-sex marriages, smoking in public places, and various forms of gambling. In other areas, the believer must decide, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, whether a particular form of activism constitutes acceptable Christian service or lies outside the gospel mandate.

Regardless of the particular issue, we also need to examine the form of activism. While Christians should avoid unethical or violent forms of political activism, there may be modes of activism that harmonize with Christian values and beliefs, and provide an avenue to “do justly, to love mercy” (Matthew 26:52; Micah 6:8, KJV). This may involve holding civil leaders accountable to the promises they have made and to their God-given role of establishing justice and maintaining civil order (see Romans 13). It may include the critique of government, as well as proposing strategies to enhance the well-being of society (see Genesis 41; 2 Samuel 12:1-15; 1 Kings 13:1-9; Matthew 14:1-4; Acts 24:25). It may call for speaking out against government policies that promote domination, oppression, or enslavement. It may require a stand against militant nationalism that ignores the brotherhood of all mankind (see Acts 17:26). Perhaps, most significantly, it may entail advocacy, mediation, and conciliation.⁴

Civil disobedience

Given the directive to submit to government, as well as the believer's supreme commitment to God (see Acts 4:19; 5:29; 1 Peter 2:13-15; Romans 13:1-7), what is the Christian to do when the state requires that which is contrary to God's will? This tension finds expression in Christian civil disobedience—conscientious,

nonviolent action or refusal to act, which will be treated by governing authorities as a violation of law.

There is ample precedent for religious civil disobedience. Josephus⁵ narrates the story of Jewish resistance to Pilate's introduction of images of the emperor into Jerusalem, in which many Jews lay in the courtyard for five days in protest. When Pilate ordered his soldiers to surround them and threaten their slaughter if they did not submit, the Jews bared their necks and said slaughter was preferable to desecration. Pilate relented, and the emperor's images were removed.

Marcellus, a Roman centurion martyred in A.D. 298, refused to worship the emperor as a requirement for military service. He declared instead: “I cease from this military service of your emperors, and I scorn to adore your gods of stone and wood, which are deaf and dumb idols. If such is the position of those who render military service that they should be compelled to sacrifice to gods and emperors, then I cast down my vine-staff and belt, I renounce the standards, and I refuse to serve as a soldier.”⁶

Similarly, in the 16th century, Anabaptists violated the law by not baptizing their infants and by rebaptizing adults. The result was a concerted persecution that nearly resulted in annihilation.⁷ More recently, in the aftermath of slavery in North America, Martin Luther King effectively used civil disobedience in the fight against discrimination. In South Africa, Nelson Mandela and Bishop Tutu stood firmly against apartheid, engaging in Christian civil disobedience at great personal cost.⁸

With such high stakes at risk, the Christian must find an effective means of testing whether a given situation truly requires civil disobedience. This might include the following filters: (1) *The law opposed is immoral, in conflict with a higher claim.* Christians were correct, therefore, when they hid Jews from the Nazis during World

War II. (2) *Non-disobedient recourses have been exhausted.* Prior to engaging in civil disobedience, the believer should seek redress—requesting more favorable legislation, for example, or using the courts to seek to overturn a law that violates protected human rights. These methods have been used successfully, for example, by the Mennonites on issues of military service and the payment of taxes for war. (3) *There is willingness to accept the penalty.* In essence, believers who engage in civil disobedience must be willing to submit to government and suffer the consequences of their holy obedience—though it may mean loss of possessions, liberty, or life. With these criteria⁹ in place, it is more likely that any civil disobedience will also be a manifestation of divine obedience.

Political compromise

Christians sometimes retreat from political involvement because it involves conflict and compromise. We must recognize, though, that cooperation and “finding common ground” are, in fact, forms of compromise and are essential in any effective society.

The case of Pilate wrongfully condemning Christ to death, however, is a warning against the dangers of compromise. The key questions are then: Does a particular political involvement require an inevitable compromise with evil? Can a Christian in politics preserve his or her moral integrity? The deciding factor then is whether the compromise involves yielding biblical principles of morality.¹⁰ When it does not, the believer can cooperate with others to achieve a win-win solution to the conflict. When it does sacrifice principle, however, one must draw the line—prepared to even resign from political office if there is no other acceptable alternative.

Voting

Is it appropriate for a Christian to vote on a particular issue or for a specific individual? Is it proper to urge

another individual to vote in a certain way? The Bible doesn't address voting directly, principally because the prevailing forms of government at that time were not democracies. Perhaps the closest scenario may be found in the selection of deacons in the early Christian church (Acts 6:1-7). The believers were counseled to "choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom" (NIV). It would thus seem that both moral integrity and a clear understanding of contemporary issues are key criteria in selecting candidates for office.

Some Christians argue that while God said to pray for civil leaders (1 Timothy 2:1, 2), He did not say to vote. Voting for a candidate, they maintain, would amount to placing confidence in men.¹¹ While the Christian should clearly pray for the leaders of government, this does not preclude action at the polls. Christ also told us to pray for our daily bread. Should we then merely sit back and let God provide, or should we find a job and let God use us as a means to answer the prayer?

In essence, by not choosing, we decide. By not voting, we still take a stand, but it may not necessarily be the position that we would wish to take. Certain government decisions impact the family: for example, establishing standards of decency for the media, regulating drug abuse, or defining what is taught in school. According to Scripture, believers are responsible to provide for their families and to protect them from harm (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 5:28, 29; 1 Timothy 5:8). If one's vote can help safeguard the family and create a more wholesome environment for one's children, should we refuse to vote and let immoral interests bear sway?¹²

This presupposes, of course, that we are informed. Both as Christians and as citizens, we have a duty to become educated regarding political issues and platforms. We recognize, however,

that every individual is still a free moral agent, and that a politician may take actions once in office contrary to his or her stated beliefs and positions prior to election. At that point, we are not responsible for those actions, but we should, through our influence, hold that individual accountable to the pledges made.

Finally, as Christians, we recognize and respect individual freedom of conscience and belief. Consequently, we must never attempt to coerce individuals to vote, or to vote in a particular manner.¹³ Nor should we seek to create a powerful Christian block and enforce a moral agenda. Rather, in voting, as in all other aspects of life, we should seek both peace and righteousness.

Partisan alignment

The Seventh-day Adventist Church must never align itself with a particular political party or political system. Such identification, Beach notes, "may bring about a quick alpha of temporary privilege, but it will inevitably sweep the church down the slippery political slope toward the omega of evangelistic and prophetic paralysis."¹⁴ It will erode the separation of church and state, and may ultimately lead to religious intolerance and the corruption of belief.

Ellen White, furthermore, cautions against denominationally-employed pastors and teachers running for political office or engaging in partisan activities.¹⁵ The reason is that such political affiliation risks being divisive. A pastor, for example, could split a church along party lines and thus weaken his or her ability to minister to the whole congregation.

What about party affiliation on a personal level? Is there a difference between political action and participation in a political party? While concern for a particular issue may lead one to support a given candidate running on a partisan platform, we should not confuse moral political action with party politics. A

Christian, consequently, must refrain from voting a "straight party ticket" —supporting a candidate due merely to party affiliation. Endorsement of certain key moral issues may, in fact, cross party lines, given the platform adopted and the candidates involved. In essence, all partisan commitment must be cautious and conditional.¹⁶

Holding political office

Is it proper for a Christian to hold public office, either elective or appointive? How can Christians run for office without fracturing the church of which they are a part? Can a Christian politician really do much in politics that is truly Christian? Do Christian politicians have any right to allow their conscience to override the majority view of their constituents? Unfortunately, there are no easy answers to these questions. As Christian believers, however, we must carefully seek a Christian response.

Cases in Scripture, such as Joseph, Daniel, and Nehemiah, indicate that a believer can effectively occupy a position in secular government without sacrificing moral principle. Similarly, Ellen White states there is nothing wrong with aspiring to "sit in deliberative and legislative councils, and help to enact laws for the nation," provided that one does not compromise religious principle.¹⁷ One must, however, candidly examine the motive for seeking political office. Is one's motivation the desire to address injustices or enhance the well-being of others, or is it a motive of fame, power, economic benefit, or self-aggrandizement?

Perhaps the most complex aspect, however, involves the matter of identification with a particular political party, given that the vast majority of elected positions and many civil appointments involve partisan affiliation. Although one may always choose to run as an independent, the chance of breaking into government without partisan recognition in many cases is but marginal.

If a believer does decide to affiliate with a political party, the relationship should be qualified. A Seventh-day Adventist politician simply cannot make an irrevocable commitment to anything that is not authentically Christian. Furthermore, he or she must be sensitive to the mission of the church and refrain from partisan words or actions that might damage its mission or fracture its community.

Legislating morality

Should Christians endeavor to legislate morality? Is there a particular Christian political agenda that believers should seek to implement? Are Christians called by God to take over government?

While we are to be concerned with promoting righteousness, we recognize that one cannot make individuals good through legislation. A law—whether civil or biblical—does not, of itself, transform. It can merely seek to exercise some control over human behavior. Government, in essence, cannot perfect humankind, it can only protect. If morality were not to be legislated, however, then there would be no laws against theft, rape,

or murder.¹⁸ Thus the question is not so much whether we should legislate morality or not, but rather what kind of morality we should legislate and how that should take place.

How can an Adventist best contribute to ensure that laws reflect a biblical moral standard? Some avenues for action are through petitions, speaking directly with one's elected representatives, voting for individuals who support moral issues, protesting bad decisions through pen and voice, and becoming directly involved as a politician in government. At the same time, we must recognize that endeavoring to legislate against all sin could result in a totalitarian state.

In an insightful essay,¹⁹ Richard Neuhaus describes the “naked public square,” where religious values have been stripped from the public arenas of discourse. He also portrays the “sacred public square,” which seeks to arrogantly impose religious values by force. Both, he says, are wrong. What Christians should promote is a “civil public square,” that allows open and vigorous debate of controversial issues. To this arena, Adventists should bring a biblical perspective and persuasively

present its inherent value to the well-being of society.

Concluding thought

In sum, although politics of itself is not inherently good or evil, there are perils as well as opportunities for us as Christians. There are dangers of compromise of principle and corruption of values, as well as allowing an involvement with politics to become all-absorbing. At the same time, there are also significant opportunities for fulfilling the divine mandate to be the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world,” serving as an effective witness for God. This perspective may lead us to a radical reorientation of thinking—from seeing Christian engagement primarily in terms of sociopolitical action, to viewing political involvement as the faithful response of witness.²⁰

Moreover, as Seventh-day Adventists, we must view politics in the light of end-time events, where political systems will attempt to legislate conscience and expediency will seek to trump truth (see Revelation 13:16, 17). We should be prepared to speak out in support of religious free-

Figure 1 Perspectives on the Relationship of Christianity and Politics






STANCE	Rejection	Paradox	Critical Collaboration	Synthesis	Imposition
Focus	Christ against politics	Christ and politics	Christ above politics	Christ of politics	Christ dominates politics
Kingdom View	Exclusive one-kingdom	Separate kingdoms	Higher-lower kingdoms	Inclusive one-kingdom	Revolutionary kingdom
Orientation	Politics is seen as inherently evil, the domain of Satan	Politics is viewed as relatively evil, yet necessary	Politics is viewed as basically good or neutral, but deficient	Politics is uncritically viewed as good, at least in principle	Politics must be forcefully reshaped to conform to divine standards
Depiction					
Advocates	Tertullian, Fundamentalism	Jaqes Ellul, Lutheranism	Thomas Aquinas, Catholicism	Justin Martyr, Liberalism	The Christian Right, Liberationism

Figure 2 Relationship of Christianity and Politics – The Position of Lordship



dom and human rights, and against discrimination and decadence. We are to remain true to our duty of worshipping the Creator of heaven and earth, of which the Sabbath is a sign of allegiance (Revelation 14:6-12). We must take hold of the Word of God as the supreme authority in our lives, shaping all of our interactions, including our relationship to politics.

While degree and form of political participation may vary for the Church, its leaders, and individual members, the mission of the gospel must always include both the *proclamation*, as well as the tangible *revelation* of who God is. This commission involves standing with voice and vote against immorality and in favor of all that is just and compassionate. It includes caring for God's creation in all of its diversity—even “the least of these my brethren” (Matthew 25:40, KJV—). It is a commitment to live a life *like* Christ, *of* Christ, and *for* Christ in every way.

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- We must always “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33, NKJV).
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- Beach, *Dialogue* (1997) *op. cit.*, p. 6.
- For example: “Those who teach the Bible in our churches and our schools are not at liberty to unite in making apparent their prejudices for or against political men or measures, because by so doing they stir up the minds of others, leading each to advocate his favorite theory... so that division will be brought into the church.”—E. White, *Gospel Workers, op. cit.*, p. 391. “Those teachers in the church or in the school who distinguish themselves by their zeal in politics, should be relieved of their work and responsibilities without delay; for the Lord will not cooperate with them. The title should not be used to pay any one for speechifying on political questions. Every teacher, minister, or leader in our ranks who is stirred with a desire to ventilate his opinions on political questions, should be converted by a belief in the truth, or give up his work” (*ibid*, p. 393).
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Figure 3 **Biblical Principles Regarding the Relationship of Christianity and Politics**

Foundational Principles

- The equality of humankind (Genesis 1:26, 27; Acts 17:26)
- Stewardship of the environment (Genesis 2:15; Revelation 11:18)
- A moral government results in prosperity (Psalm 33:12; Proverbs 14:34; 29:2)

God's Role in Government

- God establishes civil government (Genesis 9:6; Exodus 21-23; Numbers 35:12; Romans 13:1)
- God speaks out regarding corruption in government (Proverbs 17:15; Isaiah 1:23; 10:1; Micah 3:9)
- God is ultimately in control of earthly government (Psalm 22:29; Proverbs 21:1; Jeremiah 18:7-10)

Relationship to Government

- God expects citizens to respect and submit to civil authority (Deuteronomy 17:12; Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-17; 2 Peter 2:10-12; Jude 8-10)
- Christians are not to blindly obey civil authority (Mark 13:9-11; Acts 4:19; 5:29)
- God enjoins believers to pray for secular rulers (Ezra 6:10; Jeremiah 29:7; 1 Timothy 2:1, 2)

Action in Politics

- Christianity must permeate society (Matthew 5:13-16)
- Christians have a responsibility to critique government (Psalm 12:8; Ezekiel 3:17-19; Ephesians 5:11)
- God encourages active involvement in social causes (Isaiah 58:6; Micah 6:8; Matthew 25:31-46; James 1:27)
- Christians are to advocate peace (Psalm 122:6; Isaiah 2:4; Luke 6:29; Romans 12:18; 14:19)
- Christians must overcome evil with good (Romans 12:14-21)

Tension with Politics

- Political relationships involve inherent risks (2 Corinthians 6:14-17; 2 Timothy 2:4; 1 John 2:15)
- Christians are Christians first (Matthew 6:24, 33; John 17:15, 16)
- Heavenly citizenship carries both limitations and responsibilities (2 Corinthians 5:20; Philippians 3:18-21; Colossians 3:1, 2; 1 Peter 2:9-11)
- Christians must answer to a higher standard (2 Corinthians 8:21; 10:3, 4)



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PROFILE



At 24, Leonid Hrytsak may seem too young to be an accomplished artist. But he is. His age and the quality of his art speak much about his love for and involvement with nature, especially his native Ukraine, a land of fertile, rolling steppes and plateaus and beautiful beaches. Leonid was born to an Adventist pastor's family. His parents, his two sisters and he moved often, as all ministers' families do, and he got to know and love the varied scenes and peoples of Ukraine. As a child, Leonid spent a lot of time in the outdoors, letting his curiosity drive his explorations into the beauties of nature. He loved to visit his grandma's farm where he had opportunities galore to be with cows and sheep, geese and chicken, to meditate on the beauties of nature, and to be by himself—fertile soil for a budding artist. At 15, Leonid was baptized and ever since has been a committed Christian. He is very active in his current church at München-Pasing, Germany.

Ever since he can remember, Leonid has been painting. When he turned 4, his parents sent him to an art school to explore his potential and discover

Leonid Hrytsak

Dialogue with an Adventist artist from Ukraine

Interview by Ursula Weigert

his talents. Ten years later, he changed to a more professional school with sculpture, painting, drawing, and composition. Since there were no Adventist schools in the Ukraine, he attended public ones. After his 10th grade he attended an arts college, where he received a diploma. Then he went to Germany, where he worked as a social volunteer. Since 2006, he has been studying art at the famous Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. So far, Leonid has taken part in eight exhibitions and has won three awards: Works of E. White, Danner-Preis, and a public scholarship.

Leonid is derived from Leo (“lion”), but the young artist is more fascinated by sheep; he paints and sculpts them in all kinds of ways.

■ *Leonid, you are attending a secular college. Are there many Christians among your fellow students?*

Actually, I know only two Christians at the academy. Many artists feel they want to stay free from and not be confined by a church. They also look at religion with skepticism and suspicion, and most of them are agnostics, if not atheists.

Often, art is regarded by many of its practitioners as something that gives you freedom, higher than what religion can give, so much so that art becomes a kind of religious substitute. Some artists even feel that art is the future, and it has to be priority number one. It cannot be confined to ethics. It portrays life and amplifies it

to a higher level. But I look at art as a medium of communication, a medium to express my thoughts, my ideas, and attitudes, as I experience them or as I interact with them in the vast or in the immediate arena of nature.

■ *How do you go about this?*

I plan very carefully, and work in an objective, extremely concentrated, and austere manner. For example, I plan a picture about love. So I take a piece of canvas, some red and maybe lilac color, try to work with these elements. In the end, the picture may tell something else beyond what I set out to do. I might detect this when I look at it a year or so later. This is why one has to work so carefully.

■ *With the strong religious touch in your works, how do your fellow students react to your work?*

In meetings where all our works are discussed and critiqued, I often hear comments about mine, like: “This is much too religious, too Christian!” In a way, I can understand their feelings. This is why I try to work with natural materials, in a more direct way. For example, I don’t refine my altars, because those mentioned in the Bible were very plain, simply made of stones. God Himself had ordered that the stones should not be worked. It had to be simple nature, not withdrawing attention from the main thing. The subject is not altars, it’s sacrifice! This is why it must never look “pretty” or—even worse—taste-

less! It's not about how beautiful Jesus is, but what He has done for us! It's about this dedication, this death. It's about life.

My professors like what I'm doing especially since it resembles in a way what Joseph Beuys, a very famous German artist, did. He worked a lot with felt, and I use wool and fur. He was also very interested in preserving nature. I'm aware I have to develop further and work hard, but I'm very happy about the support I receive.

■ *Do you have any friends at the academy?*

I do. Most of them like what I'm doing and support me in different ways, like filming or taking pictures at my presentations. Or we talk about the whole meaning behind it, about life and death. They are very open, and I enjoy this.

■ *You must be very busy indeed: studying, painting, sculpting, involved in presentations. You also have a job as a student assistant at the academy. And you are an active member of your church. How do you manage to balance this kind of life and your own spiritual life as a Christian?*

It's not easy! I try to get up every day as early as possible and have worship every morning. I take time for evening worship as well. These devotional moments empower me a lot. I begin my work day asking myself: "What am I going to do today? What can I do best today? How can I unfold a certain subject in the best possible way?"

Also, I live a simple life, eat plain and natural food. I try to enjoy nature, the God-given gift to us, as much as possible. Near where I live in Munich is a small creek called *Eisbach* ("icy creek"), running through the popular English Garden. I usually have a swim in it every second day, even in winter-time. It's pretty cold, but it helps keep me healthy and active.

Besides reading the Bible, I also appreciate other Christian books, trying to stay in line, to stay on the Christian road because I know it's the right one.

■ *You grew up as the son of an Adventist pastor, but did not always have a life reflecting that background. And yet you got baptized at 15.*

A Pathfinder camp at the Black Sea, where I myself became a Pathfinder, changed my life completely, gave me strength and helped me keep grounded in life from then on. In that camp, I learned the meaning of true faith and fellowship. I learned the value of discipline as Christian soldiers – to carry on the spiritual battles of every day and never give up, to do everything in the best way possible, and to be ever loyal to our great commander, Jesus Christ. I got baptized soon afterwards, and everything changed for the better in my life. A Pathfinder camp made all the difference.

■ *Do you regard yourself as a missionary?*

Insofar as I can witness to truth and tell of God's goodness through my painting, I suppose I am a missionary. For me, art is an important medium of communication. People who are not open to the church, but to art, cannot be reached by evangelistic radio or TV programs. I see a need to reach them, and I think I can do that through my paintings. Often when my friends and fellow students see my work, they ask probing questions as to what I do, what it means, and why I am the way I am. They can see that my way of working is different, and they ask me many questions. The result is an opportunity to share my concept of life, my beliefs, and my values. Such sharing is witnessing. Whatever I do by way of art, I want it to be a medium that can carry a message of God's love and care to those who see it. Even those who have no faith affiliation, I want them to see in my art that there is Someone beyond them to

love them: the Creator who is always there for them.

■ *Many people are shocked to learn that you use blood for painting. How did you get this idea?*

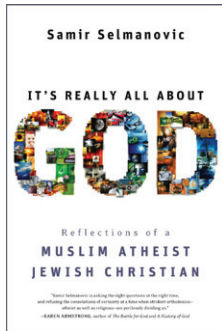
As long as I can remember, I have always drawn and painted with any material lying around. When I was young, I used to have nosebleeds quite often, and one day when the blood dropped on a sheet of paper I started drawing with it. Most of my art is about sacrifice—Christ's sacrifice, and the call for us to sacrifice. Everybody makes sacrifices in life. The question is: what kind of sacrifice? Blood is a symbol for sacrifice. I want to show the need to sacrifice and to be born again. I use blood and sheep fur in my painting—symbols of sacrifice, and the need to give up oneself.

■ *What frustrates you and what gives you satisfaction in your work?*

Art is a process, a journey that is long, requires a pause every now and then, and demands much reflection. In this process, there are moments I get stuck: how should I proceed further? This leads me to think hard, and to write down thoughts until I find the right track again. The whole process can be demanding and frustrating. And the frustration is even more when my works don't have any effect. For me, the subject is a matter of life or death. My works should directly and honestly appeal to the viewer. When that happens, I find a lot of satisfaction. But over all, every frustration in any line of work should not dishearten or discourage one; it should be a challenge to search for the better, and reach for the fulfilling. In my case, I find the subject of the lamb giving me strength and satisfaction to go on working.

Continued on page 30.

BOOKS



It's Really All About God: Reflections of a Muslim Atheist Jewish Christian
by Samir Selmanovic (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009; 320 pages; hardcover).

Reviewed by Jon Paulien

We live in an age when spirituality is considered good, but religion is considered bad. People want to know God, but find religion getting in the way. Enter Samir Selmanovic. He has written a ground-breaking book, *It's Really All About God: Reflections of a Muslim Atheist Jewish Christian*. The book combines serious reflection about God and religion in the context of the author's own unique and fascinating journey. He grew up in a secular Muslim home in Croatia, converted to Christianity, became a pastor in New York and California, and keeps the Sabbath.

In some ways, this is a quintessentially postmodern book. It does not pursue truth with scientific precision. Instead, it often meanders from point to story to point, carrying the reader along more like poetry than prose. Yet I found reading this book a life-changing experience. I recommend the book to everyone whose faith can stand a little uncertainty. But if you haven't changed a religious opinion in a decade, this book will likely anger you more than it will help you.

The idea that in today's world people of faith need to "find God in the other" is, I think, the central thesis in the book. We live in a world where people of radically different faiths can no longer hold one another at arm's length. The diversity that has long characterized cities like New York is now found almost everywhere. Children named Harry and Sally are now growing up with children named Mohammed, Keisha, Sanjay, and Hiroshi. Before you know it, Harry meets Keisha and Sally meets Mohammed, and two worlds are blended into one. So we can no longer ignore the "other" as if the other were somewhere else.

I think my favorite part of this book is the author's picture of God. He remembers an early experience with foot-washing. A local church leader tenderly washed his feet and said, "This is how God does things in the world." God's greatness is not to be measured by power, wisdom, or universal presence. It is found in humility. This kind of God

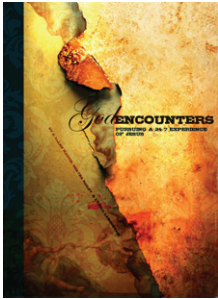
is the opposite of religion, which boasts about how great it is and wants to conquer all other religions. Religions easily become "God management systems." We unconsciously hope God can be "tamed" by the words of our theology and the ritual actions of our liturgy. But God is too great to be made captive to our religions. He cannot be managed by us.

Related to this is the author's expansion of the concept of idolatry. Thousands worship physical idols. Non-religious people worship nongods such as work, possessions, lovers, and sports teams. But if idolatry is the worship of anything that is not God, then religious people commit idolatry when they worship churches, doctrines, festivals, and laws. Since we are blind to our own idols, people of other faiths are needed to challenge the idols we have created out of our own faith. True conversion is not so much generating faith in God as transferring our faith from nongods to the true God.

The weaknesses of this book are closely related to its strengths. First, it is true that we can learn from others. But learning from others can also lead us astray. We can learn things from others that are not from God or are contrary to God. We can become fascinated by their idols without even realizing it. So I wish the book had focused a bit more on the matter of discernment. Can we really trust what we learn from others? Can we learn about God even from evil people? While God can be found in the other, God is not always found in the bustle of human activity, but in the "still, small voice" that goes against the popular grain. A little more clarity on how the author distinguishes truth from error in his own life would have been helpful.

Second, the book rightly highlights the perils of certainty. When a person or a group "knows" there is an implied criticism of every person or group that differs, religious certainty tends to divide the world and isolate people from "outsiders." Nevertheless, something bothered me as I read this part of the book. Perhaps this is an unfair criticism, but in the postmodern context I get the impression that the author is certain that the certainty of others is more flawed than his own uncertainty. Having said that, I still think he offers a message that the religious zealots of the world desperately need to consider. The author has "blessed" us all with a clearer vision of the one God who is all in all.

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GODencounters: Pursuing a 24/7 Experience of Jesus

by A. A. Bailey, S. Bailey, and L. LaMountain (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., paperback.)

Reviewed by Christopher Bartley

The spiritual journey that one begins when reading *GODencounters* is not a simple linear path. The destination of experiencing a refreshing measure of God's power, grace, forgiveness, sovereignty, and God Himself is clear. The purpose and objectives are straightforward, and the reader will know what to expect at the end of the book. Yet, there are twists, turns, and healthy obstacles that are formed by the relevant scriptural passages and challenging questions, which cause one to pause and critically self-reflect. The journey brings rejoicing, confession, and repentance. *GODencounters* bids the reader to simply bask in the sunshine of God. *GODencounters* takes time to read. If one were to merely skim the book, one would have done a disservice to the potential spiritual growth and transformation that comes with balancing on the log of temperance stretched across the torrent stream of one's regretful past, scaling up the boulder of guilt and faithfully leaping onto nature's carpet of forgiveness.

What makes this book engaging is its abundance of personal stories that are intentionally woven into every page. More than a few individuals speak to the reader that *GODencounters* are attainable, and have been experienced by people who haven't split any oceans, caught a glimpse of the third heavens, or called down fire from the sky.

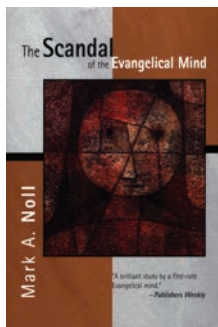
The "Encounter the Word" and "Encounter" sections after each sub-chapter take the personal testimonies and admonitions of each writer, and link them back to the transcendent Author of Scripture. This feature explores

the writer's story from the biblical frame, inviting readers to probe the scriptural foundation to our experiences. Provision for journaling facilitates readers to write a story of their own, as they take ownership of their spiritual journey rather than merely reading others' personal narrations. Thus, there are three authors in this book: the writers who have already inked their personal stories, God who inspired the Scriptures, and then the readers who have a chance to begin a new chapter of their spiritual journey.

Almost all the chapters are clear and plain in their approach to encountering God through being agents of the gospel message, gracefully expressing compassion, and living prayerfully. The chapter that seemed most vague is the very first experience on the journey: "live lives of worship" (p. 8); however, this is understandably so. To reframe worship as an experience that happens all seven days of the week is challenging, especially when there are multiple authors with different angles on what it means to worship God 24/7. For readers already starting on this spiritual path and who have already tasted the living water, the book may be refreshing. However, readers who are just finding the spiritual path, figuring out what shoes to wear, and how big of a step to take and with what stride—these new spiritual hikers—might find the lack of a step-by-step plan confusing and even frustrating. Hence, a concise summary at the end of each chapter would have been helpful to both the experienced and budding *GODfollower* to get a wholistic view of what and how it means to worship, invite, care, pray, refresh, transform, and celebrate.

Overall, I highly recommend *GODencounters* with the hope that readers engage in the personal narratives of other *GODfollowers*, embrace the Scriptural texts that have been shared, and carefully reflect on the questions asked. They will not be disappointed. Their GODshaped thirst will be refreshed by a personal encounter with the living God.

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The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind
by Mark A. Noll (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmann Publishing Company, 1994. 283 pages, paperback.)

Reviewed by Marlon Robinson

The mind is one of the most powerful parts of the human body. However, many Christians fail to use their minds to the honor and glory of Christ.

The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind challenges evangelicals to be involved in different academic fields, which they have been neglecting to some extent. Noll underscores that many evangelicals have a weak intellectual life. This weakness is visible in the cultural, institutional and intellectual lives of evangelicals. On the other hand, the book highlights that higher education (graduate education) can have a negative impact on spirituality. The author continues this argument by saying there is need for interaction between scholars in Scripture and teachers from other disciplines. Noll shows from a progressive point of view, the birth, development, and meaning of the scandal. The book concludes with whether or not there is hope for the evangelical mind.

Why the scandal matters is one of the intriguing things about this book. The author states implicitly that it matters because it goes against God's design for His children as outlined in Scripture. As the apostle Paul states, "God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to reduce to nothing the things that are" (1 Cor. 1:28).¹ Indeed, it is God's desire for His children to develop their mental capabilities in relation to the Scripture and the cosmos. The study of the cosmos reveals not only things concerning the world, but it also brings to light things about the One who designed and created it. It opens ways for the Christian and non-Christian alike to know more about God and the loving ways in which He deals with the world. The exercise of intellectual power is most certainly God's design for all created beings.

Noll points out the negative impact that higher education can have on spirituality is that while it is God's design

for people to excel intellectually, it is not His desire for people to depend on their scholastic achievements as a substitute for the wisdom of Christ. People need to be reminded that as they excel intellectually, educational accomplishment should not at any time replace dependence on the divine. Therefore, knowing that higher education can contribute to pride and self-dependence will help prospective and present scholars to be alert concerning their own actions and attitudes. If more persons were aware of this danger, the church would not have lost so many of its best minds to evolutionism, the new-age movement and relativism. An awareness of this danger would help to reduce the number of pastors leaving ministry today. Clearly, higher education has had and may have a negative impact on spirituality.

Noll also presents hope for his readers. There is a lesson here for potential and current scholars. Those who work to influence and educate minds should not only highlight the problems but also present a message of hope. This is especially important for ministers, because people may be able to live without water, food, shelter and the basic needs of life for a few days, but no one is able to live without hope for a moment. Noll does a wonderful job by not only emphasizing the problems; he also offers hope to his readers.

The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind is recommended to pastors, educators, and all students who are pursuing higher education, especially Christian students. The information presented in this book is beneficial, to help church workers avoid the pitfall of depending solely on their educational accomplishments. The book could have been improved with the inclusion of a chapter that focuses on evangelicals who have excelled academically in different fields of studies and yet were able to maintain their Christian faith. I would include this chapter in the section of the book that deals with hope. *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* underscores that it is God's will for His children to develop their mental faculties by being involved in different areas of study.

¹ New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

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ACTION REPORT

Adventist scholars, pastors, and graduate students meet to discuss the organization of a philosophical society

by Zane Yi

A group of 17 Seventh-day Adventist pastors, professors, and graduate students from North America and Europe met in November 2009 in New Orleans, Louisiana, to talk about the organization of an Adventist philosophical society. The group discussed the need for and goals of such a society and organized into sub-committees. The formation of a steering committee was also recommended, along with the formation of an advisory board to guide the process of becoming a formal organization.

Once organized, the society would serve as a network for the growing

number of Adventist students and professionals interested in and engaged in this field of study. In addition to this, the society hopes to serve as a resource for members of the church at large to better understand the intellectual currents of their culture, as well as their own beliefs and practices. Third, the organization would explore the possibilities of and advocate for the study of philosophy in the context of Adventist higher education.

“Adventism is in urgent need of some biblically-faithful sustained philosophical reflection,” commented Nicholas Miller. “Adventists know the

importance of cultural sensitivity in reaching foreign cultures overseas. But we have all too often overlooked the foreign culture here in the West that is just as alien to the biblical worldview as any found in the developing world. I believe that an Adventist philosophical society could help us better understand and communicate with the modern and postmodern cultures that surround us in the West.” Professor Miller is associate professor of church history at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.

Ryan Bell, senior pastor of the Hollywood Seventh-day Adventist Church, shares his experience. “About 11 years ago I, like most pastors, began to dabble in popular notions of ‘postmodernism.’ This has led me down the rabbit-hole into a world I have struggled to comprehend. Pastors today cannot hope to connect in any meaningful way with our increasingly post-Christian society without a serious engagement with the ideas that are shaping our culture. Yet the vast majority of pastors have not been trained in philosophy. My hope is that this organization will be a rich resource for pastors and churches.”

Since meeting in New Orleans, an advisory board has been formed, comprised of Adventist philosophers and theologians. Members of this group are Roy Benton (Pacific Union College), Fernando Canale (Andrews Theological Seminary), Linda



From left to right: Ron Osborn, Lorenzo Kim, Edward Guzman, Alexander Carpenter, Abigail Doukhan, Ryan Bell, Trisha Famisaran (with Landon), Alin Ciubotaru, Samir Selmanovic, John Webster, Danny Zelaya, Nicholas Miller, Jim Walters, Oliver Glanz, and Ante Jeroncic (Not pictured: Zdravko Plantak and Sigve Tonstad).

Continued on page 26

The gospel that came to Abraham

by David R. Tasker

Trusting God to fulfill His promises, especially at a time of greatest discouragement, is an integral part of salvation.

Why did Jesus die? Was it a demonstration of divine love, some cosmic legal transaction, human rejection of God, or something else? Or all of the above?

The Book of Genesis records a profound incident that provides an intriguing perspective to this question when God appeared to Abram and asked him to perform an unusual ritual that ended with a pillar of cloud wafting through an avenue of sacrificed animal pieces. These things may be unintelligible to people living today, but if we could peel back the curtain and see them through the eyes of the ancient world, it might help us to understand not only Christ's first advent, but also the reason for the plan of salvation.

The story commences with the words "after these things" (Genesis 15:1).^{*} The previous chapter describes Abram's extraordinary efforts in freeing his nephew Lot and a handful of other captives, and restoring not only their stolen property but also all the loot taken from the five cities of the plain by a four-king confederacy. With the "318 trained men" of his household, Abram stages a daring rescue and routes the enemy. The story ends with Abram paying tithes on his

share of the proceeds to the enigmatic Melchizedek.

So it is after this that the events of chapter 15 happen. It is also quite some time after God's promise to Abram that his children would become "a great nation"—as numerous as the "dust of the earth." It appears that that promise was made too long ago and Abram's hope is growing dim. In response, God appears in a vision and speaks directly to Abram reassuring him, "I am your shield, Abram. Your reward will be very great" (Genesis 15:1). The mystified patriarch considers how that could be true while he remains childless. God had assured Abram on at least two previous occasions (Genesis 12:2 and 13:16) that he would have many children. But nothing had happened, and he wasn't getting any younger. And his wife, Sarah, was moving from grandmother to great-grandmother vintage. He is seriously wondering how he could ever be a father and has begun considering that maybe the promise of a gazillion descendants would be fulfilled through an adopted son—his young servant, Eliezer. So he suggests that option to God.

God's reassurance

But God has other ideas. He reassures the aging patriarch that his "very own son" would be his heir, not Eliezer. And he repeats the promise that this heir will be the firstborn of a great multitude. The promise will be fulfilled. To drive the point

home, God takes Abram outside and tells him that his children will be as numerous as the stars. As we read the rest of the story, it is apparent that at this stage it is still daylight. It is not until later in the chapter that darkness falls. "Look towards the heavens and count the stars. See if you are able to number them (Genesis 15:5)." Being late afternoon, or at least early evening, that would have been an easy task. If there were any stars shining at all, there would only have been one or two at most.

The point is made. Although Abram cannot see the full complement of stars, he knows that as the night deepens, stars rapidly appear until the whole sky is full. God had promised Abram many descendants, but Abram could not see how there could be any. Until now. Stars may not be visible in daylight, but when the Sun goes down, the sky is filled with them. Countless billions. And just as fading daylight enables a person to see more and more stars, so Abram would see increasing numbers of his descendants—in God's good time. Obviously, the time was not yet right for Abram, but when it was, God would make good on His promise. At this insight, Abram falls on his face in worship, now knowing by faith that God will fulfill His word. This was not only an "aha moment" for Abram, but the Lord "counted it to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6) as well. Trusting God to fulfill His promises, especially at a time of greatest discouragement, is pinpointed here as an integral part of salvation.

This part of the story gives us insight into why Abram is recognized as a major hero of faith. His struggle is ours. Maybe there has been a time when each of us wanted something desperately. We may even have been convinced that God would answer our prayers. But God's schedule is not our schedule. He is not some convenience item that we can manipulate to make our life more comfortable.

He is the Sovereign Lord. He upholds the worlds by His powerful word (Hebrews 1:3). We need to trust Him to work out the unknowns in our own lives.

But the Lord is not finished making His point. “Bring Me a three-year old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, and a three-year-old ram, plus a young turtledove and a pigeon,” (Genesis 15:9). Those animals and birds must have been in pens close to his tent, because it does not take Abram long to retrieve them, slaughter them, and, except for the birds, cut their carcasses in two. There is not much daylight left, but Abram is able to complete the task quickly. He then lines the pieces in two rows, opposite each other, forming an alleyway or corridor. This, of course, is an open invitation to the birds of prey in the area. The smell of freshly slaughtered meat attracts many of them, and Abram soon finds himself surrounded by hungry vultures. Again, there is a delay in God’s schedule, and Abram diligently engages in “busy work,” maybe wondering why God didn’t take the next step in this exercise. He vigorously (and successfully) fights off the birds of prey until at last collapsing in an exhausted sleep on the ground (Genesis 15:11, 12). At least he has preserved the sacrifice that God had asked him to prepare.

Darkness is still approaching, but it has not completely fallen yet, so Abram’s sleep is only a power nap, maybe no more than five to 10 minutes. He is startled awake by God’s voice, “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and will be servants there... or four hundred years,” (Genesis 15:13). God is giving Abram a fast-forward glimpse into the future, assuring the old patriarch that even though his descendants will face tough times, they will return to their own land greatly multiplied in numbers and possessions (Genesis 15:14). It all adds weight to the certainty of Abram having children.

It is reassuring to see this description. God’s people would not be a super race, but a band of mortals with human limitations; they would face the reversing fortunes of life only too familiar to us. Although people at times have imagined they can successfully live their lives apart from God, He remembers that they are dust (Psalm 103:13, 14). Our first parent was created out of the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7), reminding us all of our humble origins. God is not so much interested in where we have come from, but more in where we are going. He does not expect us to perform at superhuman levels, achieving hero status. Therefore, the descriptions of the slavery and affliction of Abram’s descendants bring a human face to the situation—a reality check. God specializes in dealing with ordinary human beings with extraordinary struggles.

When it is fully dark (Genesis 15:17), the most amazing thing happens. A “pillar” of smoke and fire passes through the alleyway of animal pieces, traveling slowly from one end to the other. It is surreal, and probably causes the hairs on the back of Abram’s neck to stand on end. He is observing something very strange and unexpected. Not only does he recognize the presence of the Almighty, but also being a child of his times he is fully aware of the full significance of what he is seeing. And as the scene unfolds, he is probably utterly dumbstruck. About the only familiar element to us in this story is the pillar of cloud and fire from the Exodus story (Exodus 13:21), but that is hundreds of years later. The rest of the story seems very foreign. What is going on, exactly?

In the ancient world at that time, there was a ritual (most clearly recorded by the Hittites) that formalized a treaty between two kings.¹ In those days, there were no countries, as we know them, just confederacies of city-states. If one of these smaller

states was concerned about its “international” security, it had the option to join forces with a powerful neighbor. So a treaty was formalized between the king of a small city-state (a vassal king) and the king of a super-power (a suzerain king). Some of these confederacies grew quite large, until they reached empire status.

The treaty was formalized by a series of festivals and ceremonies, and a legal contract was drawn up. The climax of the ceremonial proceedings was when the vassal king (the little guy) would walk through an alleyway of animal halves, while the suzerain

Guidelines for contributors

College and University Dialogue, published three times a year in four parallel language editions, is addressed to Seventh-day Adventists involved in post-secondary education, either as students or teachers, and also to Adventist professionals and campus chaplains around the world.

The editors are interested in well-written articles, interviews, and reports consistent with *Dialogue’s* objectives:

1. To nurture an intelligent, living faith.
2. To deepen commitment to Christ, the Bible, and Adventist global mission.
3. To articulate a biblical approach to contemporary issues.
4. To offer ideas and models of Christian service and outreach.

Dialogue usually assigns articles, interviews, and reports to specific authors for publication. Prospective authors are urged: (a) to examine previous issues of our journal, (b) to carefully consider these guidelines, and (c) to submit an abstract and personal background before developing a proposed article. Unsolicited submissions will not be returned.

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king (the big guy), surrounded by his officials, would look on approvingly. The point? The little king was signing his life away in front of the powerful leader (and many witnesses), that if he ever did anything to break the treaty, he deserved to be put to death—sacrificed like the animals he was walking between.²

Abram had already shown himself to be a king of sorts, and a highly skilled military tactician. He was very highly respected by the kings of the valley after he defeated Chedorlaomer and his confederacy of four kings of the east and had retrieved plunder taken by them. With his tiny force (Genesis 14:14), he defied the odds and routed an enemy of superior strength. When Abram subsequently returned tithes to God instead of taking the spoils of war for himself, he was acknowledging God as his supreme commander. In other words, he recognized God as the suzerain, and himself as the vassal.

God takes personal charge

So why did the suzerain God go through the split-animal alleyway, when it should have been Abram the vassal doing that? God was simply declaring that He has taken personal responsibility for the success of the plan of salvation. He assures us that the covenant is not based on human faithfulness. And we need to know that! As we read the history of Abram's descendants, we notice that they are known more for their failings than for their successes. And we know that it is not only Abram's descendants, who vacillated between the very bad and the very good. We need to be reminded that our salvation is not dependant upon human ability or action, but upon the action of One who came as a man to fulfill all the legal requirements of the divine-human treaty. And instead of each of us having to suffer the consequences of human infidelity, God promised that He would do that for us.

Although Abram's faith in God was strong, that of his future children would be a lot less certain. If there was to be any future hope for the people of God, there had to be something more definite than the good intentions of a weak-minded people. If God's people are to have a glorious future, then God Himself must be prepared to take the consequences of the broken covenant. In other words, by passing between the pieces, God sealed an oath with Abram that if ever the covenant between them was broken, God Himself would put His life on the line.

And He did—at Calvary.

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Action Report

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Emmerson (Walla Walla University), Zdravko Plantak (Washington Adventist University), Charles Scriven (Kettering College of Medical Arts), Jim Walters (Loma Linda University), Christian Wannemacher (Ludwig Maximilians Universität München), and John Webster (La Sierra University).

The members of the steering committee are Abigail Doukhan (Elon University), Trisha Famisaran (Claremont Graduate University), Oliver Ganz (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), and Zane Yi (Fordham University).

The society plans to formally organize in November of 2010, when a conference will be held devoted to an examination of the relationship of philosophy to Seventh-day Adventism. At this time a mission statement and constitution will be finalized, along with an election of officers. Details about the conference and a call for papers are forthcoming. For more information, contact: Steering Committee. E-mail: adventistphilosophy@gmail.com.

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For more information about the Society's upcoming inaugural conference, visit <http://adventistphilosophy.wordpress.com>. Theme: "Athens and Jerusalem Revisited: Adventism and the Love of Wisdom."

FIRST PERSON

Restful peace, trust in the Lord

by Hudson Kibuuka

The perfect antidote for anxiety and alarm is to trust in the Lord. He never fails.

“A life in Christ is a life of restfulness. There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there should be an abiding, peaceful trust.”¹

What did Ellen White mean by this statement? What is restfulness and peaceful trust, particularly in the context of the contemporary world, where these concepts are seemingly scarce? When you sit in a bus, a plane, a train, or a car, what makes you trust that the driver/captain is competent and will take you safely to your destination?

About 18 months ago, as I was setting out on an itinerary to the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo, news broke out that rebels were active again, close to the city of Goma, one of the places I was going to visit. I was scheduled to lead out in seminars in two different places, conduct a week of prayer, and attend the University of Lukanga board meeting. These activities were scheduled to take a little more than two weeks in the area around where fighting had erupted.

Naturally, the news of the rebel activity alarmed me. I was reminded of Jehosaphat’s experience in 2 Chronicles 20. He reigned over Judah and was considered a good king, walking in the way of God. Yet a time came when he and his kingdom were

surrounded by enemies from all sides, and he “was afraid” (2 Chronicles 20:3, NRSV). Being alarmed and fearful is natural and normal, and even kings can have fear. What makes the difference is how fear or anxiety brought about by such alarm is handled. Jehosaphat knew how to handle anxiety and alarm. He trusted in God. He sought God’s counsel, and declared a fast throughout Judah (2 Chronicles 20:3). Fasting involves soul-searching to ensure that there is no known sin that may hinder one’s prayer from reaching the throne of grace. As a result, Jehosaphat did not panic but experienced restful and peaceful trust. Finally, he conquered his panic, and his enemies disappeared.

I, too, tried the Jehosaphat way. I prayed about the situation and sent a message to my counterpart, the education director for the local union in Northeastern Congo, asking him to advise me on the security situation where we were going and what to do. A few days before, I had sent my passport to the Congolese embassy for a visa to enable me to enter the country. It was a late application because I had been traveling prior to that time. My counterpart informed me that he would consult with the rest of the leaders there and would let me know. Within a day, he responded that the rebel activities would not disrupt our program, so he advised us not to change our plans. This took some level of trust that God would take care

of us. So I prepared for the trip. I was scheduled to travel on a Sunday, so I ordered my ticket on Friday, although my passport had not returned from the embassy. It arrived late Friday evening with the visa.

Meanwhile, the news was not good: the rebel activities were increasing, and on Friday evening the international news media reported that a plane had crashed at Goma airport. Although it was a cargo plane, I knew that in that part of the world such planes often carried passengers. What should I do? I had to use that airport at least once on my trip.

Trusting in the Lord, I started my journey. My first flight was not to Goma, but to Bujumbura, from where I would board a bus to cross the border to Bukavu. I arrived in Bukavu to find the education director and other brethren.

We planned a full-day seminar the following day with teachers and heads of schools. This was my first time in that part of the country. We planned to leave by speed boat, traveling across Lake Kivu from Bukavu to Goma the day after the seminar—a journey of three hours. From Goma we would fly to Kisangani later the same day.

On the day of the seminar, just as teachers were gathering, I learned that the boat was not going to operate on the day we were supposed to travel. The only remaining alternative was to use a night ferry, leaving at 5 p.m. and arriving at Goma the following morning, requiring us to spend the whole night on the lake. The rebel activities were taking place near the western shores of the lake. Thus, the news that we would spend the night on the lake raised concerns and anxiety. Nevertheless, we went ahead with the seminar and purchased our tickets for the ferry. That evening, we boarded the ferry, which was in a state of severe disrepair, but we trusted that the Lord would take us safely to our destination.

The ferry left about an hour late and began moving toward Goma. At about midnight, we heard the boat engines reduce speed drastically and wondered what was happening. A soldier sharing our cabin went to find out. Upon his return, he told us that the boat captain had been instructed to slow down by the United Nations peacekeeping soldiers, who were patrolling the lake at night. We did not know the reasons for such a directive; all we could do was to trust in the Lord and pray for safe arrival.

The night seemed much longer than usual, but eventually we began seeing the lights of Goma on the other side. Dawn was breaking. We arrived and were thankful to God, who can always be trusted. The next segment of our trip was to the interior of the country, to the city of Kisangani, where we were scheduled to hold another seminar. Once more, we boarded the plane with fear and uncertainty, but knowing all the time that there is Someone whom we can trust.

How is trust derived?

Trust was my constant companion on this and similar subsequent trips. There is no substitute for trust and prayer. This experience made me reflect on what Ellen White wrote on restfulness and peacefulness as a consequence of trust. Trust is derived from several sources. It is based on competence – a belief that the person responsible is competent in jobs such as flying a plane. As we board a plane, we do not ask if the pilot is competent. We just trust that he or she is.

Another source of trust is experience. We trust either because we have experienced the event before or whoever is leading out has the necessary experience. This experience may come with age, in which case it may also be referred to as trust due to age or due to prolonged exposure. We would have more confidence that an experienced company would transfer our goods than a newly-formed one.

There is also trust due to acquaintance. Contact or relationship can help us get to know people better and therefore build trust. It is often difficult to trust a total stranger unless there is proof that he or she has one or more of the other qualities such as competence or experience.

Trust due to love is yet another kind of trust. This comes as a result of love that exists between two people. While trust between a child and a parent may be due to age, it is even much stronger if it is based on love. Members of a family trust one another mainly because of shared love. When the trust between husband and wife is based on love it will be much stronger than if it is only based on competence, experience or the passage of time. When love diminishes, so does trust. Trust between members of a family becomes difficult if love is absent.

In our daily life, we assume that a person occupying a position of trust ought to be trusted. This trust may be due to his or her position. Teachers, for example, occupy positions of trust for their students. By virtue of their position, in addition to their competence, experience, and age, they are trusted. It is not uncommon for a young child to argue with his or her parents that such and such should not be so because the teacher said so. This places a very important responsibility on all who occupy positions of trust. It is possible for trust to be lost. But if we act in the fear of the Lord, this need not happen.

God is love, and He loves us so much that He sent His only Son to die for us—even though we were sinners. We can trust Him because He is not only competent, experienced, and dependable but because He loves us. One can, therefore, be at peace and have restful trust in all circumstances. This does not mean that we cannot get alarmed. But it does mean that we know where to go when alarmed. Here is something to remember: “Courage, fortitude, faith, and implic-

it trust in God’s power to save do not come in a moment. These heavenly graces are acquired by the experience of years.”² So we need to spend time with the Lord in order to be able to acquire these virtues, including trust. Trust, among other fruits, is borne by those who are truly connected with God.

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OPEN FORUM

Questions to *Dialogue* about stewardship and student life

by Erika Puni

As a student, I don't have a regular job. Should I pay tithe on money that I earn from time to time, or money given to me for my birthday or Christmas?

As stewards/disciples of Jesus we don't "pay" tithe. To the contrary, we "return" tithe because tithe is God's property (money); tithe belongs to God! In tithing, we are simply returning to God what is rightfully His.

The Bible clearly teaches that tithe is returned as an act of worship to God; it's about a spiritual experience between the worshiper and the Creator. In the returning of tithe, you are expressing your faithfulness to the covenant relationship that you have with Jesus Christ. Tithing has nothing to do with being a baptized member, office holder of the church, or a student. It is not even about being employed (full or part time). But it has everything to do with my acknowledgment of Jesus as Savior and Lord of my life even when I'm outside of my home church or country.

Now, to your question. I would say a definite "Yes." Given the biblical principles (worship, relationship,

lordship) shared above, I've come to understand that the returning of tithe is not a financial matter but a spiritual act of faith and trust in God. In fact, it's not a choice but a privilege of being a partner with Him. It's about loving God. In tithing, I'm acknowledging Him as the Creator of the universe, owner of everything in the world, and sustainer of life. God is also the giver of every good gift, including money from my earnings through work and gifts received from Him through the generosity of others. Little or much, rich or poor, these are not the issues in tithing; rather, it is about my being worshipful and faithful to God.

How does stewardship apply to me as a college student? I need money now and am not in a position to put money in the offering plate, even though I'd like to be able to.

It is unfortunate that many in the church think of stewardship in terms of money only – as tithe and offerings. To the contrary, biblical stewardship is about the Lordship of Jesus Christ

in all areas of the believer's life. This wholistic understanding of stewardship puts the focus back on God, and not on the disciple/steward. It recognizes stewardship as a response of the heart to God; it's a way of life (lifestyle) under the rulership of Jesus. From this perspective, I've come to accept that being a Seventh-day Adventist means that Jesus is Lord of my thoughts, my worship, my leadership, my relationships, my possessions, my body, my finances, my language, and even my studies.

So how does biblical stewardship apply to being a college student? It applies to every facet of one's life. Stewardship is "all" of me (the totality of my human experience and being) in response to "all" of God.

As a former college student myself, and having studied on two occasions outside of my home country of Samoa, I know very well what it's like to live and survive on very little or with no money at all. At Fulton College, Fiji, where I did my basic ministerial training, I was blessed to have had the opportunity to work on campus for part of my college fees. Being able to contribute in a little way toward the financial costs of my theological education was a positive thing because it taught me the lessons of self-reliance, the value of work, and taking responsibility for this part of my personal development and life. I was also a recipient of a couple of small scholarships made available through the kind donations of church members from Australia and the United States. My family also sent me money on occasion, and I will always be grateful to God for their support, including these other good Samaritans whose generosity enabled me to finish my studies at Fulton College without any debt. Interestingly, I don't remember a Sabbath when I didn't have an offering to give to God as part of my worship. For me, He always supplied

my needs, even money to express my thanksgiving and gratitude to Him.

Some years later, while studying at Loma Linda University and Fuller Theological Seminary (both in the United States), I went through a similar experience as I did at Fulton College. At Loma Linda, for example, I worked for the university security department, and I did odd jobs for different Adventist churches such as preaching, conducting training seminars, and evangelistic programs. For the three years of my doctoral program at Fuller, I was privileged to have free accommodation with the El Monte Seventh-day Adventist Church in return for helping the church caretaker look after the church grounds and do janitorial work weekly. This arrangement was providential, and an absolute blessing from God. But in addition to money earned and saved from the work I did, I was also able to manage the little financial resources I had, and carefully use them for what was important (tithe, offerings, university fees) and necessary (basic food items and clothes). Stewardship includes living within one's means, and not getting into any unnecessary debt.

In retrospect, what helped me in my giving (beyond tithe) as a student then, and even now, is the fact that I gave thought to my offerings and planned accordingly days ahead before the Sabbath. The giving of offerings was never an option; it was an integral part of my Sabbath worship and a privilege to express my gratitude to God for Jesus and for everything He had done for me. Did I ever think of not giving any offerings because of my perceived needs as a student? Yes,

many times. Was I always faithful in my financial stewardship? No, but in my failure and unfaithfulness God forgave me, and I experienced His grace to make a new start with Him. Stewardship, I have learned, is not about money only, but also about my willingness to allow Jesus to come into my life and take full control of me. Stewardship is a lifestyle where I surrender every part of me (including my finances) to God 24/7.

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To church...

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the Power of the Past. Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age through Roman Palestina, William Dever and Seymour Gitin, eds; (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), pp. 445-53.

8. See Randall Younker, "Moabite Social Structure," *BA* 60 (1997), pp. 237-248; also LaBianca and Younker, "The Kingdoms of Ammon, Moab and Edom," *op. cit.*, pp. 404-406.
9. Compare in more detail the discussion in Gerald Klingbeil, "Between 'I' and 'We': The Anthropology of the Hebrew Bible and Its Importance for a 21st-Century Ecclesiology," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 19 (2009), pp. 319-339.
10. Unfortunately, it must be recognized that the negative tendency is much more prominent in the Old Testament.
11. Compare the description of the churches (Revelation 1-3), the group of 24 elders (4:4), the 144,000 and the great multitude (7:4, 9; 14:1), those that overcame (15:2), the great multitude in heaven (19:1, 6), etc.

Leonid Hrytsak

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■ *What type of skills and attitudes should a person have in order to succeed in the area of his or her work?*

Always look ahead! Most important, of course: believe in God, stick to Jesus, and live accordingly! Be focused as to where you want to go. Whatever line of work you choose—be it architecture, painting, poetry, creative writing—put your best in, and do your best. Our Lord asks for the best in us.

■ *Your latest project has to do with gardening.*

My grandma had a farm with cows and geese, a little paradise for us children. We learned to work together; everybody was needed and important. That gave us self-esteem and a feeling of belonging. We learned about community and meaning in life. Humankind has been so much alienated from nature and ultimately from God. I want to show ways of getting there again by using parables from nature as Christ did. That's what draws me to gardening.

Ursula Weigert writes from Munich, Germany, where she works as a freelance writer, English and German teacher, and grief counselor. She is widowed and has two grown daughters. She attends the tiny church at Freising, where she is a church elder and organist. E-mail: UrsulaWeigert@aol.com.

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C O L L E G E A N D U N I V E R S I T Y
DIALOGUE
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Some things never change—such as *Dialogue's* mission and focus. Other things, though, are updated and enhanced—such as new ways in which you can access *Dialogue*. We wanted you to know that *Dialogue* is now available online, in addition to the regular printed format. The journal can be accessed at: dialogue.adventist.org. At the *Dialogue* site, you will have the opportunity **to read all of the articles, from the very beginning of *Dialogue* to the present.** Additionally, you can read the articles in any of the four languages in which *Dialogue* is published.

So spread the good news to your friends and colleagues, so they can be a part of *Dialogue*. We want to *Dialogue* with everyone, everywhere!

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Go forward: The call from the 59th session of the General Conference

by John M. Fowler

Growth, unity, and commitment marked the 59th world session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists that convened in Atlanta, Georgia, United States, from June 25 to July 3, 2010.

The General Conference session is a quinquennial world assembly of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to celebrate its global presence and mission. It meets every five years to elect world church leaders, to review the constitution and by-laws, to discuss and approve any changes to the fundamental beliefs of the church and the *Church Manual*, and to affirm the global unity and mission of the church. The first General Conference session met in 1863 in Battle Creek, Michigan, with 20 delegates, when the church was largely limited to a few states in the northeastern United States. Almost 100 years later, in 1954, the 47th session drew 1,100 delegates to San Francisco. The 52nd session, which met in Vienna in 1975, was the first to be held outside the United States. The current session welcomed 2,240 delegates, representing Adventists in 203 of the 232 countries recognized by the United Nations. Truly a global convocation!

But the convocation was not simply a global convergence of language, culture, colors, and peoples. It was a celebration of joyous growth, an affirmation of unity, and an unending journey of commitment toward one glorious event, inscribed in the very name of the church: the second coming of Jesus.

A growing church

Awaiting that glorious climax of human history, every General Conference session defines anew that

the church is ever on a forward mode. The first General Conference session in 1863 recorded an adult membership of 3,500. Approximately a century later, in 1960, the membership crossed the million mark and stood at a glorious 1,245,000. Forty years later, the 21st century began with a membership of 11.68 million.

Over the past 10 years, the growth has been staggering. At the end of 2009, the church had an adult membership of 16,307,880, of whom 5.3 million were baptized since the General Conference Session last met in 2005 at St. Louis, Missouri. Add to this the army of Adventist children who are not yet baptized and we have a global family of 25 to 30 million. Likewise, tithe income around the world shows the increasing faithfulness of God's people.

What was once largely a North American church has come of age and has truly become global. Today, only 7 percent of world membership is based in the North American Division, while Africa claims 36 percent, and Inter and South America have 32 percent of the membership. Yet the importance of the North American Division to the world mission and ministry must not be missed or minimized: for the years 2005-2009, the North American Division contributed 63 percent of the General Conference receipt of tithes and mission offerings, whereas the other 12 divisions contributed the balance of 37 percent. Thus, the North American Division is

still responsible for a large share of the financial responsibility of the work of the world church.

"When I consider the history of the Seventh-day Adventist movement—the outgoing president, Jan Paulsen, told the delegates in his report—John Wesley's words 'What God hath wrought!' come to mind." Indeed so. In the last five years, the church baptized an average of 3,000 persons every 24 hours. While the first GC session had one church member for every 373,143 of the world's population, the 59th session rejoiced that we have one member for every 400 people. If you stood anywhere in the Georgia Dome or walked the streets outside or meandered through the myriad booths in the exhibition halls, you would have seen the world. Delegates from Iceland to Papua New Guinea, from Japan to Chile, representing a kaleidoscope of colors and cultures, languages and sounds, walked together, gathering in small groups to pray, discuss earnestly the future of the church, share stories or greet long-last friends who once met in the common halls of Adventist education (was it Andrews, Loma Linda, Spicer, Solusi, Newbold, Friedensau, or...?). As they jarred that memory, scratched that skin, shook that hand, watched that smile—underneath it all, there was Adventism—global, growing, energizing Adventism.

A united church

If the 59th session marked the stunning growth of the church, in no less

way it was a pointer to the remarkable unity that marks Adventism around the world. The reports from the 13 world divisions, presented with color, candor, and a lot of joyful music, left no doubt in the minds of the delegates and the vast throngs of visitors that crowded the stadium each evening that we are a church marching to one tune, celebrating one vision and purpose. Devotional speakers, for the first time in the history of the church, came from every part of the world, and were mostly young pastors. Each one gave a vision of what God's grace has done to them and through them in their congregations. I like the way Tara VinCross, a pastor from Philadelphia, defined grace. To her, from the perspective of incarnation, grace is a challenge to "be incarnate in this world" and touch someone. To Paul Frederick, a young pastor from India, grace is a gift—divine, lasting, personal, and certain. To Dennis Meier, a pastor from Germany, "grace is not a concept to be defined, but a name to be confessed: Jesus."

If proclaiming grace was the core of all the preaching and all the singing, grace also underscored the business sessions of the church. The heat of the debates, election of the officers, wide-ranging participation from conceptual formulations to the placing of a comma—each business session was touched by grace and sailed through smoothly by the presence of the Holy Spirit. The electoral process dropped a few, added a few, but there was no rancor or shouting like what one sees in other elections of other organizations. The debates were marked by Christian courtesy and gracious acceptance of whatever the body decided. One major constitutional item came up early in the session: a proposal to postpone the election of associate departmental directors to the Annual Council in October. After a lively debate, the recommendation was turned down. Associate directors were elected at the session. Not a note of

bitterness. Not a thumping of victory. When the church in session speaks, there is neither victory nor defeat. Only a recognition of God's people at work. That is the secret for the community, buoyancy and unity that marks Adventism. We are, as someone remarked, not simply a denomination; we are a movement bound for a destiny whose builder and maker is God.

A committed church

The highlight of the 59th session no doubt was the moving presentation of God's Word by the newly-elected president. More than 75,000 people in the Dome and hundreds of thousands around the world, on TV or radio, heard the sermon. It was not just a sermon. Not just an exposition of God's Word. It was the Holy Spirit at work through Dr. Ted N. C. Wilson, the church's 20th president. When the nominating committee presented his name to the delegates within three hours of its first meeting, joy and praise rose as a crescendo in the dome. In his acceptance remarks, Ted Wilson enunciated, affirmed, and reaffirmed three Adventist non-negotiables: the Word of God and the Spirit of Prophecy as the guide of our faith and guardian of our conduct; Creation account as in Genesis—literal, six-day, recent mighty miracle of God; salvation through grace and grace alone, leading to a life of sanctification and obedience. On the Sabbath, the theme was reaffirmed, almost as if the early apostle himself stood and challenged the Georgia dome: "We have not followed cunningly devised fables" (2 Peter 1:16, KJV).

The firmness and the challenge from the president was not at all surprising. After all, Wilson is a child of Adventism. His grandfather, N. C. Wilson, served as president of three world divisions: Southern Asia, North America, and South Pacific. His father was baptized with the fire of Adventism—14 years as president of the North American Division, and

12 years as president of the General Conference. Ted Wilson and his wife, Nancy, are rooted firmly in an Adventist home and have served different parts of the world as missionaries and church leaders. He also earned a doctorate in Religious Education. The new Church president is a Seventh-day Adventist, through and through, undiluted, and absolutely committed.

So it was not a surprise that he unambiguously called the world church to commit to those three imperatives even as they "go forward" walking toward the kingdom, with the unerring Word as the guide. Dr. Wilson also warned the church not to go backward and fall into some modern religious enticements that come in the guise of the new and the novel, of the large tent mentality under which all can find a resting place, the apocalyptic sensationalism and loose theology, and the bizarre and crowd-pulling emotional movements. Instead, invited the president, "Go forward, united by the Holy Spirit and our foundational biblical beliefs."

With such a powerful call to safeguard and proclaim the faith delivered to the saints, the 59th session sent me home to ponder, to commit, to proclaim, and to talk the walk, and walk the talk—until the next session on the Sea of Glass, hopefully, or the 60th session in San Antonio, Texas.

John M. Fowler, Ed.D. (Andrews University), retired at the session after 52 years of service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the last 15 being at the General Conference.

Ted N. C. Wilson – President
of the General Conference
of Seventh-day Adventist Church
Robert East/Adventist News



G. T. Ng – Secretary
of the General Conference
of Seventh-day Adventist Church
Gerry Chudleigh/Adventist News



Robert Lemon – Treasurer
of the General Conference
of Seventh-day Adventist Church
Gerry Chudleigh/Adventist News





“Go forward, not backward! Stand for truth though the heavens fall!” urged Dr. Wilson in his Sabbath sermon entitled “Go forward.”

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The art of **Leonid Hrytsak**

Sheep café - oil on canvas, 100 x 160 cm.



Serial "People sheep" – drawing, ink on paper. 21 x 15 cm 2009



Thinking man – drawing, ink on paper. 21 x 15 cm 2009



Chosen one – oil on canvas. 80 x 160 cm 2007

Inside the Lambfruit
- Performance, Munich 2010

Untitled

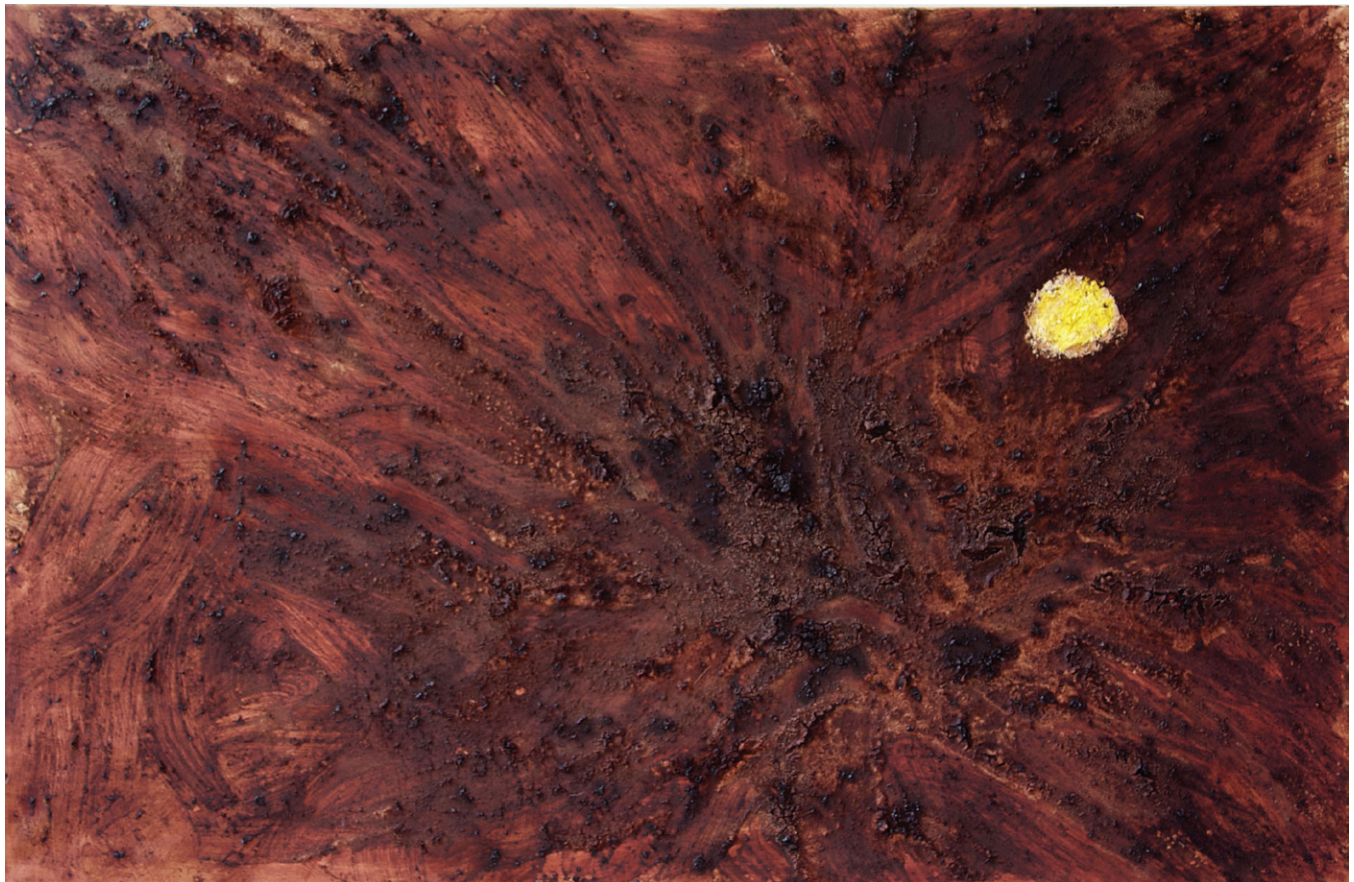
– drawing ink on paper.
15 x 21 cm 2009
“This is about birth. No.
Rebirth. It is not just to be
born, but much more; men-
tal rebirth even: to do my
best, love my neighbor, etc.,
truly and always. In my many
drawings in the series ‘Fruit’
or ‘Embryo’, I am trying to
show that development is a
process. A source of constant
affection is needed to grow.”



Birth through the Lamb – Performance, Munich 2009



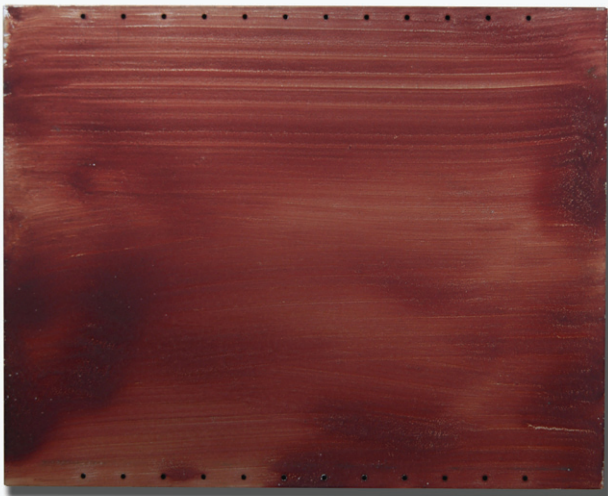
Inside the Lambfruit
– Performance, Munich 2010



Blood and Sun - blood on canvas. 100 x 160 cm. 2009



The golden idol of Babylon
 – polystyrene, golden film, wood.
 520 x 230 x 180



Untitled

“I was fascinated by the blood stream in this work. It’s so amazing to realize that we are not machines or robots, but self-preserving, organic (living) beings. The steel gives more translucence and pathological ambiance to it.”



Altar drawing

“The altar seen in this drawing is a social event. It means that everything we do, our whole life is a permanent offering.”