COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY

DIALOGUE

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Jesus: A Man for All People

Volume 27

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COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY
DIALOGUE

EDITORIAL

"Inspire to be. Empower to share."

In the midst of a blizzard that stopped traffic and rerouted airplanes, a Public Campus Ministry (PCM) summit and symposium met from March 4 to 8, 2015, at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The day before it began to snow, representatives – from veterans in campus ministry to university students who have just started such a ministry – convened from all 13 divisions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and from the Middle East, North Africa, and Israel fields. They came to build on more than 60 years of Adventist ministry on public campuses and launch it to the next level of visibility, focus, and coordination. Some of the participants had never experienced snowfall before. Casting dignity aside, they ran outside and flung themselves down like kids to make snow angels, much to the amusement of their colleagues.

We heard exciting reports about public campus ministry from around the world. The conference was webcast and I, for one, was able to participate in that way for two of the five days (see www.hopetv.org/gcevents for the weekend services).

But not everything at the summit was lighthearted. On the public campuses where most Adventist students live and learn, there are many challenges to faith. We talked and prayed about those challenges and for the many students who face them. The summit centered on this group because theirs is a special calling. With this in view, we created the following mission statement, motto, and slogan (the kind you put on a T-shirt!):

Mission Statement

To inspire Seventh-day Adventist students to be disciples of Jesus and empower them to share the everlasting gospel on campus.

Motto

Follow Jesus, Embrace His Mission, Change the World.

Slogan

Inspire to Be. Empower to Share.

During the event, small groups worked to identify how each of seven building blocks for public campus ministry could be implemented. These recommendations formed the basis for a fuller document fleshing out the building blocks. The General Conference Adventist Ministry to College and University Students Committee (AMICUS) has begun to study the recommendations so as to be able to implement them through various channels and levels of the church organization. But many of the recommendations can be acted on right away. Of those, two can be implemented in any church, and especially those near a large public campus. The first is for every church to appoint a public campus ministry director or coordinator – ideally a college or university student – to oversee local operations; the second is for every church to foster relationships, spiritual growth, mission, training, and

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empowerment for witness on public campuses. The local congregation is the first building block and the place where students are nurtured and equipped.

Resources from the PCM summit and symposium will be available online. The plan is to create a website that will feature grassroots projects and service programs, and serve as a clearinghouse for public campus ministry resources. You will hear more about this as it is launched. In the meantime, back print issues of *Dialogue* include action reports on what students have already done in Argentina, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Romania, the Philippines, Papua-New Guinea, and beyond. In North America, the Adventist Christian Fellowship (ACF) website has links for resources (www.acflink.org) and has developed *Word In Action* workbooks and Campus Catalyst weekend seminars to help train local churches on how to launch and support ACF chapters on nearby college and university campuses. ACF Institute is open to those interested in campus ministry training.

This past year, the Mongolia Mission initiated a public campus ministry using an approach that was used years ago in Concepcion, Chile, and at Advent House in Tennessee, U.S.A. (www.adventhouse.org). Such efforts should be replicated in other university towns. In Mongolia, where there is no Seventh-day Adventist higher education at all, the church has built and is operating a dormitory for university students studying on secular campuses in the capital city of Ullaanbaatar. The dormitory not only provides much-needed housing but also functions as a center for spiritual nurture, fellowship, and training for outreach and witness.

Before the watchword was ever voted by the summit, the church in Mongolia has already found an effective way to *"Inspire to Be. Empower to Share."*

How about where you are?

Lisa M. Beardsley-Hardy

— Lisa M. Beardsley-Hardy, Editor

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Science and faith as honest friends

by H. Thomas Goodwin

Science provides a way to gain testable knowledge about nature, a method that drives the continuous accumulation of knowledge within paradigms as well as the occasional scientific revolution in which one paradigm replaces another. How do Christian beliefs help us understand this way of knowing?

Can faith and science live as honest friends? I believe they can, and I hope to convince you of three points. First, core Christian beliefs give critical insight into the power and limits of science as a way of knowing. Second, scientific knowledge often enriches theological beliefs, particularly beliefs about God as creator and humans as creatures formed in God's image. Third, although scientific knowledge sometimes challenges Adventist beliefs, these challenges should not surprise us; they provide opportunity for scientific, theological, and ethical growth. In sum, this article will attempt to show that science and faith may function as honest friends – supportive but sometimes challenging each other.

Although the analogy of honest friendship yields helpful insights, it does have limits: Adventists do not approach the science-faith dialogue with neutrality. We acknowledge the Bible as "the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history,"[1] and this commitment shapes our understanding of nature.

Defining a Christian perspective on the nature of science

Before we explore the relationship between biblical beliefs and science, we need to clarify what science is and how it works. Roughly, science is a way to gain knowledge about nature that seeks to describe and explain phenomena of the material world in ways that other scientists can test empirically.

By its very nature, scientific knowledge is dynamic and always changing, driven by the ongoing interaction of three core elements of scientific thought (see figure): data, theories, and shaping principles.[2] Data represent the observations, counts, and measurements that scientists record and wish to explain. Theories are the ideas scientists develop to make sense of and interpret their data. Shaping principles correspond to background beliefs, commitments, and values that inevitably influence a scientist's work, often unconsciously. Members of a given scientific community typically share a broad set of core theories and shaping principles that strongly guide their work: the types of data they look for, the kinds of explanations they propose, and so on. Thomas Kuhn[3], a noted philosopher of science, referred to these broadly-shared sets of theories and shaping principles as paradigms.

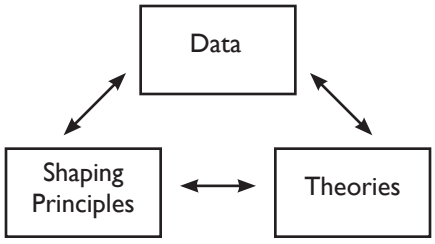
Much of this dynamism in scientific thought is driven by the interaction of data and theory as scientists seek to find a better fit between what they observe in nature and their theories about nature. Sometimes change occurs because a fruitful theory encourages accumulation of new data. A prime example is the exponential increase in genome sequence data over the past decade, fuelled by modern theories of genetics and new methods of DNA sequencing. At other times, change occurs because new data force us to revise or even replace an existing theory.

According to Kuhn, scientific knowledge sometimes changes in a more holistic and comprehensive manner. In this view, scientists normally do not question their paradigms; they assume them to be true and do science accordingly. In the process, however, scientists will occasionally discover things that don't fit the expectations of the paradigm. If these discoveries are sufficiently serious or numerous, a scientific discipline will experience a crisis as scientists scramble to make sense of the anomalous data. During a crisis, a brilliant scientist may come up with a whole new way of looking at the discipline – a new paradigm. If the new paradigm works well, over time the community will "switch over" from the

old to the new; a scientific revolution will occur.

Kuhn suggested that such episodes represent important events in the history of science because they open up new vistas of research, generate new and more comprehensive theories, and stimulate scientists to study a new range of phenomena. Kuhn's ideas may be oversimplified – especially in fast-paced disciplines characterized by perpetual crisis and multiple, competing hypotheses – but they offer helpful insights into the way scientific thinking has progressed over time.

All scientific disciplines share a commitment to empirical testability, but disciplines vary in how they collect data and test theories. At risk of oversimplification, the experimental sciences (e.g., physics, chemistry, and many areas of biology) typically test hypotheses by doing multiple, controlled experiments under differing conditions. In contrast, the historical sciences (e.g., paleontology and archaeology) usually cannot



directly test causal hypotheses by experiment. Rather, they seek to decipher *past* causes (for example, causes of the extinction of mammoths at the end of the Ice Age) by proposing multiple, competing hypotheses and looking for physical evidence that will discriminate among these hypotheses[4] – a form of hypothesis testing.

To recap, I understand science to be a way to gain testable knowledge about nature, a method that drives the continuous accumulation of knowledge within paradigms as well as the occasional scientific revolution in which one paradigm replaces another. How do Christian beliefs help us understand this way of knowing? We will now explore what Christian beliefs may tell us about the power and limits of science.

The power of science. Science is a powerful way to gain knowledge about nature, a power demonstrated by two facts. First, scientific theories often unify diverse observations in elegant and simple ways and commonly make surprising predictions about nature that turn out to be valid, especially in the experimental sciences. Einstein's general theory of relativity, for example, unified broad areas of physics with mathematical elegance. It also made surprising and risky predictions – for example, that light should bend when it passes a large object with strong gravitational force – that later were verified experimentally. When scientific theories unify and accurately predict what we see (and should see) in this way, we gain some confidence that science teaches us something real about the world.

Second, the power of science is demonstrated by the practical utility of scientific theories. Science generated the theoretical knowledge that made it possible for humans to land on (and return safely from) the moon, develop treatments for malaria, eradicate smallpox, exponentially increase crop production per acre, and create iPhones and personal computers.

This demonstrated power of science raises an intriguing question. Why does science work so well?

Christian theology provides a simple but elegant answer to this question. Science works well because its foundational assumptions are true, rooted in the biblical doctrine of creation. Consider two of these assumptions. First, scientists assume that the universe has been put together and continues to behave in an orderly manner. We assume that carbon atoms have the same properties on earth and in stars and that gravity works the same way today that it did in the past. This

assumption, which allows us to gain useful knowledge about nature even though we investigate only a tiny fraction of it, can never be directly demonstrated from within science. However, it grows naturally from the biblical teaching that an all-wise, rational God created the heavens and the earth.[5]

A second and equally-critical assumption necessary for science is that humans have the mental capacity to recognize and understand this order in nature. We can figure out that order, even though it may be hidden from everyday view. Again, the biblical doctrine of creation gives us reason to believe that this assumption is true because God made humans in His image (Genesis 1:27). The Bible does not precisely define what it is about humans that represents God's image, but one common view is that God is reflected, at least in part, in the human capacity to think and choose freely[6], a capacity dependent on complex, creative, and rational thought – the key human elements necessary for science.

This interpretation – that biblical beliefs undergird the essential assumptions of science – may have been important in the history of science. For example, Melvin Calvin, recipient of a Nobel Prize in chemistry for working out detailed biochemical pathways in photosynthesis, believed that the assumption of nature's orderliness could be traced historically to the ancient Hebrew view "that the universe is governed by a single God, and is not the product of the whims of many gods, each governing his own province according to his own laws."[7] This interpretation suggests that biblical faith played a crucial role in the rise of modern science, although other intellectual strands (notably Greek philosophy) were also important.

The limits of science. Although science has shown great power, it also has limits. Several Adventist scholars have addressed these limits in broad and helpful ways, and the reader is invited to consult their discussions for elaboration.[8] Here, I will distill these limits into two categories: limitations of method that arise because fallible humans do science, and limits in scope that apply because reality extends beyond the subject matter of science. I will argue that Christian beliefs about creation and humankind help us make sense of both types of limits.

Science is a human endeavor, and all aspects of science are affected by this truth. This fact does not surprise Adventist biologists. Humans are finite creatures by creation (made in God's image, but never gods), fallen and selfish due to rebellion against God (Genesis 3:1-12), and thus thoroughly fallible in all we think and do, including our science. Occasionally, scientists display human fallibility in a reprehensible quest for self-gratification. High-profile cases of biomedical scientists who used fraudulent data to promote their research careers[9] serve as stark reminders of human sinfulness, although such breaches of ethics are by no means restricted to science. More commonly, our fallible human nature plays out in more subtle ways.

Let us begin with the collection of data. Good scientists attempt to collect data with care – to record observations and the results of experiments accurately and objectively. However, scientists almost always collect data for a purpose – they have a theory or hypothesis to test or a question to answer – and they often have preexisting ideas about where to look to find the relevant data, and what that data should look like. Such motivations and background expectations are essential to science because they undergird the persistence and focus necessary for effective scientific inquiry. However, they sometimes blind us – at least temporarily – to more relevant observations.

If the human element reveals itself in data collection, it does so even more in the creation of scientific theories and the operation of shaping principles. Philosophers of science remind us that theory formation doesn't flow simply or automatically from data. Rather, theories represent *ideas* creatively formed by human minds, and their formation and testing inevitably are shaped by our background beliefs and commitments – our shaping principles.[10]

Consider Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection. He developed this theory to make sense of much of the data that he had assembled, so data played an important role. However, his ideas also were shaped by the economic and philosophical ideas of his culture. Darwin's insight into the struggle for existence that results from overpopulation and limited resources in nature was attributed to Thomas Malthus, whose essay engaged these questions as they pertained to human economies. Furthermore, Darwin's uncompromising commitment to mechanistic explanations for the origin of species that did not involve divine action reflected a trend in philosophical thought at that time.[11] Thus, Darwin's theory represents a human construct whose origin was shaped not only by data, but also by background knowledge and metaphysical commitments.

This commitment to natural, mechanistic explanations in science deserves further comment. In one sense, this commitment is central to the scientific enterprise because it motivates scientists to probe unknown phenomena until they are well understood; we don't want scientists to invoke a divine miracle every time a phenomenon remains unexplained! Taken as a philosophical imperative, however, this commitment may restrict the range of plausible hypotheses considered for testing, especially in the historical sciences; recall the role that multiple, competing hypotheses play in these disciplines.[12] As an example, a philosophical commitment to naturalism automatically excludes special creation as a hypothesis for the origin of life and biological design, regardless of whether scientific evidence might favor that hypothesis.

What does all this mean, practically, to the Adventist biologist who encoun-

ters apparently well-grounded scientific theories that conflict with our understanding of the Bible? Opinions vary. David Read, an Adventist attorney who has written a book on dinosaurs and the fossil record, argues that many current theories about life's history are so thoroughly molded by atheistic shaping principles that they must be rejected as false.[13] In this view, erroneous shaping principles drive formation of these theories; data play a secondary role.

Shandelle Henson, an Adventist mathematical ecologist, offers a differing perspective. She argues that the methods of science, although inevitably human and therefore fallible, represent a powerful way to keep subjective bias in check because of the ongoing interaction between data and scientific reasoning and the careful scrutiny of scientific research by peer reviewers before it can be published.[14] In this view, data play a central role in keeping scientific ideas on track.

My own view is that we should always be aware of human fallibility when evaluating scientific theories, especially some theories pertaining to life's history that may be difficult to test in rigorous ways. Sometimes dominant shaping principles may play an inordinate role in guiding theory formation and testing.

Let us now consider the second way in which science has limits: it is limited in the scope of its subject. Science offers powerful tools that help us describe and explain phenomena of the empirical universe. For the Christian, however, reality is both infinitely wider and much richer than the stuff of the universe, and science tells us little about these dimensions of reality. For starters, in the biblical worldview, God – not the material universe – is the ultimate reality. Science offers a few hints about His character and work insofar as these are reflected in the natural world (Romans 1:20), but it can never reveal the depths of His character or the plans He has for the world as revealed through Jesus Christ. Only God's self-revelation gives us these insights.

Furthermore, human experience displays rich dimensions not fully reducible to the material level. We have deep convictions about right and wrong, often sense that our lives have meaning and purpose, and experience transcendence and beauty in nature, our relationships, and art. For the believer, these experiences reflect dimensions of created reality. God created the moral law to govern human conduct (Psalm 19:7-11) and formed humans with a basic moral orientation. He invested humans with purpose and meaning at creation (Genesis 1:26-27) and continues to do so across generations (Psalm 139:14-17). Again, science tells us little about these dimensions of reality.

Some scientists strongly disagree with this interpretation. In their view, science does explain our sense of morality, purpose, and so on – as evolutionary adaptations to improve human fitness. However, I concur with Del Ratzsch[15], who argues that all such so-called explanations only work when what is to be explained is reduced to something less than it really is. As an example, science might "explain" our moral convictions as an adaptively useful tool to get us to behave in ways that maximize our fitness. However, this does not explain morality. It may explain why certain behaviors are useful but does not help us understand why we *ought* to act in moral ways – the real question of morality.

Finally, science faces limitations in scope even in the study of its proper domain: the material universe. Science often works well when asking questions about what things are made of, how they are put together, how natural phenomena work, when and where natural phenomena occur, and so on. These questions often begin with what, when, where, and how. Science falls silent, however, when we address ultimate questions about nature – questions that begin with a philosophical why. Why is the universe put together in precisely the right way to support intelligent life? Science does not tell us. Why does the universe exist at all? Again, science does not tell us. As believers, we obtain insight into these questions through God's Word.

Viewing science as a means of enriching Adventist belief and practice

In the preceding section, I argued that core Christian beliefs (notably the doctrines of Creation and the Fall) provide a robust framework for understanding the power and limits of science as a human way to understand the natural world. We now turn to the second claim of this essay: that discoveries of science often enrich our beliefs and practices as Seventh-day Adventists.

God as Creator and Sustainer. Seventh-day Adventist fundamental belief 3 states, in part: "God the eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation."[16] A number of scientific discoveries, when viewed through the lens of faith, offer support for this belief because they suggest that important features of the universe, and of life on earth, reflect the clear intention and planning of a wise Creator. Biologists who advocate design in nature are struck by the highly-integrated, tightly-regulated, complex biochemical systems universal to living cells. They see no viable naturalistic explanation for how such systems could evolve through unguided natural processes, and they thus see evidence for divine design.[17]

However, as Adventist physicist Gary Burdick points out, profound design also may be displayed by what science has explained.[18] He recounts the story of how physicists came to understand the way the elements carbon and oxygen could be formed in the nuclear furnaces of stars. In doing so, they determined that both elements could only be formed, and in the right proportions to support life, if each element exhibited an excited state at a very precise energy level. Subsequent discoveries demonstrated that carbon and oxygen

exhibit these precise excited states, and scientists were left to wonder, "Why?" Why is the universe put together in precisely the correct way to make this process, which is so essential for life to work so optimally? The believer sensibly sees this as evidence for divine design.

Some Christians conclude that scientific evidence essentially compels belief in a Creator-God. Ariel Roth, a long-term contributor to Adventist thought on faith and science, offers this perspective: "The data of science itself is essentially forcing us to conclude that something unusual is going on, and it looks as if a knowledgeable and transcendent God was involved in creating the complexities that scientific observation keeps uncovering."[19] Other believers find such evidence suggestive but not coercive. After reviewing the astonishing rational beauty of nature and the exquisite fine-tuning of the universe to support conscious life, John Polkinghorne, a physicist who became an Anglican priest, concludes that a theistic interpretation of the universe, although not "logically coercive," offers an "intellectually satisfying understanding of what would otherwise be unintelligible good fortune."[20] In either view, knowledge gained from science often is congruent with the Christian conviction that the universe is God's creation.

Perhaps the most important contribution that scientific study makes to our belief in God is that it gives practical occasion to live out this belief – to "worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters" (Revelation 14:7). Many scientists – even those without religious orientation – express amazement and awe at the grandeur and complexity of what they study, and they sometimes express this experience in transcendent, almost religious terms.[21] Christian biologists can take this experience a step further. With Job of long ago, confronted by God's power manifest in untamed nature (Job 39-41), we are reminded of our smallness, repent of our prideful ways, and worship our Creator (Job 42:1-6).

Although the study of nature provides insights into Christian beliefs about God, we must acknowledge that it does so with complexity and ambiguity. I recall one magical Friday evening in south Florida, when students marveled with their teachers at the exquisite behavior of an orb-weaving spider constructing its web. Some mentioned this marvel of design in worship reflections later that evening. On Sabbath morning, however, one thoughtful student pointed out that this beautiful web serves as a death trap and mused about its meaning. Nature is full of such twists, which complicate simple design-of-nature arguments for God's existence. In a fallen world, we see through a glass darkly.

Adventist conception of humankind. The Genesis narrative tells us, "[T]he Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (2:7). This narrative grounds two truths about human nature. First, we share much with the rest of creation because we are made of the same material (birds and beasts also were formed "out of the ground" – Genesis 2:19). Second, our status as "living souls" reflects an indivisible unity between body and spirit. Seventh-day Adventists have formalized the last truth in fundamental belief 7, which states, in part, that "[Each person] is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else."[22] The Seventh-day Adventist commitment to wholesome and healthful living flows from these convictions: if I am to care for my soul, I must care for my whole being – body, mind, and spirit.

Scientific discoveries continue to illuminate these beliefs and commitments. Biochemistry shows us that we share much of the fundamental molecular machinery of life with other creatures, and ecology reveals the critical ways that humans are integrated into natural ecosystems. On a practical level, advancing knowledge in nutrition and wellness confirms Adventist's commitment to healthful living.[23] More theoretically, scientific discoveries give insight into the wholeness of human nature. We still have much to learn in this arena.

Adventist beliefs and scientific discovery sometimes challenge each other. Up to this point, I have emphasized the positive ways that Adventist beliefs and science interact. We must acknowledge, however, that for Adventists, biblical beliefs and scientific knowledge sometimes challenge each other. We experience this challenge most directly when we study the history of life. Adventists accept the creation narratives of Genesis as factual history,[24] describing God's work of creation in six real days, followed by the Sabbath (fundamental belief 6, in part).[25] Modern scientific discoveries are interpreted to indicate a process of gradual formation over a very long period of time. How do we bring the evidence from the Bible and nature into a coherent picture of creation?

Consider four general principles for constructive dialogue that will affirm the authority of the Bible, encourage growth in our understanding of both the Bible and nature, and facilitate respectful conversations among participants.

First, we must affirm the authority of the scriptures and not force interpretations of the Bible to accommodate science. For example, some believers have interpreted the days of Genesis 1 as figurative, representing indefinite periods of creation.[26] This interpretation helps resolve the time-discrepancy between geology and Genesis, but Adventist scholars have rejected it because it is inconsistent with evidence in the biblical text.[27]

Second, we must be honest with the empirical evidence of science and not

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Death as sleep in Adventism and in Scripture

by Wilson Paroschi

What does the Scripture imply when it refers to death as sleep? How did its usage evolve in Adventist theological history? What are the implications of this theological metaphor, both in preaching and in the development of our doctrine of the state of the dead and the resurrection? A professor of theology from Brazil shares his insights.

Scripture uses the metaphors of death as a sleep and of the resurrection as an awakening from sleep (cf. John 11:11-14; 1 Cor. 15). While these analogies can provide meaningful insights, such as affirming the certainty of the resurrection, they can also lead to erroneous conclusions if taken literally or if one were to conclude that in death the soul is sleeping – as if death were an intermediate state in which the person lies inactive in the grave until the resurrection. This article seeks to affirm the biblical perspective regarding death and the state of the dead, while also valuing the message presented through the metaphors of sleep and of awakening from sleep.

Early Adventist developments

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was influenced in its belief of conditional immortality by some in the Millerite movement, particularly George Storrs, one of its most influential leaders in the late summer and early fall of 1844.[1] Around 1840, Storrs, still a Methodist preacher, became convinced that humans are not immortal, but receive immortality at the resurrection through the condition of faith in Christ. As a corollary, he also believed that the wicked who live and die in their sins will be punished through fire and utter extermination, rather than live in suffering forever.

While Storrs strongly emphasized that death is a total deprivation of life, most of his arguments were directed against the traditional belief in hell as a place of eternal torment. When he spoke about the righteous, he wished to balance his statements in view of the resurrection promise, and he did that by means of the sleep concept. He says, "When men die they 'sleep in the dust of the earth' (Daniel 12:2). They wake not till Christ returns 'from heaven;' or till the last trump."[2]

As early as 1842, Storrs' conditionalist ideas were accepted by Calvin French, a Baptist minister who also joined the Millerites. French was able to advance the arguments concerning death as an unconscious state by appealing rather extensively to the biblical metaphors of sleep and rest, arguing that "the righteous and the wicked rest together in the grave in an unconscious state until they hear the voice of the Son of man, and come forth to the resurrection of life or damnation," and that "they who sleep in Jesus will awake at the first resurrection," while "the rest of the dead will awake at the second resurrection, and appear before Christ at the judgment."[3]

This seems to have been one of the first occurrences of the expression "sleep in Jesus" among Adventists of the 1840s, which would become quite popular among later Seventh-day Adventists,[4] especially in obituary notices. In that line, Storrs' biographical sketch, published as an introduction to the 1855 edition of his *Six Sermons*, refers to Charles Fitch's sudden death in October 1844: "He fell asleep in Jesus, in the glorious hope of soon awaking at the voice of the Son of God."[5] This mention of Fitch, one of the top Millerites, is fitting inasmuch as he became Storrs' first ministerial convert to the doctrine of conditional immortality within the Adventist ranks, while other movement leaders strongly rejected it.

With the fragmentation of the Millerite movement after October 22, 1844, however, several Adventist groups continued to believe in conditionalism. This was the case with Sabbatarian Adventists,[6] to whom the concept of sleep started playing a

central role in their understanding of death and the resurrection.

In their first publication, in 1847, James White refers twice to the "sleeping saints" who will be raised by Jesus Himself at His second coming.[7] Ellen G. White would also use this expression at least 15 times in her own writings. In fact, in the following years, she would make an extensive use of the concept of death as sleep in its various forms.

Besides speaking of the "sleeping saints" who will be "kept in safety" until the resurrection morning, when they will be "awakened" by the voice of the Son of God and "called forth" from their graves, Ellen White refers dozens of times to those who are now silently and for a little while sleeping/resting in their graves. She uses the expression even for herself, as in her diary entry for December 26, 1904: "May the Lord spare my life to do this work before I shall rest in the grave, is my prayer."[8] Two years later, she would write in a letter: "I am waiting my summons to give up my work, and rest in the grave."[9]

In a biographical article published in 1876, however, Mrs. White makes two surprising statements. After reporting a conversation her mother had had with another woman in reference to a discourse they had heard on the nature of death, she came to her mother and, deeply impressed by the comments, started inquiring about the issue. At a certain point, she asked, "But, mother … do you really believe that the soul sleeps in the grave until the resurrection?" A few paragraphs later, when describing the impact that this new doctrine had on her, she says, "This new and beautiful faith taught me the reason that inspired writers had dwelt so much upon the resurrection of the body, it was because the entire being was slumbering in the grave."[10]

Even though this episode took place more than 30 years earlier when Ellen White (then Ellen Harmon) was only 16, she seems to be reproducing the very language she used at that time, equating the *soul* sleeping in the grave with "the entire being." Nowhere else does she speak of the *soul* sleeping, resting, or slumbering in the grave.

She seems, in fact, to have avoided talking about dead souls. The closest she comes to the idea of a dead soul is when she speaks figuratively of sinners who have not yet accepted Jesus as their Savior. "A soul without Christ," she says, "is like a body without blood; it is dead. It may have the appearance of spiritual life; it may perform certain ceremonies in religious matters like a machine; but it has no spiritual life."[11]

In addition to Ellen White's writings, other early Adventist works also use biblical language to describe the state of the dead as a "sleep."[12] To those, however, who were unfamiliar with the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of biblical anthropology whereby "man is a unit – that soul and body are not separate beings," as R.F. Cottrell expressed it in 1865,[13] the concept of death as a sleep was open to misunderstanding. "We do not," he clarified, "teach that 'the soul sleeps *with the body* in the grave.'"[14]

Such clarification was necessary because the soul-sleep concept was still likely to be understood dualistically in connection with the immortality of the soul. Throughout Christian history, there have been several immortalists who believed just that. This was so, for example, with some early Syrian writers (such as Ephrem), John Wyclif, William Tyndale, and Martin Luther. Many Anabaptists and Socinians too apparently subscribed to this view, which was also fairly widespread in England in the 16th and 17th centuries.[15]

Death as sleep in Scripture

In Scripture, sleep is used both literally and metaphorically. When it is used literally, it simply denotes the physical act of sleeping (Genesis 28:11; Job 33:15; Daniel 10:9; Luke 9:32). When it is used metaphorically, sleep may denote spiritual dullness, indolence, or lack of vigilance. In Proverbs, laziness, indolence, and sleep are used in a quasi-moral way to depict the negligent person who refuses to acknowledge the reasonable needs of human life (6:9-11; 19:15; 20:13; 24:33, 34). In Isaiah (29:10) and frequently in the New Testament (Mark 13:35, 36; Romans 13:11; Ephesians 5:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:6-9), sleep describes a spiritual lethargy that must be thrown away in order to remain awake in this evil world. When it is used in this way, the context is very often eschatological, warning us to be alert to the signs of the times.

Sleep (as well as lying-down and rest) is also used as a metaphor for death. This is common in the Old Testament (1 Kings 1:21; Job 7:21; 14:12; Psalm 13:3; Jeremiah 51:39, 57; Daniel 12:2). The expression "slept [or rested] with his fathers" is a fixed formula in reference to the death of the kings of Israel and Judah; it is used 36 times in the books of 1 and 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles. The metaphor is also found in the New Testament. When Jesus rose from the dead, we are told that "many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised" (Matthew 27:52). After being stoned, Luke records that Stephen knelt down, said his last words, and "fell asleep" (Acts 7:60).

By the time of his third missionary journey, Paul says that some of those "more than five hundred" who had seen the resurrected Christ had already "fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:6). He also refers to those who "have fallen asleep in Christ" (vs. 18, 20) and to his hope that not all would "fall asleep" before Jesus' second coming (vs. 51). In 1 Thessalonians, while addressing the situation of the brothers and sisters who had already died, Paul refers to them three times as those who had "fallen asleep" (4:13-15).

Jesus also used this metaphor on two different occasions. The first was in relation to Jairus's daughter, who had just succumbed to her illness and died (Mark 5:35). Upon His arrival at Jairus's home, Jesus saw the commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly (vs. 38). To them He said, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead, but sleeping" (vs. 39). The mourners responded cynically to Jesus and ridiculed Him (vs. 40). They took His words to imply that the girl was literally sleeping, while they knew that she was dead (vs. 35; cf. Luke 8:53).

The second occasion was the case of Lazarus. When Jesus was informed that His friend Lazarus was sick, Jesus did not respond immediately (John 11:3). When He finally decided to go to Bethany, He said, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awake him" (vs. 11). This confused the disciples, who took Jesus's words literally, concluding that sleep would be good for Lazarus (vs. 12) and that Jesus would not have to risk His life by going to Judea (cf. vss. 7, 8). As in the case of Jairus's daughter, Jesus was not speaking about sleep in its normal sense, but figuratively as a reference to death (vs. 13). It was necessary for Him to tell them plainly: "Lazarus is dead" (vs. 14).

Thus, in both stories, Jesus resorted to the sleep metaphor to refer to death, and in both of them He was misunderstood. The misunderstanding, however, was not because the metaphor was a novelty introduced by Him, but because He used it in an unconventional way: not simply to describe death itself, but to deny its irrevocable character.

The biblical view of death

The biblical description of death is that of termination (Job 7:21; 14:12). When the person dies, nothing remains, as the breath of life returns to God and the body decomposes to the basic elements from which it was formed (Psalm 146:4; Ecclesiastes 12:7; cf. Genesis 2:7; Job 33:4; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, 10). As Haynes explains, "the union of two things, earth and breath, served to create a third thing, soul. The continued existence of the soul depended wholly upon the continued union of breath and body. When that union is broken and the breath separates from the body, as it does at death, the soul ceases to exist."[16]

Samuel Bacchiocchi puts it this way: death is presented in Scripture "as a return to the elements from which man originally was made… . [Death is] the termination of one's life, which results in the decay and decomposition of the body… . [It means] the deprivation or cessation of life."[17] While this cannot be literally equated with sleep, in which one remains alive, the biblical metaphor nevertheless remains important to the Adventist understanding of death.

There is no question that there will be a resurrection, as in the case of Jairus's daughter, Lazarus, and several others, besides Christ Himself. Some will raise "to everlasting life" and some "to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2; cf. John 5:28, 29). And the resurrection to everlasting life will be possible precisely because of the resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:17, 18; 1 Thessalonians 4:14). This is also how the expression "the firstborn from the dead" (Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5) or "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23) has traditionally been understood.[18] To use a classical statement, "the resurrection of Christ is a pledge and proof of the resurrection of His people."[19]

So the biblical teaching is that, though death means complete termination, it is not final or definitive, except for what the Bible calls "the second death," which refers to the final extermination of the wicked (Revelation 20:11-15; 21:8). For believers, death does not have the last word (1 Corinthians 15:26, 54, 55; cf. Revelation 2:11; 20:4, 6).

If death means termination, resurrection is then much more than an awakening. It truly means re-creation. If there is nothing left, there is nothing to be physically awakened or to come out of the tomb. All aspects of the present life reach their end at death. Sometimes not even the bones are extant. Yet, they will live again (John 5:25, 28; 11:25; Revelation 20:6), because the memory of the personality and character of the deceased are preserved by God.[20]

In order to be resurrected, then, there must be a new creation, this time not formed from dust of the ground, but from heaven (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:47-50). Thus, there is no physical link between this life and the new life in the resurrection. "Though they no longer exist, by the power of God they can be re-created to live again"[21] – a re-creation out of nothing, a new life. Hence, the awakening metaphor, frequently used in the Bible, is simply the counterpart, the logical equivalent of the sleep metaphor. As sleep does not fully convey the nature of death, so awakening does not fully express the character of resurrection.

Conclusion

In sum, there are perhaps two key points to keep in mind. First, sleep is a metaphor for death, not a comprehensive description of death. It does not fully express the condition of human beings in death, because death means the complete cessation of life, with all that that includes. As a metaphor, however, it can provide important insights. On the lips of Jesus, for example, it served to highlight the reality and the assurance of the resurrection (cf. John 11:23-25).

Second, there is no biblical basis for the soul-sleep concept. Death is not a literal sleep. While one may resemble the other, they are in fact two different things. This means that it is not

appropriate to use sleep to understand the nature of death, or by extension the state of the dead. The biblical view is that upon death, the soul ceases to exist (cf. Genesis 2:7; Job 33:4; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, 10).

Consequently, we should use the sleep metaphor judiciously to avoid understating the seriousness of death or detracting from the uniqueness of resurrection.

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Jesus: A Man for All People

by William G. Johnsson

Four unmatched insights into the mind and values of Jesus, the matchless Man for all people.

Jesus of Nazareth was a Man for all people. No one was too important or too humble, too poor or too rich, too blessed or too broken, too powerful or too powerless, too despised or too famous to be passed by. The range of Jesus' interest in humanity ran the gamut of society.

Turn to four encounters in which Jesus was involved. These four encounters, found only in the Gospel of John, occurred early in Jesus' ministry, probably between Passover AD 28 and Passover AD 29. They provide unmatched insights into the mind and values of Jesus, the matchless Man for all people.

The night caller

Nicodemus was one of the most powerful men in Jerusalem: he was a Pharisee and a member of the ruling council, the Sanhedrin.

The Pharisees, scrupulous in their observance of both written and oral regulations, were the religious purists. Although the Sadducees controlled the high priesthood, the Pharisees dominated in spiritual affairs. Proud in their religiosity, they looked down on the common people who, unlike them, had neither the time nor the means to devote to rigid adherence of the Law.

Throughout the Gospels, we find Jesus frequently clashing with the Pharisees. His strongest denunciations were directed at them: "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!"[1] (Matt. 23:13, 15, 18, 23, 25, 27, 29). To the crowds surrounding Him and to the disciples Jesus advised, "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach" (vs. 1-3).

Over the centuries, the very word "Pharisee" has taken on negative connotations. It represents people who make a big show of religion but who in reality are hypocrites. We should be careful not to write off all Pharisees under this blanket condemnation, however. Among their number were earnest seekers after God, whose meticulous attempts to keep the law sprung from hearts that wanted to please God.

Nicodemus belonged among such a group. He had heard about Jesus, and his heart was moved. He wanted to know more about Him. Who was He? Why did He possess such power to perform such miracles – which Nicodemus recognized as *semeia,* signs of the presence of God?

Nicodemus decided to find out for himself.

The second feature that made Nicodemus one of Jerusalem's elite was his membership in the Sanhedrin. This, the highest governing body of the Jewish people, was a group of 70 drawn from the priests (Sadducees), scribes (Pharisees), and lay elders of the aristocracy. The high priest presided over the Sanhedrin. Nicodemus came to Jesus under cover of darkness. He was drawn to the Master, but he was protective of his reputation. In terms of Jerusalem's power structure, the wandering teacher-healer from Galilee – uneducated, poor, commoner – was a nobody. No one could foretell what would come of Him and His small band of followers. In a short time, the Jesus movement might fizzle out.

Curious to know more about Jesus but apprehensive concerning the step he is taking, Nicodemus has prepared what he will say when they meet: "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him" (John 3:1, 2).

"Rabbi ... teacher from God" – Nicodemus' greeting is polite and complimentary. Or so he thinks. Jesus' response, abrupt and pointed, startles the Pharisee.

"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again," Jesus declares.

The learned Pharisee finds himself in an uncomfortable position, one that he isn't accustomed to. He is used to dictating the flow of conversation, not being put on the defensive.

So he resorts to ridicule. "How can someone be born when he is old?" he blusters. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb

to be born?" (v. 4).

Nicodemus knew better. The word translated "again" in Jesus' declaration, *anothen,* has dual meanings: "a second time" or "again, and from above." Nicodemus selected the former meaning in order to try to gain the advantage over Jesus. And he was familiar with the idea of rebirth itself. The Jews already had such a teaching; however, they applied it not to Jews, but to Gentiles who wished to convert to Judaism.

Jesus' response takes Nicodemus to the heart of his spiritual problem: *he,* not just Gentiles, needs to be born from above. "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit," Jesus tells him. "You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again'" (vs. 6, 7).

Now Jesus brings in an illustration from the wind. To catch its force, we need to realize that the Greek word for "wind" can also mean "spirit." "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit," says Jesus (vs. 6-8).

Nicodemus, now utterly deflated, can only offer up a weak "How can this be?" (v. 9).

And Jesus tells it straight: "You are Israel's teacher and you do not understand these things?" What a rebuke! One may be considered learned and yet be ignorant of what matters the most. Unless one knows God, all one's teaching about God is empty. Unless one knows that Jesus is far more than "a teacher who has come from God", unless one acknowledges that Jesus is "the one who came from heaven" (v. 13), he or she speaks only on an earthly plane.

Look and live!

The conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus follows a three-stage development, as Jesus leads the Pharisee into his own need of salvation. Three times Nicodemus speaks, and three times Jesus begins His answer with the solemn words: "I tell you the truth" (vs. 3, 5, 11).

Just where the conversation ends is not clear. After his feeble "How can this be?" (v. 9), we hear no more from Nicodemus, nor does John inform us of his departure. Indeed, there is even a question as to where Jesus' words stop: some interpreters end them after verse 15, making John the source of verses 16 to 21.

I find no compelling reason to accept the view that verses 13 to 21 are a commentary added by John rather than the words of Jesus. On the contrary, the ideas of this passage are so lofty, among the grandest in the entire Bible, that they rightfully belong with Jesus Himself. We will briefly summarize the material.

"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life," said Jesus (vs. 14, 15). He referenced the incident recorded in Numbers 21:6-9, when the children of Israel fell among poisonous snakes but were saved by looking at the bronze serpent on a pole that Moses made at God's direction.

Look and live: this was the message that came from the desert.

Look and live: this would be the message to flow from Calvary, when the Son of Man would be offered up for the sins of the world.

For unbelievers, the crucifixion of Jesus is no more than an accident of history. Jesus was a good man who, trapped by circumstances, was put to death in a gross miscarriage of justice. Jesus' death *was* a gross miscarriage of justice, but it was also far more. It had a "must be" quality about it. That is, *God* was in it, working out His plan to save the world through it and by it. And its message to humanity then and now is this: look and live!

The verse that follows, John 3:16, is the best-loved and most-frequently quoted passage of the New Testament: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Notice its great ideas:

Our salvation begins with God, not ourselves. He took the initiative, devising a plan to rescue us from the pit into which we had fallen.

Salvation springs from God's love alone. Nothing else – no satisfaction of divine ego, no selfish purpose – only love. Love for the world. Love for you, for me.

God loved us first. Before we ever turned back to Him, before Jesus died, God loved us. He doesn't love us *because* of Jesus; He sent Jesus because He loves us. The love of the Father cannot be separated from the love of the Son.

God gave *His Son for the world, to the world.* A gift is forever: free, unlimited, eternal. The Son is forever heaven's choicest and most precious gift to the world.

The gift must be received. Eternal life in exchange for eternal death: who would not gladly seize it? Yet, strangely, many do not. The gift seems too good to be true, but it isn't. Only as we take God at His word and accept the gift can we have its eternal benefits.

How did Jesus' words impact Nicodemus? The conversation began with Nicodemus coming to Jesus at night; it ends on the theme that men and women must leave the darkness and come to the light. Nicodemus came to the light, not immediately but eventually. Later, when the Sanhedrin was planning to have Jesus arrested, Nicodemus spoke up in His defense (John 7:50-52). And at the last, at the Cross, Nicodemus, no longer following Jesus in secret, came forward openly to request Pilate to release His body for burial (John 19:38-42).

Of water and men

She was a lonely person, this woman who came to the well in the middle of the day to draw water. Her life revolved around water and men.

Anciently and still today in many parts of the world, it falls to women

to supply water for the home. It can be hard work, especially if the water source isn't easily accessible and is located at a distance. Morning and evening find women at the spring or well; they avoid the heat of the day. When they gather together in fulfillment of their daily chore, they find relief in sharing gossip and news from their simple lives.

We know where the story recorded in John 4 took place. It was near the town of Sychar, the modern Askar. The well nearby at the foot of Mt. Gerizim is ancient. And it is very deep, about 100 feet. Hauling up water in a bucket from that depth took strength.

Yet here she was, approaching the well at noon with her water pot. She doesn't expect to find anyone; she doesn't want to find anyone. She is a person whose reputation has become known to all the people in the town. When she passes by in public, heads turn and tongues wag. So she avoids meeting people, choosing to perform the menial task of drawing water in the heat of the day.

Water she knows; men she knows. She has lived with five different men. When Jesus tells her that, it is to her as though He knows everything about her. When she goes back into town and tells the people about Jesus, she says, "He told me everything I ever did" (John 4:39).

The contrast between this story with that of John 3 – the encounter with Nicodemus – could not be drawn more sharply: a ruler of the Jews versus a nameless person. A man learned in Torah and scrupulous in observing its finest details versus a woman whose life revolves around water and men, a tainted woman polite society avoids. And beyond all these differences: a Jew and a Samaritan, mutually antagonistic.

To Jesus of Nazareth, however, the woman who came to the well in the middle of the day was just as important as Nicodemus. She was as much a child of God as was he. And both were equally in need of the new life that Jesus had come to make possible.

As Jesus did with everyone He encountered, He met the woman where she was. Her life was water and men; He talked with her about water and men. No being born from above, no snake on the pole, no discourse about the incredible love of God that sent His Son into the world.

So simple, so basic: water and men. Yet through these two items around which the woman's life revolved, Jesus led her, step by step, to God and the new life – eternal life – made available to all through the gift of the Son.

It was a shocking conversation. Shocking that Jesus would spend time talking to a woman, shocking that He would speak to a Samaritan. His disciples, who had gone away to buy food, were shocked (v. 27). By analyzing the conversation (John 4:4-26), we gain insights into its main ideas and their development. We see that the encounter consists of two short dialogues, each with three exchanges (based on Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John,* I-XII, 176-177).

Scene 1 a: The Living Water (vs. 5-15).

Dialogue 1 (vs. 7-10).

Jesus asks for water, violating the social customs of the time.

The woman mocks Jesus for not observing the proprieties.

Jesus shows that the real reason for His action is not His inferiority or need, but His superior status.

Jesus issues a two-part challenge:

- If she recognizes who is speaking to her,
- She will ask Him for living water.

Dialogue 2 (vs. 11-15).

The woman misunderstands on a material, earthly level.

Jesus clarifies that He is speaking of the heavenly water of eternal life.

The woman, intrigued, asks for water. She thus fulfills one part of Jesus' challenge in verse 10.

Scene 1 b: True Worship of the Father (vs. 16-26).

Dialogue 1 (vs. 16-18).

Jesus leads the woman to recognize who He is by referring to her personal life.

The woman gives an ambiguous reply.

Jesus uses her answer to uncover her past.

Dialogue 2 (vs. 19-26).

The woman attempts to change the subject. But by broaching the topic of worship, she is beginning to think on a spiritual level.

Jesus explains that true worshipers are those born of the Spirit.

The woman at last recognizes who Jesus is.

Jesus affirms that He is the Messiah.

Thus, this simple but powerful conversation shows the way in which Jesus leads a person to eternal life – from absorption in material things to everlasting values. We detect four main stages in the process:

- The awakening of a *desire* for something better (vs. 7-15)
- The awakening of a *conviction* of personal need (vs. 16-20)
- The call for *decision* to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah (vs. 16-25)
- The *action* that appropriately follows the decision (vs. 28-30, 39-42)

The woman came to draw water. At the close of the story, her water pot lies abandoned, left by the side of the well. She has found something infinitely more precious than water from the well: she has found Jesus, the Living Water!

The second miracle at Cana

In this, the third encounter, found in John 4:43-54, Jesus meets another powerful person. This man isn't a religious leader but a royal official. But like Nicodemus he seeks out Jesus, traveling from his home in Capernaum to Cana.

He comes with an urgent request: his son is dying, and he begs Jesus to come and heal him. Jesus' response, however, is abrupt, just as it was to Nicodemus' greeting. "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus tells him, "you will never believe" (v. 48).

Jesus' words seem surprisingly sharp. We find no careful build-up as with the conversation by the well, because there is no need of it. The official already believes in God; he has already heard about Jesus and comes seeking His help.

But there is a problem in his attitude toward the Master. He has made up his mind that he will decide for or against Jesus on the basis of how Jesus acts. If Jesus comes and heals his son, good, he will accept Him. If not, he will not believe in Him.

It is a dangerous thing to lay conditions on God. The Lord isn't subject to our reasoning. Sometimes we hear people say, "I could never believe in a God who does such and such." But these declarations tell us nothing about God, only about the person who makes them.

When the official heard Jesus's gentle rebuke, at once he realized how false his reasoning had been. In desperation he cried out, "Sir, come down before my child dies!"

And Jesus' words came back, calm and comforting: "You may go. Your son will live."

He left. He made his way back at a leisurely pace; He didn't rush back to Capernaum. He took his time because he *knew* that all was well. He believed without seeing. And when, hours later, he received the news that his son had recovered, his faith in Jesus was affirmed.

Waiting by the water

Of the four cases of need, the one in John 5:1-15 seems the most hopeless. This unfortunate person had been an invalid for 38 years. With the passing of the years, hope of recovery had faded away. He'd become resigned to his fate. So low were his spirits that when Jesus came by and asked, "Do you want to get well?" he didn't cry out, "Yes!"

Instead, he said, in effect, "My case is hopeless." He could only think of being first into the pool of Bethesda as the source of healing, and he had no one to assist him in his dash for the water.

Jesus didn't offer the invalid help in getting into the pool. He simply said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk" (v. 8).

And at once the man was cured. He picked up his mat and walked.

Nicodemus came at night asking questions of Jesus. The woman by the well asked Jesus to give her the living water that He said He could provide. The royal official asked Jesus to come to Capernaum and heal his son.

But the invalid by the pool didn't ask Jesus for anything. Not to be made well. Not for assistance to get into the pool ahead of the others. He was a broken person. Broken in body. Broken in hope. Too broken to ask. Jesus, however, acted without being asked. His compassion flowed out in healing, restoring, life-giving power.

Jesus is the Man for all people.

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1. Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture passages are from the New International Version.

PROFILE

Umutoni Aïssa

Dialogue with Rwanda's National Human Rights Commission officer

Interview by Bahati Nkundakozera

Umutoni Aïssa is a witness to the transforming power of the Bible and prayer. Her parents originally belonged to Rwanda, but due to frequent tribal clashes and unsafe conditions, they moved to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). There, Aïssa was born in 1976. Her parents found in her a precious gift and loved her dearly, giving her a name that literally means "lovely one" and "lamb." They gave her everything love could offer and brought her up as a child of hope.

Aïssa was not a Christian at birth, but at the age of 24 she came to know Jesus, accepted Him as her Savior, and was baptized in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. That was a difficult decision for her non-Christian family to accept, but her mother allowed her to choose what she thought was best for her life.

That early crucible of intense struggles of the soul shaped Aïssa into who she is today. She chose to study law, worked tirelessly for the causes of human rights and equality, and finally ended up working as Rwanda's National Human Rights Commission officer. As she serves society as a promoter and preserver of human rights and equality among all tribes, races, and religions, she is conscious that the foundation for her beliefs in equal rights of all people rests on her faith in Jesus, in whom there is no east or west, no black or white, no male or female. One in Christ, one common humanity, became her creed – and that is the creed of her religious faith and her professional choice.

Aïssa is married to a lawyer, and together they work for the cause of human equality and dignity. Her husband has been a church elder for many years. Aïssa does not rest whenever there is a church activity. During the many international conventions organized by the church in Rwanda, she makes sure visitors are well received, and that they are central to the theme of human equality and dignity. Aïssa's happiness is to see that others are happy. She serves the church as an active lay member and carries the message of joy in Jesus to all those she comes across.

■ *What is your personal background?*

Although born in DRC, I am a Rwandan today. I became a Seventh-day Adventist through the influence of the man who later became my husband. He was a soldier, and he shared an apartment with my uncle, who was also a soldier. I visited my uncle often, and while there, I observed this man, who at first seemed unusual. In the morning, he started the day singing, praying, and reading the Bible. From time to time, he would introduce the Ten Commandments into conversa-

tions he had with people, inviting them to keep the Sabbath. He used to invite us and many other people to his church. At first, we responded just to please him, but later I realized that what he was saying was plain truth. In addition, his life was the testimony of an organized person. At his invitation, I attended his church and learnt more about truth. Eventually, I became a Seventh-day Adventist; we got married, and are blessed with a son and a daughter. My husband is a lawyer by profession and an elder in the local church, and I am involved in human rights issues.

■ *How did you become interested in working for human rights?*

From a young age, I was interested in law, and after completing high school I decided to become a lawyer. At university, my interest focused on human rights, particularly after the tremendous tragedy my country, Rwanda, went through in the 1990s, culminating in the 1994 genocide that left almost a million people dead. This massive violation of human rights, and the cold-blooded killing of an entire people, drove me to work in the area of human rights. By nature, and by my early upbringing, I am a person of racial and religious tolerance, and so it was not surprising that I was drawn into this area and decided to work on behalf of those whose rights have been violated.

■ *What are some of the major human rights projects you have been involved in?*

I have worked with the Rwandan National Commission for Human Rights for 14 years, and have held several positions in the Commission, including legislation officer and human rights protection officer.

As legislation officer, it was my responsibility to provide assistance for the formulation of laws and regulations concerning human rights in the country. Such promotion involves introducing strong and pertinent laws that will ensure nationwide understanding and conformity to fundamental and universal principles of human rights. What has happened in the mid 1990s should never happen again in Rwanda – or for that matter, anywhere in the world. My work has helped contribute to the amendment of the current penal code, labor law code, and the law regulating religious professions in Rwanda. These views and principles were placed and defended before various commissions of the Parliament in both chambers and have received favorable consideration.

As human rights protection officer, my daily task involves investigating cases of human rights violations, such as illegal arrest and detention. I also carry out visits to prisons to check whether human rights there are secured. As a result of our advocacy of rights for those who are incarcerated, the quality of life of prisoners has improved measurably.

In addition to legislative and human rights matters, my duties also include being an observer during presidential and legislative elections.

■ *Do you have any opportunities to share your faith convictions in your work?*

At work, everyone knows that I am an Adventist, and as such my colleagues respect my choice to keep the Sabbath. In addition to my regular professional duties, I have been involved for the last five years as an advisor to the District Council. Whenever the Council session is scheduled to meet on Saturdays, the organizers have been very considerate of my faith priority and shift such appointments to another day. I have appreciated this consideration very much, and I give the very best of what I can for the betterment of the District Council.

I also find it a joy to share my faith in many other ways: friendship evangelism, counseling where there is a need, passing out faith-strengthening literature, praying with colleagues (without giving any impression of imposition on my part), and visiting colleagues in their homes when I can be of some help. In whatever I do, I want to share God's love with my colleagues in a positive and affirming way, without any appearance of coercion.

■ *In your work, what frustrates or disappoints you the most, and what gives you the most satisfaction?*

I get the most satisfaction in my job when, at the end of the day, I can go to bed with a sense of having accomplished the daily tasks with all the strength God has given me and with the knowledge that what I have done will be a blessing to someone. My approach to my daily task is to give my best, not only because that's what I am paid for, but because that's the job God has called me to do at the moment. I believe that the Lord's Prayer teaches us not only to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," but also to submit: "Give us this day the wisdom to accomplish what you have called us to do." What gives me the most satisfaction in my job is that I feel that I am on God's mission when I listen to someone telling me about a problem, expecting a solution from my advocacy. What frustrates me is that sometimes we receive cases for which we do not have any solution, although the case is a serious one. In such cases, I am simply driven to my knees.

■ *How do you handle your frustrations?*

Pray, pray, pray. Work, work, work. I don't see any other way.

■ *How do you manage to balance the various demands of your profession and your personal life?*

Today's life is complex and highly demanding, and so there is need to set priorities in daily work schedules. For me, my relationship with God, my family, and my church take priority, in that order. Only after that come my professional duties and other activities. I am fortunate in having an

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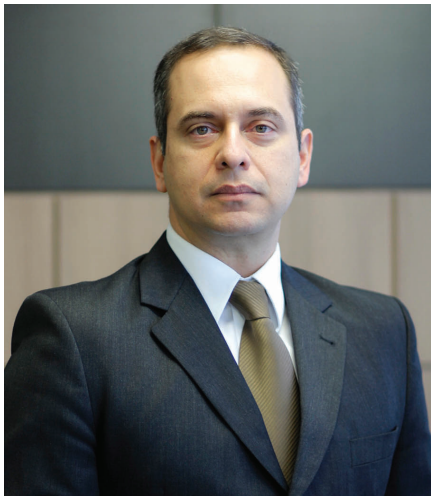
PROFILE

Thadeu de Jesus e Silva Filho

Dialogue with a Brazilian Adventist sociologist

Interview by Areli Barbosa



Thadeu de Jesus e Silva Filho, 40, works for the federal government in Brazil as a sociologist, with a research focus on health, education, public safety, and income.

Born in Belém, Para, Brazil, Thadeu Silva grew up in a loving and strongly-affirming Christian home. Early in life, he moved with his mother and brother to Brasilia, the country's capital. There he came under the influence of the local Pathfinder Club, and at age 12 he was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

As he entered college, sociology became Silva's passionate interest. At the University of Brasilia, he completed bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in sociology. His professional profile includes a professorship in the Department of Sociology at the University of Brasilia, consultancy at the National School of Public Administration, service in Brazil's Ministry of Justice, and advisement to the National Public Security Department. He has also served as a visiting scholar at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, USA. Since 2013, he has been pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts (in musical performance) degree.

As a research scientist, Silva coordinated three major studies for the Seventh-Adventist Church in the South American Division: the 2008 Youth Survey (25,538 respondents from 2,094 Adventist churches in Brazil); the 2011 Ministerial Census, involving almost 3,000 district pastors; and the 2012 Apostasy Survey, covering 3,336 members who left the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The survey results helped the Division to focus better on methods of ministry, evangelism, and member retention.

Silva is married to Denise Rochael. They attend Brasilia Central Adventist Church, where he volunteers as the director of the local Ellen G. White Research Center, and takes an interest in promoting the study and research of the writings of Ellen White. In addition, he plays the first trumpet with the Brasilia Seventh-Day Adventist Orchestra.

■ *How did you become acquainted with the Seventh-day Adventist Church?*

One Saturday afternoon in January, 1984, the most-watched television news station in Brazil reported on a camp where 10,000 boys and girls between 10 and 15 years of age, from various countries in South America, gathered in the city of Foz do Iguaçu. It was the first Pathfinder Camporee of the South American Division. That report sparked in me a great desire to be a Pathfinder. It took me a year to get registered with the Cruzeiro do Sul Pathfinder Club in Brasilia.

Thus began my journey that would eventually bring me into this great faith community: the Seventh-Day Adventist Church.

The club was (and still is) very active. All physical, social, spiritual and community service activities caught my attention. The Bible studies were always inspiring, consistent, and relevant. The club was the church for me. As time passed, I learned about other aspects of the church, always sensing God's leading hand. Gradually I accepted the Bible as the rule of my faith and practice and a guide to all life activities.

■ *How did you become interested in sociology?*

Unlike most of my classmates in high school, it took me a while to pass the university entrance exam. Inspired by my father's professional career, I tried to study law, but could not get entrance into law school. I passed the entrance exam for a degree in music, something I had always wanted. I moved to Joao Pessoa to pursue a degree in music, but for some reason, I did not complete the course and returned to Brasilia. I switched fields, took the entrance exam for social sciences, and was selected. Gradually, I acquired a taste for sociology and enjoyed my study all through the doctoral level.

■ *What motivates you most in your practice of sociology?*

My great satisfaction is to understand the combination of factors that cause certain scenarios, events, or environments and then to create reliable instruments to measure the distance between what *is* (real) and what *should be* (ideal). The great challenge of sociology is to concretely demonstrate a selected hypothesis, and it is not always possible to do so in a reliable manner. My challenge and satisfaction come from creating solutions to unravel the mechanisms.

■ *In what major projects have you been involved?*

At the federal government level in Brazil, the largest project I worked directly with was the first National Victimization Survey – an exploratory study that interviewed the Brazilian population on the occurrence of crimes. The outcomes met the dual task of expressing views primarily collected from the population, compared with official data registered by the police. Over the years, such data has helped to more accurately determine the incidence of criminal events and to review and adjust methodologies, tools, and data collection.

For the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the most significant projects I was involved in were to coordinate three of the largest surveys led by the South American Division: the 2008 Youth Survey, 2011 Ministerial Census, and 2012 Apostasy Survey. They were all important studies, not only because of the sample size and reach, but because of the richness of data and information that can help church administrators make decisions based on prevalence and incidence. Currently, I am a member of the new pastoral evaluation design team for the South American Division.

■ *In your work, do you find opportunities to share your faith convictions?*

Not directly, but indirectly. Like many other fields of knowledge, sociology studies probe, for the most part, the problems common to human experience: poverty and misery, violence, hunger, disease, abandonment, unemployment, despair, sadness, and such issues. Many of my colleagues who do not have a faith experience tend to attribute these evils to capitalism and, ultimately, to Christianity. Here I find an opportunity to show that problems such as the ones mentioned above have existed from time immemorial and do not have any direct relation to Christian faith. Indeed, if anything, Christianity's driving social creed and motivation are rooted in love and justice for fellow humans, and such love needs to be expressed in caring relationships.

In discussions with colleagues, I always find it a moving experience to point out that Jesus is the greatest social leveler in all of human history. His redemptive mission is to create one common humanity, where there will be neither rich nor poor, neither slave nor free, but all are children of God's great love. Whenever possible, I take the opportunity to show that the cause of evil is within the human being (sin) and that the solution is outside it (Christ Jesus). This is not a simple statement to make in today's world, especially in highly-developed cultural environments where religion has lost its authority – both as the explanation of reality, as well as a regulating norm of life.

■ *As a sociologist, what do you like the most in your work, and what bothers you the most?*

What bothers me most is to see sociology used as a flag in a political struggle, rather than as an instrument of social analysis to bring about betterment in society. In Latin America, for example, social sciences have become almost synonymous with ideological propaganda based on atheism and relativism, a promoter of struggle among the classes. I do not like that. On the other hand, I enjoy when studies are led well, explore realities as they are, and help in decision-making to alleviate human suffering. This is especially true in federal government programs and project evaluation. Large sums of money are invested in those programs, and the technical team is called to assess whether they brought about the desired effect, their realization costs, their scope and the risks, and the impact of maintenance or interruption.

■ *In addition to your work as a sociologist, what else are you currently involved in?*

I have returned to where I left off

in my first degree program in music. I am now a doctoral candidate in musical performance (trumpet). Music has become a spiritual passion for me. At present, I serve as first trumpet of the Brasilia Seventh-Day Adventist Orchestra and president of the Brazilian Trumpet Association. I am also serving as director of the Ellen G. White Research Mini Center of Brasilia Central Church. In addition, I serve as Sabbath school teacher and leader of a small prayer and Bible study group. These activities require me to study trumpet every day, work on my dissertation, play for public recitals, prepare the Sabbath school lesson, lead group book studies, and chair an association of trumpet players from all over Brazil. This year, which marks the 100th anniversary of Ellen G. White's death, I am delivering monthly lectures about the prophetic gift given by God to Mrs. White and the legacy she left.

■ *With all those activities and with your regular profession as a sociologist, how do you manage to maintain a professional balance, a meaningful family life, and the demands of your own spiritual life?*

It's not easy. The modern world has many demands, and I have to be careful in taking on so many responsibilities. One can experience an explosive combination, and that needs to be carefully watched. My greatest problem is managing time and deciding whether to prioritize things, actions, or people. I deal with this all the time. So I intentionally make some decisions on behalf of my health, my happiness with my wife, and my dependence on God. For example, I turn off my phone every day between 8 p.m. and 7 a.m. I have my best moments of Bible reading and prayer in the evening, and when I am not traveling, I spend the whole weekend with Denise. I foresee I'll have to change this arrangement of my activities soon, especially so as not to swallow the bait of success and put aside fidelity to God in exchange for the happiness one can have in this world.

■ *What would your counsel be if some of our readers want to take up the challenge of sociology as their life work?*

Among the many challenges sociology of the future will thrust upon young people is the increased humanistic approach to the problems in the field, at the expense of other approaches, such as Christian norms and values, and biblical principles of community living and care. As it is, just the reading list for any course in sociology is dense with humanistic content, and is devoid of any spiritual focus or depth. So I would advise any aspiring sociologist to get a firm footing and rooting in an Adventist worldview that can stand you in good stead and keep you afloat and alive when your faith concerns are challenged. Such a worldview, based on biblical and Christian values and concerns, must be discovered early in one's academic life, and then continually developed and matured to face every day's fresh challenges.

One needs to be able to deal with the fact that the products of sociology are the means for others to perform purposeful activity, and to transition easily between other fields of knowledge, especially economics, comparative religion, literature, law, and politics. Sociology provides useful tools to be of great service to the community, but that usefulness should not be compromised at the altar of a weak or absent faith. Human beings are created in God's image, and that should be at the core of any service we render to humanity.

Areli Barbosa was director of the Youth Department of the South American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and now is the senior pastor at the Centro Universitário Adventista de São Paulo (Brazil Adventist University). E-mail: areli.barbosa@adventistas.org.br.

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Science and faith ...

From page 9

force interpretations of this evidence to resolve tensions. As believers, we naturally wish to harmonize what we learn from nature and the Bible – God's two books. However, we must do science carefully, only taking our scientific conclusions as far as evidence allows, and honestly publish these conclusions – even when what we discover does not meet our expectations.

Third, we need to seek integration. Although biblical and scientific studies have their own methods of investigation and testing, there is an appropriate way for the two to dialogue when they disagree: each may encourage the other to reexamine long-held interpretations and consider alternatives. In some cases, scientific ideas have helped believers identify faulty biblical interpretation (for example, the claim that the Bible advocates a geocentric universe). In other cases, biblical concepts have suggested new lines of scientific inquiry, leading to discoveries that reduce the tension between scientific theories and our understanding of the Bible.[28]

Ideally, integration will eliminate conflict between our understanding of science and the Bible, but in practice some conflicts persist. Such conflicts can be deeply frustrating, but they shouldn't surprise us: all our knowledge is partial and subject to human frailty! Indeed, it is just these points of conflict that may suggest new lines of research and discovery. Also, knowing that we simply cannot and do not know everything tempers human ego, encourages humility, and fosters intellectual honesty. Thus, the presence of unresolved tension may serve not as the enemy, but as the servant to Christian faith: believers are encouraged to grow in both knowledge and character while remaining faithful to God's Word.[29]

Finally, we must be respectful in our dialogue with each other. The conversations about science and the Bible often are heated and angry, even among fellow Christians. Perhaps we will be more respectful and generous to each other when we remember our own frailty, and Christ's command to love one another – even as we vigorously debate how to harmonize God's Word and the world that He created.

Science and Christian belief, then, can be considered honest friends. Christian belief provides a framework for understanding science as a way of knowing, scientific discoveries shed light on biblical beliefs about God and humanity, and the two sometimes challenge each other to find better explanations.

H. Thomas Goodwin (PhD, University of Kansas) is a professor of biology at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA.

This article is abridged from the original in *Biology: A Seventh-day Adventist Approach for Students and Teachers*, ed. H. Thomas Goodwin (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 2014). Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

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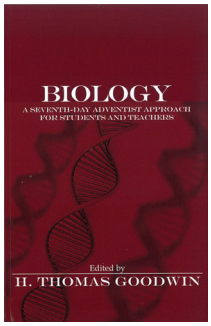
BOOKS



Biology: A Seventh-day Adventist Approach for Students and Teachers
edited by H. Thomas Goodwin (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 2014; 198 pages; paperback).

Reviewed by Keto E. Mshigeni

How did our solar system come into being? When and how did life originate on our planet? What is responsible for life and death, growth and decay, the calmness of the sea, and the destruction of a tornado? How do we account for the beauty of the mountains and the destruction that occurs as volcanoes from the belly of those mountains erupt? How do we understand massive creatures that may have roamed this earth at one time but are now extinct, leaving behind signs that defy human understanding?

Two possible answers have challenged the human mind. The first answer is an ancient one, the way of faith that is rooted in the biblical claim "In the beginning God … . The second one is the way of science. Seventh-day Adventists, since they came on the world scene some 150 years ago, have explored the issue and tried to understand the relationship between science and faith. From their early and unwavering commitment to the Genesis account of Creation, they have provided their defense of faith through many publications. Such defenses have also attempted to understand the challenges science has increasingly posed.

In that run of Adventist literature on faith and science, here comes one of the finest explorations of the connections and challenges between faith and science from the perspective of the Adventist worldview: *Biology – A Seventh-day Adventist Approach for Students and Teachers.* It is published as part of the Faith and Learning series, co-sponsored by the Center for College Faith at Andrews University and the Education Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Planned and written with an explicit purpose and for a specific audience – the growing number of Adventist college and university students who struggle with issues of faith and science, specifically in biology – the book is a collection of essays by eight top Adventist biologists, known for their fearless faith and their openness to looking at the challenges of biology.

The meeting of that fearlessness and that openness becomes clearly visible in the editor's introductory chapter, which lays the groundwork for the book's thesis: "Although important challenges exist, Adventist beliefs and scientific discoveries often illuminate each other," leading the way for science and faith to live as honest friends. But how can science and faith, the advocate of biology and the believer in Genesis, seek a path of friendship and set out on a sojourn of friendship? H. Thomas Goodwin, the editor, is gifted with theological depth (theology was his college major) and a curiosity to probe biology's challenges (his graduate study and professional work is in paleobiology). He presents searching minds and troubled hearts with this clue: "Christian belief provides a framework for understanding science as a way of knowing; scientific discoveries shed light on biblical beliefs about God and humanity; and the two sometimes challenge each other to find better explanations" (p. 16).

That essentially summarizes the thesis of the book. But the richness of *Biology* continues with topics such as:

- what genomes tell us about life, science, and God (Tim Standish), reinforcing the point that knowledge is not static and what we know at any point in time is only in part
- biology, faith, and human nature (Karl G.D. Bailey), defining the agony and the ecstasy of being humans
- scope and limits of the evolutionary process (Leonard Brand)
- fossil records and the Adventist perspective (H.T. Goodwin), giving a tour from the author's personal experience of how he met the emerging challenges of new scientific facts and his faith journey
- an Adventist view of ecology (D.L. Cowles) that recognizes the creative activity of God and rejects "the position that nature is autonomous, meaningless and run entirely by physical laws" (p. 131)
- Adventist faith and environmental stewardship (Floyd Hayes and William Hayes), providing how best "environmentally sensitive Adventists will energize the church and usher in an exciting new era of environmental consciousness, stewardship and witness" (p. 157)
- creationism, darwinism, and mere science (Earl M.J. Aagard), that articulates a need for integrating Adventist beliefs and science, considering the incessant unfolding of new knowledge through scientific research.

Having said that, the book is a challenge and a feast: a challenge that makes college students and teachers confront the reality of the world of science (one cannot escape its professions and conclusions), and a feast in that believing scientists share from their experience how struggling students and teachers can best "come to a better understanding of the many ways Seventh-day Adventist faith shapes

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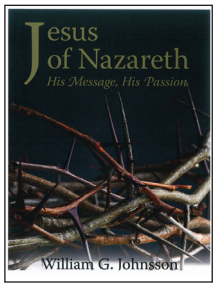

Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, His Message, His Passion
by William G. Johnsson (Silver Spring, Maryland: Biblical Research Institute, Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2015; 2 volumes; 345 pages; paperback).

Reviewed by John M. Fowler

But for the fact that William Johnsson met as a teenager the subject of this two-volume formidable study and has remained faithful to Him for more than six decades – teaching, preaching, writing, and living Him – his writing ease and style may have taken him to the *New York Times* list of best-selling authors.

As an accomplished, polished, prose-in-poetry writer, Johnsson, a long-time former editor of the *Adventist Review,* turns his personal commitment to Jesus and his scholarly pursuit in New Testament theology into this easy-to-read, perceptive, powerful, and persuasive history of the life and work of the greatest Man who ever walked on this earth. Sorry, not just the Man, but God who became Man. In Johnsson's work, incarnation, while embracing the mysteries of biblical theology, takes on a simple and direct communication process to confront the reader for a person-to-person, one-to-one meeting with Jesus the God of all and Jesus the Man for all. The twin-dynamic and the single mystery never leave the pages of this exposition par excellence.

Johnsson's prologue sets the tone of his work: "Jesus. All our hopes, for this world and the next, center in Him. Our best joys, our highest aspirations, our cleanest motivations spring from Him. Every other name will pass away; His never" (1: xiii).

The conclusion offers a confession and a question: "The story goes on … . The story has no end, can have no end … . The question that faces each of us … is this: Am I part of that story?" (2:193).

The transition from that confession to that challenging question occupies the author for nearly 350 pages. Johnsson does not hesitate to raise hard questions: is Jesus real – His birth, crucifixion, resurrection? Are the Gospels reliable? Is He what He claimed to be: sent by the Father to accomplish the mission of the Father? Is Jesus the Man for all people and for all time? If so, why is He misunderstood or misinterpreted in the course of history? Why should His demands be so absolute: everything or nothing at all? Why is He the world's greatest teacher and only hope for fallen humanity? These and many more questions are dealt with clearly, honestly, and perceptively, presenting the reader with a convincing mosaic from history, archaeology, and above all the Gospels.

The four Gospels form the bedrock of Johnsson's study. Behind the study lies a life of experiential and unreserved, but not blind, commitment to the Person and mission of Jesus. The prologue of the Gospel of John provides the core of Johnsson's approach. His moving prose seizes that matchless prelude as an inspired exposition of the co-eternity of the Word with the Trinity and of the light that shatters the darkness that has covered the world since that betrayal of God's goodness in the Garden of Eden. With an exposition of that Infinite Word and the eternal Light that Jesus is, Johnsson presents in his first volume the wonder of His life, death, and resurrection that set out to create God's new community of the redeemed.

The second volume focuses on the teachings of Jesus. Here is a gold mine for evangelists and pastors who want to preach on the great verities of the gospel: what did Jesus teach about God, Himself, the Holy Spirit, the kingdom of heaven, grace, discipleship, the Sabbath, eschatology, prayer, power, sex, money, and more? Each discussion is a moving message that unravels both the mystery and wonder of the good news He is and He brought to ensure human redemption.

That central theme – Jesus *is* the Savior of the world – remains the core message of the book. One will be poor for not reading it, and poorer still for not being part of the story of Jesus.

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"Not so with you!" A biblical paradigm for leadership

by Zdravko Stefanovic

"Leadership is influence – nothing more, nothing less." [1]

The notion of a close link between leadership and influence is very important in the Bible. This article examines a passage from Deuteronomy, which is often referred to as the "Law of the King" (Deuteronomy 17:14-20), and deduces some basic points related to the biblical paradigm of leadership. Having done that, I will connect this passage with Jesus Christ's well-known words on the topic of leadership, found in Matthew 20:25-28.

From monarchy to theocracy

Among Israel's neighbors, the king was the fountainhead of law, and his main task was to maintain order (Egyptian *ma'at*, Mesopotamian *me*).[2] Given his privileged position, the king could be tried only by the gods. Some ancient societies considered kings to be either divine or at least direct descendants of deities. "The trappings surrounding kings were the most rich and ostentatious of any group in society."[3]

Biblical texts claim that because of God's act of deliverance of His people from bondage (Exodus 15:18), followed by a special covenant relationship, the Lord (Yahweh) was Israel's supreme ruler, whose word was the basis of government. Although Israel was a theocracy, the idea of Israelite kings is already present in the earliest books of the Pentateuch (Genesis 17:6, 16; 35:11; 49:10; Numbers 24:7, 17). It is remarkable that when a comparison is made with the societies of many non-Hebrew nations, the biblical conception of the kingship entailed extraordinary restrictions of royal authority.

Israel's kings were accountable to God for what they did. For this reason, the prophets claimed to speak for the Lord whenever they addressed Israel's monarchs. The prophets kept the kings' actions in check and sometimes confronted them if they had acted contrary to the principles of the divine covenant.

Roland de Vaux stated that it is remarkable that the two "laws of the king" (Deuteronomy 17:14-20; 1 Samuel 8:11-18) make no allusion to any power of the king to lay down laws. On the contrary, these two passages warn the people against the monarch's arbitrary acts, and order him to write a copy of the divine Torah, read it daily, and obey it. De Vaux concluded that both passages contain warnings against royal autocracy.[4]

Not a typical monarch

Instructions for the conduct of Israel's future kings found in Deuteronomy 17:14-20 are a part of Moses' second farewell speech to his people. A temporal close opens the passage with the word "when" (Hebrew *kî*), followed by three verbs that describe a future historical situation: "when you enter the land, have taken possession of it and settled in it." According to this passage, the problem of establishing a monarchy in Israel was not that the people would want a king. What mattered more was the reason *why*[5] they asked to have one: so that they would be like the other nations (v. 14). This denial of God's call to be unique was a clear reversal of Israel's election.

Moses did not oppose in principle the idea of a monarchy in Israel. Instead, he defined the qualifications for candidates to the throne and set limits on a king's behavior. The Law of the King provides a distinctive view of Israel's kingship and royal authority. Its original intention was "to limit royal powers and thereby abuse, and to enjoin royal allegiance to Yahweh."[6] This meant that Israel's ruler had no right to exploit his leadership position for personal gain.

Instructions from the book of Deuteronomy contain the requirement that the king should be a native Israelite, not a foreigner (v. 15). Throughout Israel's history, only a few exceptions to this rule are recorded, such as Jezebel or Herod the Great (and his dynasty). Furthermore, the king should be chosen or elected in accordance with divine will. The concept of divine election of Israel's ruler is woven throughout the book

of Deuteronomy. Thus, a ruler chosen by God would govern the people who had been chosen by the same God.

The king's duties

The description of the king's duties begins with three prohibitions (proscriptions) against pride, lust, and greed. The prohibitions are specifically against multiplying horses, women, and precious metals (vs. 16, 17). The egotistic aspect of these actions is evident from the triple occurrence of the expression "for himself" (Hebrew *lô*). The king of Israel is to adopt a humble and dependent lifestyle contrary to that of the neighboring monarchs. In the second part of this passage, the three proscriptions are followed by three commands (prescriptions) that are of spiritual nature and were intended to insure justice and stability of the throne.

Let us first look at the list that specifies what the king may not do. The king's position precluded the amassing of horses, because this was a sign of military might and power. In ancient Israel, cattle and donkeys were used as beasts of burden, while horses pulled chariots, especially during military operations (Deuteronomy 20:1). The king is told not to send the people to buy horses from Egypt. In doing so, he would pave the way back to slavery and thus reverse the exodus event. This, in turn, would equal undoing God's great act of salvation. The desire for power exhibited by the use of horses would lead to a desire to return to Egypt, the land of slavery, described on one occasion by rebellious leaders as "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Numbers 16:13). Scholars conclude that this prohibition puts a limit on the king's professional standing army.

The second prohibition presents a warning to the king not to have too large a harem. The original word for women or wives (Hebrew *nšîm*) that is used here commonly refers to the harem of a typical monarch of the time. The multiplication of wives in many ancient societies had to do with the king's status. While multiple marriages were often arranged to foster international political alliances, a large harem was used to impress foreign visitors. Serving as a sign of economic, social, and political advantage, it was intended to enhance the king's status in the country as well as abroad. Moses' main concern here is that through the practice of polygamy, the king's heart could be led astray. Multiple marriages would lead to religious syncretism and idolatry.

The third prohibition is against the excessive accumulation of material riches. The abbreviated list of precious metals points to the monarch's ambition to amass wealth. This would result in the king having an attitude of superiority toward his fellow countrymen. The passage warns, however, that the king in Israel must be different from the typical non-Hebrew monarch. He should not distinguish himself by a showy cavalry, multiple wives, or great wealth. Rather, he is to behave as a fellow Israelite "brother" and also be an exemplary student of God's instructions.

Centrality of the divine revelation

In contrast to the three prohibitions (proscriptions) that are related to egotism, each of the three commands (prescriptions) refers to God's Word. Moses specifies that the king should copy the sacred text by his own hand, thus making it very personal (Deuteronomy 17:18). The recurrence of the expression "for himself" (Hebrew *lô*) puts this command in sharp contrast with the king's selfish ambitions that are previously used in the passage. Israel's ruler is not someone who writes the Torah. Instead, he receives it from a higher authority and copies it with his own hand. Copying the word of God by hand was considered binding in the context of the covenant.

The command that follows states that the king is to carry with him this copy of the Torah (17:19). Some scholars have suggested this act was a part of the accession ritual. The third command says that the king should read the Torah every day and meditate on it (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2). This reading of the word serves to define the king's attitude of respect and obedience toward God. It also defined his attitude toward his people, which is one of solidarity with his fellow Israelite kindred. Finally, the king's attitude would result in the secure future of his descendants (v. 20). Several biblical passages show that dynastic succession and national tenure in the land are parallel rewards for fidelity (2 Samuel 7:10-16; Psalm 132:11-18).

The reading of God's word is to be a constant reminder of the king's subordinate status. He is an instrument of God and must not act as a god. On the other hand, a heart turned away from the Lord would usually produce a heart lifted up above one's people. Thus, the major function of Israel's king is to exemplify what it means to be a humble servant of the Lord. He is to lead the people in the keeping of the divine principles.

Christ's example

The king of Israel was called by God to model the principles of His word. "Moses hereby presented the king as an exemplary Israelite and an embodiment of covenant fidelity. His countrymen should be able to recognize that if they imitate him, their own well-being in the land would be secured."[7] Sad to say, very few of Israel's kings conformed to the standards that had been laid down by Moses. It is a well-known fact that King Solomon's style of kingship directly collided with the teaching of the Law of the King. Solomon's palace took almost twice as long to build as the temple in Jerusalem, and his wealth and fame were astonishing. His

foreign wives turned his heart away from the Lord, and he began to serve other gods; he also built shrines for them (1 Kings 11:1-13).

In contrast to most of Israel's leaders, Jesus Christ was the perfect embodiment of biblical principles, showing how a leader must depend on God and also relate to fellow human beings in truth and love. He underscored this fact at a time when some of His disciples openly expressed their desire to be superior in rank to their companions. Christ said, "You know that rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you! Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:25-28 NIV, emphasis mine).

Christ practiced unconventional and timeless principles that also served as the basis on which He established His kingdom. That kingdom had very little in common with the kingdoms of this world, as the following quotation from Ellen G. White aptly expresses it: "In the kingdoms of the world, position meant self-aggrandizement. People were supposed to exist for the benefit of the ruling classes. Influence, wealth, and education were so many means of gaining control of the masses for the use of the leaders … Christ was establishing a kingdom on different principles. He called men, not to authority, but to service, the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak. Power, position, talent, and education place their possessor under the greater obligation to serve his fellows … In the kingdom of Christ those are greatest who follow the example He has given, and act as shepherds of His flock."[8]

In closing, I would like to propose that the principles of Christian leadership, drawn from the Law of the King, are applicable to our time. As they were relevant in the past, so are they today. The best leaders are the persons who are recognized by others to be genuinely spiritual. That spirituality, according to the Bible, is rooted in a close and constant contact with God and his instruction. Such leaders will not strive for earthly power and privileges but for a better appreciation of God's will, as well as for the well-being of the members of their community of faith.

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Umutoni Aïssa

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understanding spouse, who helps me maintain this balance between spiritual, family, and professional priorities. Whenever I have to work far from home, my husband makes himself available to care for family needs and, if need be, adjust his own schedule. When my professional duties contradict my faith, the latter prevails. I made it clear to my superiors that I couldn't do any job that contradicts Bible principles.

■ *What counsel would you give to Adventist university students or young professionals who may be interested in your line of work?*

Those driven by Bible principles to undertake human rights-related professions should know from the outset that most of the leading principles in human rights comply with biblical norms, but not all. For example, some issues of human rights generated by sociological developments may not be in consonance with one's understanding of biblical principles and teachings. Some of these issues have become extremely challenging and contradictory to one's faith stance. Such issues range from corporal discipline of children to marital and sexual issues. One has to prayerfully take a personal stand on such issues and be aware of the possibility of compromising one's faith.

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OPEN FORUM

Sex on the Sabbath

by Michael W. Campbell

Is it biblical to engage in sex during the confines of the seventh-day Sabbath? What does the Bible have to say on this topic?

This issue is often raised in the context of Isaiah 58:13: "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day … ." Since sex is pleasurable, the text is taken to forbid sex during Sabbath hours. However, a deeper investigation reveals that the passage in Isaiah is speaking about the Day of Atonement, a day devoted to self-examination, judgment, and cleansing. Every individual was supposed to participate, lest he or she be "cut off" (Leviticus 23:29). There is no textual evidence to indicate that sex was forbidden on the weekly Sabbath or the Day of Atonement. No biblical evidence exists to indicate that sexual intercourse defiles. In fact, all references to sexual pleasure in the Old Testament are positive!

What, then, is referred to by the word "pleasure" in Isaiah 58:13? The Hebrew word is the same one found in verse 3 that warns against exploitation. The word is also translated (NIPS Jewish Bible) as "business pleasure" (or one's own "business interests"). Isaiah 58:14 commands to "call the Sabbath a delight" (NIV). The word "delight" in Hebrew is *'oneg*, meaning "exquisite delight."

The implication of Isaiah 58:13 is that God wants us to lay aside our own agenda and to replace it with something far more exquisite. God calls us to live a life of selfless pleasure, focused on our relationship with God. The notion that the Sabbath forbids joyous pleasure during the Sabbath hours is basically a misreading of the original text. What this text does refer to is avoiding "business pleasure" or pursuing one's own "business interests." Otherwise, anything pleasurable, including eating food or studying the Bible or singing, should be forbidden, too.

What is at stake is a biblical understanding of sexuality. Ancient Jews, known for their rigorous law codes for Sabbath observance, did not forbid sexual activity on Sabbath, albeit within the confines of marriage. This "Sabbath blessing" was considered a time of connubial consummation. The Sabbath and marriage were two holy institutions that originated in the Garden of Eden. In God's original design, sex was intended to be the ultimate way for a husband and wife to experience the deepest levels of intimacy within the sacred bonds of marriage – the two becoming one flesh.

Tragically, sexuality has been distorted and perverted through sin. The ancient Hebrew codes were necessary because God wanted to avoid the sexual perversions of the surrounding heathen nations. Sexuality was to be carefully guarded. Another perversion came from Greek thinking that held that the human is made up of body and soul – the body being matter and evil, and therefore temporary and perishable; the soul being spirit and good, and therefore eternal and imperishable.

Some early Christian thinkers embraced this dualism between the body and the soul, which had implications for human sexuality (as well as for the Sabbath and other doctrines).

The lasting impact of Platonism can be seen in the repression of sexuality in the writings of the early church fathers, such as Origen and Augustine. All sexual urges were to be repressed. This view of Christian sexuality had a direct correlation with ecclesiology, as monks retreated to outposts and caves. Those who denied themselves sexual pleasure and became celibate were perceived as more spiritual and thus more deserving of church office. All of this contributed to a theology that, similar to the seventh-day Sabbath, had moved away from the biblical view of sexuality. The beauty bestowed in Eden on Sabbath and sex was lost during the Dark Ages.

The topic of sex on Sabbath, in any case, is a deeply personal decision that should be prayerfully discussed between a husband and wife. For some married couples, this may be something that they choose "by mutual consent" (1 Corinthians 7:5, NIV) to forgo during the hours of the seventh-day Sabbath in order to maintain their spiritual focus. This is admirable, but for others this may be more distracting.

For those married couples who do engage in sexual relations on Sabbath, such a view has deep roots in the original Creation. A view of sexuality that embraces the whole person connects sex with creation as God's beautiful gift to humanity. Satan has distorted such a gift. Whether that distortion comes from the view that sex is self-centered pleasure and therefore needs to be suppressed, or from the view of today's mass media that sex has nothing to do with morality and is at the will and wish of the indulger, Satan is behind every such attempt to rob this

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VIEWPOINT

Ten things pastors wish their congregations would do for them

by Dave Gemmell

As worshippers in a church, big or small, we expect much from our pastors each Sabbath and during the rest of the week. We want them to preach sermons each week that are biblical, well researched, well delivered, challenge our minds, comfort our aching hearts, and nourish our hungry souls. We expect our pastors to be our dynamic caregivers: visit our homes, relate to us in the best possible way, pray for us when sickness or death strikes our homes, empathize with us when we lose our jobs. There are even times when parishioners expect pastors to experience their pain, participate in their joyful moments, and act as their counselors, legal help, and all-in-all experts. We indeed expect too much from our pastors.

For a moment, look at the other side. If pastors were given an opportunity to tell what they would like their congregants to do for them, and if we had a moment or heart to listen, what would we hear? A pastor who has traversed the road of ministry for a long time shares his wishes on behalf of countless pastors who minister to us week after week. Here are 10 such wishes. – Editors

1. Pray for your pastor. The pastor is the spiritual catalyst of the church. That makes the pastor a great big target for the enemy. Pray for the pastor's spiritual health. Pray for protection. Pray for wisdom. Pray that the catalytic gifts of apostleship, prophecy, teaching, evangelism, and shepherding will grow strong in your pastor. The most affirming words that a pastor ever hears is "Pastor, I'm praying for you every day." *Romans 15:30, 2 Corinthians 1:11.*

2. Affirm your pastor. Pastoring may be one of the most difficult jobs in the world these days. Pastors live in a highly-concentrated environment, where they see the results of sin on a daily basis through caring for humanity. While the average person may see a death, injury, illness, or family conflict occasionally, the pastor encounters these things on a weekly basis. Though pastors don't live for affirmation, words of validation do provide a lifeline of strength through treacherous times. Those little notes saying, "Pastor, you're making a difference," may be the very thing that helps your pastor make it through another day. *Acts 4:36.*

3. Bless the pastoral family. Pastoral stress leaks into families and is enough to test all the family bonds. Throw in a few wild expectations about how a pastoral spouse and pastoral kids are supposed to behave, and you have a recipe for a family meltdown. The antidote is to offer blessings. Bless the spouse. Bless the kids. Let go of any expectations, and treat the family with a rich blessing of heaven's grace. And of course, to relieve the financial pressure, return a faithful tithe so that the pastor is secure in getting a regular paycheck. *1 Corinthians 9:14.*

4. Release the pastor from constant ministry so renewal can take place. Pastors who go 24/7 for days, weeks, and months on end will inevitably self-destruct. Mandate that your pastor take weekly breaks for spiritual renewal, as well as annual extended breaks for study leave and vacation. It is a small price to pay for the rich spiritual energy that comes as a result of regularly releasing you pastor from ministry. *Matthew 14:23.*

5. Talk *with* your pastor, not about or around. Complaining about the pastor to someone else is corrosive for the entire church family. Writing anonymous critical notes to the pastor are acts of spiritual terrorism (by the way, smart pastors just throw them in the trash can without reading them). If you have a problem with the pastor, talk directly with him or her and try to work it out. If a resolution can't be found, then bring a spiritual leader with you and seek solutions. Then (and only then), if a resolution is not found, bring together a larger group to dialog with the pastor. Challenge privately. Affirm publicly. *Matthew 18:15-17.*

6. Forgive your pastor for falling short of your expectations, because no pastor will perfectly satisfy your ideals. Remember that your vision of what a pastor should be is probably unique to you. Everyone else in the congregation also has unique expectations. Many of the expectations are mutually exclusive. Your pastor will also make some mistakes. All pastors do. Extend to your pastor the same grace that God extends to you. If your pastor knows that he/she practices ministry in a safe, grace-filled congregation where

risk-taking is expected and stagnancy is deplored, your church can become spiritually turbocharged. *Matthew 18:21, 22.*

7. Feed yourself spiritually. Don't expect to live on a limited spiritual diet of 30-minute weekly sermons. Going seven days without eating makes one weak. Even with the best sermons, you will spiritually starve to death. The role of the shepherd is not to stick grass in the mouths of sheep but to lead the sheep to green pastures. As you listen to the great sermons that your pastor preaches, may you be inspired to get into the Word yourself every day in prayer-filled Bible study. *Psalm 23:2*.

8. Bond with a small group. Don't expect the primary pastoral care to come from the pastor. It is mathematically impossible, and primary care is not his/her role. Regular spiritual support occurs in small groups. When you are plugged into a weekly small group, you will grow together, pray for one another, care for one another, and support one another through all the ups and downs of life. The pastoral staff and lay pastors can serve as a safety net for those not in small groups, as well as care for those in life transitions. *Matthew 18:20.*

9. Follow the leader. The pastor is not the CEO of the congregation; that role is reserved for Jesus. However, the pastor has been given the gift of apostleship, and you should take your cue from him and follow after Jesus. Let your pastor lead. With leadership comes change. Things will be different. Since the founding of the church, God has brought a succession of quality pastors, each one with leadership to take your church to the next level. God gives your pastor vision. Help the pastor flesh out the vision, and then do your part to turn the vision into reality. *Hebrews 13:17.*

10. Exercise your spiritual gifts. Pastoral gifts don't do much by themselves. However, if you let those catalytic gifts energize your gifts, you will come alive spiritually. Let the pastor equip you so that your church family can reach unity in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure the fullness of Christ. Take advantage of the teaching and ministry opportunities at your church. Place yourself in optimal places for spiritual growth. *Ephesians 4:11, 12.*

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Biology

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and interacts with biology."

To the extent we live with that understanding, we can see faith and science as friends, affirming one's faith. The book is easy to read, backed by laudable authorities, and filled with recommended bibliography. The fact that each essay in the book is peer reviewed by six to nine scholars active in their disciplines and by several anonymous reviewers, gives the readers a book worth having. Better yet, worth reading.

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Sex on Sabbath

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precious gift of God's original design.

To our question of sex on Sabbath, the principle the apostle Paul conveyed in another context may apply here as well: "Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him" (Romans 14:3, ESV). God created sex as a way for humans to connect at the deepest mutual level. Such a view embraces the whole person and views sex as a beautiful gift from God.

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"I am with you always ..."

by Alberto R. Timm

Crises are God's opportunities to remind us of some realities that we do not always take as seriously as we should. Here's the retelling of one such crisis and what it meant to one person's life and faith.

One of the most frightening experiences of my life took place on the evening of March 14, 2015. I was supposed to fly from Washington, D.C., to Zurich, Switzerland. When I searched for flights, I found two possibilities: a direct, nonstop flight departing at 5:40 p.m., and a two-segment flight through London, departing at 11:00 p.m. Undoubtedly, the first option was the best one, but I ended up buying the second one. The reason was simple: the first flight would have meant departing during Sabbath hours.

That Sabbath morning, I went with my wife and son to church, and afterward we had a good lunch. Around 5:00 p.m. my stomach started feeling somewhat upset. I thought it was nothing serious, and after sunset my wife dropped me at the airport for my flight. But the closer the boarding time came, the more my abdominal pain and nausea increased. With rising desperation, I prayed, "Lord, I don't recall ever having heard Your audible voice before. But now I really need You to tell me plainly whether or not I should board this airplane."

Instead of speaking directly to me, the Lord used a friendly airline agent to guide me in the right direction. When I asked her about the possibility of changing my flight to the next day, she inquired how I was feeling and if she should call the paramedics. After some reluctance, I finally agreed. The paramedics took me to an ambulance that carried me to the nearby hospital. My abdomen was almost like a balloon, and only Dilaudid injections (much stronger than morphine) could control the pain.

The PET scan and X-rays showed a complete bowel obstruction of my small intestine and mid-jejunum, which could be a tumor or something else. So, on Sunday morning, an intranasal tube was used to remove all undigested food from my stomach. Then, on Monday evening, I had a laparoscopy (three small incisions), by which the surgeon was able to identify and cut a small piece of tissue, like a string, freeing the adhesion to the retroperitoneum that was causing the problem. It was a simple procedure, and no biopsy was needed. Praise the Lord, two days later I was released from the hospital to go back home!

What could have happened?

We are told that "our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service and honor of God supreme will find perplexities vanish, and a plain path before their feet."[1] This means that God could have solved my health problem in a different way. But from my limited human perspective, I can only imagine what would have happened if my bowel obstruction happened exactly as it did, but I had decided to follow another path.

For instance, what would have happened if I had simply disregarded the inspired counsel of avoiding unnecessary trips during the Sabbath hours and ended up taking the 5:40 p.m. flight? Most certainly, my severe pain and nausea would have showed up while I was crossing the Atlantic Ocean. Since cabin air pressure at cruising altitude is lower than at sea level, my pain and nausea would have been even more intense. In addition, commercial airplanes are not equipped to handle such problems.

On the other hand, if my severe pain had started just a little bit later, I would have boarded the 11:00 p.m. flight. In this case, the airplane would have needed to either return to the departure airport or land in another airport on the northeastern coast of North America. But my problem also could have started farther away from home, either while flying over

the Atlantic, while waiting for my connection in London, or even during my train trip from Zurich to my final destination. Of course, these are only human speculations. But I am convinced that my problem occurred exactly at the least risky time, with an easy way out.

What did I learn?

Crises are God's opportunities to remind us of some realities that we do not always take as seriously as we should. During the 56 years of my life, I have never had any surgery. But the four days I spent at the hospital helped me to see that our lives are more fragile than we usually realize. Isaiah 40 even compares human beings with the grass that remains green for a while and then withers, and the flowers that bloom for a short time and then fade (vv. 6-7). But the same chapter also adds that "those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (v. 31).[2]

Another reality that crossed my mind at the hospital is that we can control some things but not everything. There are circumstances in life that are far beyond our controlling power. A voice from heaven told King Nebuchadnezzar that "the Most High rules in the kingdom of men" (Daniel 4:32) and, by extension, also rules our own lives. Though not understanding exactly why certain problems show up in our path, we should not forget that "God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him."[3]

A third significant reality is that sometimes we need to stop the routine of our lives and rethink our priorities. Ellen White declares, "As activity increases and men become successful in doing any work for God, there is danger of trusting to human plans and methods. There is a tendency to pray less, and to have less faith. Like the disciples, we are in danger of losing sight of our dependence on God, and seeking to make a savior of our activity."[4] Oswald Chambers warns, "Beware of anything that competes with your loyalty to Jesus Christ. The greatest competitor of true devotion to Jesus is the service for Him. It is easier to serve than to pour out our lives completely for Him."[5]

It takes a mountain

Shortly after I arrived back home from the hospital, a brother-in-law sent me a YouTube link to the Gaither Vocal Band's meaningful song "Sometimes It Takes a Mountain."[6] The first four lines of the chorus say that "sometimes it takes a mountain, sometimes a troubled sea, sometimes it takes a desert to get a hold of me." The whole song suggests that God sometimes allows us to pass through significant crises in order to bring us closer to Him. By contrast, what a difference it makes in life when we remain always commited to God and His Word, regardless of the circumstances!

We live within the great cosmic/historical controversy between God and His holy angels and Satan and his evil angels, meaning that many of our life incidents are not yet fully understandable. But in the heavenly school, "every redeemed one will understand the ministry of angels in his own life. The angel who was his guardian from his earliest moment; the angel who watched his steps, and covered his head in the day of peril; the angel who was with him in the valley of the shadow of death, who marked his resting place, who was the first to greet him in the resurrection morning – what will it be to hold converse with him, and to learn the history of divine interposition in the individual life, of heavenly co-operation in every work for humanity!"[7]

God did not promise to free us from all life storms, but rather to be with us in the midst of them (see Matthew 8:23-27). Jesus even stated to His followers: "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer" (John 16:33), "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). And this makes all the difference!

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FIRST PERSON

The Sabbath: Our delight and our duty

by Mioty Andriamahefason

"Blessed are those who fear the LORD, who find great delight in his commands" (Psalm 112:1, NIV).

As a college student in a strange and foreign country, I found how reliable and trustworthy God's promises are, particularly with regard to the Sabbath. When I received that letter in 2007 from a university far away from my home, offering me a scholarship to study management, a thrill and a fear ran down my spine, even as I read the letter a second and third time, seated in my simple home in Madagascar. The thrill because of the fresh and marvelous opening into a new world of opportunities; the fear because of the uncertainties of leaving the familiar grounds of home for the unknown culture and people of a new country, far away from home, where being a Christian and keeping the Sabbath would itself be a challenge. But I knew where my real strength comes from: not in my knowledge, not in my social and intellectual skills, not in my ability to excel and cross unknown frontiers, but in my trust in the Lord. As a Seventh-day Adventist, I knew my God, and I knew He would not let me down – as long as I was faithful to Him.

I reached the university with great anticipation, and at first things went well. My trial did not come until the second semester of my first year. One day, Professor Meriam (not her real name) announced that we should come prepared for a test the next Saturday. At the end of the class, I asked her if she could schedule the test for another day, as Saturday is my day of worship and I do not engage in any secular activity on the Sabbath. She tried to convince me to write this test. She argued that other students, both Christian had non-Christian, had no problem attending classes on their day of prayer, be it Friday, Saturday, or Sunday. She said, "God will understand." I tried to persuade her to my point of view, but she was firm: "Look, go to the administration. If they agree, I will permit you to take your test another day."

My silent plea

At that very moment, I turned to God with a silent plea: "God, you brought me to this country, and I don't know why. You guided me into the study of management, and I don't know why. You allowed me to attend one of the best business schools of this country. I don't know why. But I trust You. I know that You will not let down those who delight to obey your commandments. Help me to be faithful to your Sabbath."

The next day, I went to the administration to meet the director. He was in a rush, but after I explained my problem to him, he asked me, "To which church do you belong?"

"Seventh-day Adventist, sir," I replied.

"I've heard about them as I travel around the world," he said. "I would like to know a little bit more about this denomination. Let's meet in one hour."

I was excited about this prospect of talking to him, but an hour later he was not around. However, I found out – to my delight – that my request to take the test on another day was approved.

During the rest of the week, I had no further contact with my professor. At the end of the Sabbath, my classmates told me that my professor was really angry with me. When I went to class the next day, anger shone in her eyes and flashed in her words. Yes, she was indeed very angry. But eventually she calmed down and let me write the test in a corner of the classroom, as she lectured to the rest of the students.

A few weeks later, I found out that the final exam was also scheduled for Saturday. Professor Meriam refused to do anything, except to issue a threat: "This time I cannot do anything for you. You will write the exam as scheduled, or get a zero and suffer the consequences."

I didn't write the exam. But I did find out that the marks I received in

the first test were sufficiently high to qualify to seek a makeup exam. Professor Meriam did give me the makeup opportunity, but not without a threat: "If I am your professor in any future semester, and if you are not in the class on Saturdays, you will face expulsion."

I knew I had to face her again the next semester in a core course, which she was generally taught to ensure the continuity of her subject. My solution was to find another teacher who was teaching the same subject. But God had His solution: Professor Meriam ended up not teaching at all the next semester.

A fresh opening

The semester after that, Professor Meriam was back. But this time around, she took a fresh interest in me. In fact, at the close of the first session, she whispered to me, "Young lady, don't worry. I am not planning anything on Saturday." God was indeed at work.

After that, Professor Meriam was my teacher for many classes over the course of several semesters. She sometimes planned exams on Saturday, but allowed me to write my makeup exams. Once she even gave me an oral exam, saying that she was aware of how well I prepared for my exams.

Soon she took me into her confidence and went out of her way to counsel me on many academic and social issues. When I planned my major field of study to be finance and accounting management, she counseled me that in that field I would often face Saturday employment issues. Eventually, she became my confidante and was easily accessible whenever I needed advice and encouragement. In fact, she became my mentor for my final project. We actually became quite close, and she guided me every step of the way until I got my master's degree in finance management in 2012.

The happiest moment in my relationship with Professor Meriam came when she took me aside one day and congratulated me for being so strong and committed to my faith. "We need," she said, "young people who can stand for principles they believe in."

The credit goes not to me, but to God, who never disappoints those who place their trust in Him. During my five years at the university, I encountered many Sabbath problems. In some cases, I didn't even have to ask for Sabbath exemption. My classmates would do it for me. They would say, «We have someone here who doesn't attend class activities on Saturday." Because of the "Sabbath problems," most of my fellow students learned that I am a Seventh-day Adventist. I had many opportunities to share my faith: only God will know what effect such sharing will produce.

I encourage all Adventist students around the world to remain faithful to God, who has called us into "this marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9, NKJV). The special light we have is the truth of the Sabbath, which is a sign (Ezekiel 20:20) between God and us to indicate forever that we are His by creation and His by redemption. When we are faithful to His commandments, we will discover the truthfulness of His promise: "Blessed are those who fear the LORD, who find great delight in his commands" (Psalm 112:1, NIV).

May His command be our delight, our duty.

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