

# *Spectrum*

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The Journal of the Association of Adventist Forums

## Muslims and Mission

ADVENTIST CHRISTIANS,  
CULTURAL MUSLIMS

LAY MISSIONARY IN  
THE ARABIAN GULF

HOW MUCH LONGER  
FOR THE COLPORTEUR?

PROPHETS IN PARALLEL:  
MOHAMMED AND ELLEN WHITE

PURSUING GENESIS AND  
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POETRY AND ART  
Two poems by John McDowell;  
Calligraphy by Myken Woods

READERS' RESPONSES  
Creation to Sexual Harassment

October 1992  
Volume 22, Number 4





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# Spectrum

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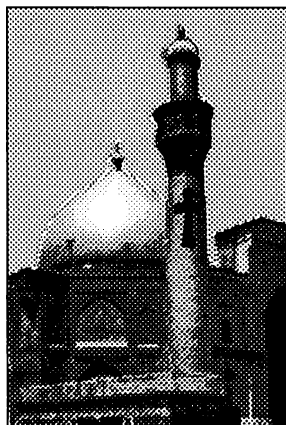
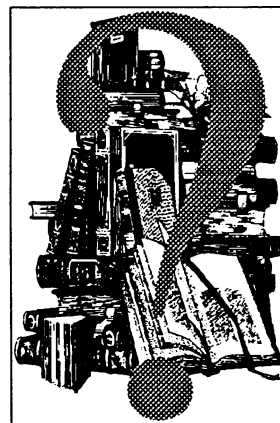
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# Muslims and Mission

**T**wo dynamic missionary movements—Adventism and Islam—first collided in the Middle East. Islam barely noticed. More than 100 years ago, European Adventists first set foot in the Islamic countries of the Mediterranean, beginning with Egypt in 1878. As late as World War II, when I was growing up in Cairo in an American missionary family, converts to Adventism came from Christian, not Muslim, communities. To this day, Adventists convert very few Muslims, and these appear more often in Asia than the Middle East.

The special section, “Muslims and Mission,” publishes a few of the presentations made at a 1992 conference conducted by the Seventh-day Adventist Centre for Islamic Studies located at Newbold College. The conference and the centre reflect the commitment of the General Conference’s Global Mission program to overcome Adventism’s long-standing frustration in penetrating the 725 million-strong world of Islam. The conference and the centre also highlight the emergence during the past 20 years of a new discipline within Adventism—mission studies.

Although his formal Ph.D. training at the University of Utrecht was in theology and anthropology, Gottfried Oosterwal established the discipline among Adventists in the early 1970s. After missionary service in New Guinea, Oosterwal established the department of mission at the SDA Theological Seminary and published his widely read volume, *Mission Possible*. Subsequently, he founded the Institute of World Mission that he continues to head at Andrews University.

Oosterwal was succeeded as chair of the mission department by Russell Staples, an experienced educator in Southern and Eastern Africa. He received his doctorate from Princeton, also in theology and anthropology. Oosterwal and Staples, probably the Adventist theologians who have read the most widely, taught hundreds of seminarians, missionary appointees and church administrators that it is part of the church’s mission to

value the world and its cultures as God’s creation.

A growing number of professors in Adventist colleges and universities have earned doctorates in mission studies—many from Fuller Theological Seminary, including both Michael Ryan, executive secretary of the General Conference office of Global Mission; and Borge Schantz, director of the Seventh-day Adventist Centre for Islamic Studies.

Leaders in mission studies have not only influenced the church’s theology. They have also introduced mission institutes that markedly improved the preparation of missionaries, led Adventists to understand the concept of “people groups” at the heart of the church’s Global Mission program, and successfully proposed innovations, such as the Adventist Volunteers Service, that utilize the specialized talents of lay professionals all over the world.

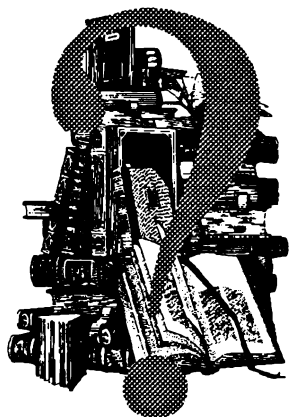
The special section on Islam provides a case study of how the discipline of mission is bringing critical analysis and creativity to the work of the church. For example, the articles show how pilot projects conducted by Adventists within Islamic nations translate into action a central tenet of mission studies: Christians must always appreciate the specific cultures, societies, and traditions within which they embody the gospel.

The news update section reports on another center devoted to mission founded by an academic, Charles Teel, a professor at La Sierra University. The Stahl Center for World Service, with the help of ADRA, has just completed an innovative Global Village ’92 program. It drew unprecedented network television attention to Adventism’s concern for the poor.

Hopefully, this issue of *Spectrum* will alert readers to how scholarship, combined with dogged, sometimes daring acts of service, renews the Adventist tradition of mission in the world.

Roy Branson





# How Much Longer For the Colporteur?

Several unions explore new ways to reduce the price of books, and sell more volumes to more people.

*by Sharise Esh*

**D**URING THE PAST YEAR, THREE NORTH AMERICAN unions have made drastic changes in the distribution of Adventist books. As a result, North American Adventism is transforming bookselling from a tithe-draining to an income-producing part of the church's work. In 1992, these three unions—Atlantic, Columbia, and Pacific—have cut 29 full-time salaries from their budgets, have used less than half the tithe contributions they used in 1991, and have achieved sales that are equal to or higher than those in 1991. Other unions are also making changes.

The widespread changes began in 1991, when financial problems in several areas of publishing reached a critical stage. A declining number of literature evangelists were selling fewer books. In a typical conference, income from sales barely equaled expenditures of tithe to support the literature evangelist program. In 1991, for example, literature evangelists in Northern California brought in \$400,000

in sales—and accepted \$400,000 in tithe contributions. In some areas of New England, tithe contributions exceeded revenue from sales by as much as 120 percent.

In the past, each union in North America had its own distribution agency, Family/Home Health Education Services, that received book orders from literature evangelists, handled accounting, and distributed books to the customers. As early as February of 1991, Columbia Union officers began conversations about the financial problems of its distribution agency. The Columbia Union decided that something had to be done in the North American Division. Literature evangelists could not even make a modest living without support from tithe, and Adventist books were just not penetrating the marketplace. By 1991, the Pacific and Columbia unions combined had only 14 full-time literature evangelists.

Tom Mostert, president of the Pacific Union, knew that the Family/Home Health Education Services program was struggling in his union as well. Mostert appointed a committee, chaired by Harold (Bud) Otis, former president of the

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*Sharise Esh is a senior journalism major at Columbia Union College, and Spectrum's editorial assistant.*

Review and Herald Publishing Association, to study the problem. The committee recommended forming a new organization that would combine the literature distribution programs of several unions. This new program would still be responsible to the North American Division.

That same year—June 1991—the Review and Herald Publishing Association reported a \$500,000 operating loss. Finally, the 1991 General Conference Annual Council voted to “grant authority to the 1991 North American Division year-end committee to act on behalf of the General Conference in North America and to exercise its authority in respect of the two publishing houses operated by the General Conference in North America, thereby exercising full authority over the entire publishing program (manufacturing, distribution and sales) in the North American Division.” This gave enhanced power to a commission on publishing set up earlier in the year.

Robert Smith, director of publishing for the North American Division, says he believes the Annual Council took this action because it hoped that the publishing commission would decide that the two publishing houses should be in charge of the entire publishing program in North America. However, this recommendation was never made. When the publishing commission’s recommendations were presented prior to the North American Division year-end meetings, they were found unsatisfactory. Another committee was set up to study alternative courses of action. When the vote was finally taken at the North American Division year-end meet-

ings, it was decided, among other things, that each union was to review the publishing situation and formulate its own approach.

Not all union officials were happy with this decision. According to Robert Smith, the union officials were also hoping that distribution of books through literature evangelists—a duty traditionally performed by Family/Home Health Education Services—would come under the control of the publishing houses. “However,” Smith said, “with the publishing houses in the financial situation that they are, this didn’t seem to be the solution.”

Immediately after the year-end meetings, the Pacific Union Conference took action. On

November 20, 1991, executive committee members voted to replace its branch of Family/Home Health Education Services. Within a few weeks, the Columbia and Atlantic unions made the same decision. On January 1, 1992, these three unions founded a single program, Family Enrichment Resources. The Pacific Union houses the operations of the new company, while the administration is located in the

Columbia Union offices. Bud Otis is president of the three-union company.

The new combined program has cut 29 full-time positions—including all local conference publishing directors and office secretaries. Otis says that advanced communications technology permitted this streamlining of middle management and cuts of \$1 million in spending for 1992. Otis says that these savings are passed on to the literature evangelists in the form of larger commissions, making it possible

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*The new combined program has cut 29 full-time positions—including all local conference publishing directors and office secretaries. Otis says that advanced communications technology permitted this streamlining of middle management and cuts of \$1 million in spending for 1992.*



for them to make a living at this work, with less dependence on tithe contributions. In the first six months of operation, sales for Family Enrichment Resources have totalled \$1 million, with a tithe contribution of only \$500,000. The pattern of a dollar-for-dollar match between tithe contributions and sales has been broken.

Family Enrichment Resources has also instituted credit checks on all accounts and worked to resolve collection problems. For example, in December 1991, \$80,000 of the \$100,000 of literature evangelists' sales in the Columbia Union had to be written off as uncollectible.

Otis is full of innovative plans. Family Enrichment Resources is developing new product lines, which it will own and copyright. Home videos on parenting, animated Bible stories, and sing-along religious videos for children are just a few examples. Ron Wisbey, president of the Columbia Union Conference, says the company will still look first to Adventist publishing houses for its production needs, but will go to other sources if necessary.

New marketing techniques will be employed to supplement sales by literature evangelists. For example, Family Enrichment Resource will run 30-second television ads, 30-minute "infomercials," and buy preferred customer lists to use in telemarketing.

The unions not participating in Family Enrichment Resources are nonetheless searching for effective solutions. Many unions are testing pilot programs in an effort to increase sales. Adventist Self-supporting Institutions and the Pacific Press Publishing Association are working together to put out low cost literature. The *Great Controversy* is now available to these unions at a cost of 69 cents a copy. Five other Ellen White books are also available for under a dollar. In the Southern Union, a smaller percentage of the total cost of an order is being taken for the down payment.

Dramatic changes are also happening at the Review and Herald Publishing House. Ron

Appenzeller, director of publishing for the General Conference, says the publishing house has reduced its staff by 42 people. At the end of June 1992, it was running at a \$500,000 gain—a \$1 million turnaround from a year ago. However, the Review and Herald still has a long-term debt of \$5.7 million, and Review and Herald Publishing House officials recently received authorization to borrow up to \$2.5 million just to sustain current operations.

How is the North American Division being affected by these changes? Appenzeller reports sales have been down in the North American Division. Two unions not involved in Family Enrichment Resources—North Pacific and Lake—are showing gains. The first nine months of 1992 reveal a 16 percent decline in sales in the unions covered by Family Enrichment Resources. However, Appenzeller adds that this is to be expected with such fundamentally new reorganization.

Robert Smith, director of publishing for North America, feels that the reason behind this decline in sales is the decrease in district and field leaders. "Conferences want to run their programs on less than 1 percent of tithe subsidy. We feel that it will take 2 to 2.5 percent. Some conferences may even require 3 percent. But if you decrease the leadership staff, the number of literature evangelists will go down, simply because there isn't anyone to train them. The cuts should have been with workers in the Family/Home Health Education Systems programs."

Regarding future changes or shifts in authority over the publishing work, Appenzeller foresees further changes. "What form [the changes will take] remains to be seen. But it seems that if the publishing houses could have more control over distribution, it could be advantageous. We're not out from under the storm clouds yet." But he is confident that this period of experimentation will be beneficial. "North American publishing will find its way," he says.



# Circuit Riding In the 1990s

A Walla Walla College student finds meaning the old-fashioned way: door-to-door canvassing.

*by Paul Dybdahl*

“IT’S NOT LIKE IT USED TO BE,” HE SAID, SHAKING his head slowly. “People just don’t care about spiritual things anymore. Used to be, you could just hang out a few advertisements for the evangelistic meetings, and people would come flocking in off the streets. Not now. It’s sad, but everyone is so secular—no one cares about religion anymore.”

He was a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, and his words discouraged me. I had only been working in the area as a literature evangelist for about a week when I happened to knock on his door. I had already been warned about bloodthirsty watchdogs, slamming doors, drunken threats, and “friendly” women—all hazards I must be prepared to face during my summer in the Tri-cities.

Hearing the words “no one cares about religion” from an Adventist pastor did little to lift my spirits. I knew the “Lord’s work” would be tough, but I was beginning to wonder if it

was perhaps impossible.

His comments heightened a concern I’d had ever since I’d come back from being a student missionary. Overseas, it seemed like the gospel was big news. It was different, it was exciting, and it really seemed to reach people. Here in America, I sensed that things were different. I assumed the gospel was old news, and most people were tired of hearing it. The basic Christian message was known by all, I thought. Even our Seventh-day Adventist denomination was fairly visible and well-known. After all, we even had a big, prize-winning float in the Rose Parade. Perhaps it was time to set our sights fully on the last mission frontier—the distant, pagan lands across the seas.

## You’re a Liar

Just down the street from the pastor’s house, I knocked on the door of a house that looked empty—dry lawn, no car in the driveway, curtains and shades pulled. After a long

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*Paul Dybdahl, a graduate of Walla Walla College, wrote this for the campus newspaper, The Criterion. He is currently an intern pastor in the Oregon Conference.*



wait, the door opened just a couple of inches. One eye glared at me through the crack, then a finger poked out at me. "You're a Mormon," the voice said.

Unaccustomed to this creative greeting, I stuttered for a second and finally came up with a winning response. "I am not," I said.

"Yes you are, and you have been all your life." His voice was rising, and from his tone I felt it safe to assume he didn't feel a deep agape love for Mormons, or for me.

"I am not," I repeated, unable to think of anything else to say.

"And you're a liar," he announced with disgust.

By now I could see both his eyes. This wasn't a particularly positive development, however. "I should just leave," I thought. But he had called me liar, and I had to say something. "If I was Mormon, and had been all my life, wouldn't I be proud of it?" I asked. "Would I be afraid to admit it?"

The door opened.

Half an hour later, I shook Bernard's hand and left him standing on the porch. It must have been hard for him. Thirty-two years old, living alone and taking care of his mom who was helpless with Alzheimers. Before I left, I told him I'd stop by again sometime. "I'm always here," he said.

## Elephant Man

One block away, a Mexican man took my brochure and didn't say a word. "What's in your garage?" I blurted out. I'd noticed a sign by the door that said "Welcome."

His answer was so quiet I didn't understand him.

"Could I see it?" I said. As soon as the strange words came out, I felt like an idiot. The man looked at me as if I was an idiot, too. He closed the door.

As I walked down the walkway toward the

garage, I knew I was blushing. I paused by the "Welcome" sign, unsure if the man would open the door, and hoping he wouldn't. What was inside? Why did I ask to see it?

He did come, and he opened the door. He was a "tax man" and helped low-income individuals with their IRS forms. I went in, looked at his computer and desk, made an "it looks nice" comment and headed for the door, embarrassed to look at his face.

I was outside when he started talking. About prejudice. About being a token minority in a city club. "Since they knew I was an accountant, they wanted me to join—thought I'd do their books for free. My wife and I went to their banquet. We were the only Mexicans there. We sat by ourselves while everyone stared at us—like we were some freak of nature. I felt like the elephant man. I quit. Never told them why. I'll never let that happen to my wife again."

He walked back inside and I followed him. I listened to him talk about how accountants "rip people off" for at least 15 minutes before I finally decided it was time to go. My hand was on the door knob when he mentioned God. I sat down again and didn't get up for over an hour.

"I'm not a religious man," he assured me several times. Then he talked about his struggle with the church of his childhood and his decision that it just wasn't for him. He worried about his son. He knew the world was in bad shape—"going to hell" in his words. There was only one solution that he could see, and just before I left, he shared it with me. "Wouldn't it be neat," he finally said, "if God just decided that things were ugly enough, that there was enough pain, and he just decided to come down here to earth and shake things up a little bit? To set things straight again?"

"Of course," he added, "I don't know much about these things because I'm not a religious man."

## Never Met an Adventist

The phone rang and I heard Shellie on the other end. "Paul?" she said. I thought she sounded nervous. "I'm not sure how to say this. I hope this doesn't seem too personal, but I checked the publisher of those books and found out they're put out by Seventh-day Adventists. I've never met an Adventist before and I'm a little worried. I feel responsible for my kids and only want the best for them. I have a question for you . . ."

My mind was racing. What would it be? What would she want me to explain—Sabbath? sanctuary? state of the dead?

"... I was wondering," she continued, "Who is Jesus to you?"

## Pistons and Spark Plugs

Bob was in the driveway, working on his car and wouldn't even take the brochure I offered him. I took it back and asked about his car. This is always a dangerous question for me to ask because I know cars about as well as an Eskimo knows camels. I must have sounded pretty knowledgeable, because Bob shared many deep, automotive secrets with me.

After 10 minutes on pistons and spark plugs, Bob changed the subject to religion. He didn't go to church anymore and seemed to feel pretty guilty about it. He wanted to go, but it was hard for him after what happened to his friend.

"He was the best man you could have ever known," Bob said. "He worked hard, took care of his family—he'd give you the shirt off his back. A good, good man. Best friend I ever had. He was killed in a car accident. They wouldn't let him be buried in the church cemetery because he'd never been baptized."

Bob was looking at the ground now and talking very slowly. After a long pause, he said, "I know I'm a sinner, and I don't under-

stand God very well, but I don't think God would want us to act like that. I don't think God would keep him out. It just doesn't seem right to me."

## Wimps

I met Julie and Todd one evening while knocking on doors in a low-income apartment complex. They were young and had just moved from San Francisco. They didn't have any kids yet, but both wanted to plan ahead and get some story books.

While we were looking at the books, we were hearing strange noises from outside—it seemed like a fight—and it was getting louder by the minute. Finally we heard a woman's scream that made us all jump up and look outside.

The neighbor man was chasing his wife across the parking lot, swinging a tire iron at her wildly. Someone must have given the police advance warning because several patrol cars were already pulling up to the curb. Within a couple of minutes, the neighbor man had been disarmed and things had quieted down. Julie and I just sat down again while Todd went outside to watch.

When he had gone, Julie turned to me. "I know from the books that you're an Adventist," she said. I used to be an Adventist too. Todd never has been—he had a bad experience with the church a long time ago."

Julie needed help. "I want to come back to church," she said. "Todd? Well, I pray about him a lot. He believes the doctrines, but he's worried about the people. He just needs someone to do things with and be his friend, but he has this idea that men in the church are wimps. He likes to go out and shoot his gun. He likes to hunt and fish—stuff like that."

She looked at me hopefully. "Is there anyone who would do those things with him?" she asked. "Are there any fishermen in the church?"



## Where's Daddy?

She looked exhausted, but I held out the Bible Adventure Video brochure. She read the first few words and laughed. "Looks like something I need," she said.

"Are you joking?" I asked.

"No."

"So you need the videos?" I was getting excited.

"No, I need Jesus."

It all came tumbling out. She said her husband was running around. He told her he didn't really love her anymore, but loved someone else. The three kids were wondering where Daddy was all the time, and she didn't have a good answer. She didn't have anyone to talk to, and she didn't have much hope. "I think it's over," she said.

I stood on the step and couldn't think of much to say. She stopped, and was embarrassed—like she suddenly realized she was talking to a salesman and a stranger. Did she ever pray? I asked. No. Would she mind if I prayed for her and her family? She seemed surprised that we could talk to God right there—that a prayer didn't have to be memorized. When we were finished it was quiet. She looked in my eyes, said thank you, and went back into her house crying.

## Scared but Hopeful

The house was cluttered and the two old ladies were cooking breakfast. Still, they invited me in. "He's not feeling too well," one said, "but you can go see him in the living room." I had no idea who "he" was, but I went around the corner and saw him sitting on the couch in his pajamas, reading the paper. He patted the couch next to him, and started talking as I sat down.

He was in the middle of chemotherapy treatment and wasn't feeling very good. Like

most elderly people, he gave a rather lengthy and detailed report of his present health. He still had pain from the surgery.

"They took both of them out weeks ago," he whispered with a helpless look in his eyes, "and things still haven't healed up. I called the doctor a few days ago and asked him about it, and do you know what he said? 'Don't worry.' Don't worry! What kind of answer is that?"

In the kitchen I could hear the two ladies arguing. They couldn't agree on whether I was a Jehovah's Witness or a Mormon.

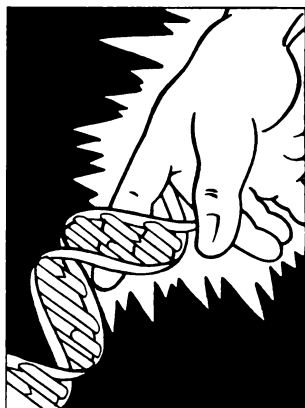
Finally, he asked me what I was selling. I told him I was sharing information about Christian books, and he didn't have to buy any if he didn't want to. He smiled.

"I'm a Christian, too," he said. During his thirties, he had been a traveling revival preacher in the South. "Nothing as thrilling as seeing a sinner come to the Lord," he said, smoothing the paper on his lap with a shaking hand. His weak voice started to falter as he told me of a certain hard-drinking, lawless railroad man who "gave his heart to the Lord" as a result of his preaching. "God is so good," he kept murmuring.

He knew he would probably die from the cancer. "I'm scared, but I'm ready. I have a hope for something better." I listened as he quoted his favorite Scripture passages—passages of promise and comfort, of heaven and healing.

Before I left, I asked if he would pray for me. He nodded yes. It was a prayer I'll never forget—the prayer of a dying revival preacher for a discouraged young man. I felt as if I was being lifted into the very throne room of Almighty God. He prayed in King James language, and his voice grew strong as he called down all the blessings of heaven upon me. He had forgotten my name, but I didn't mind because throughout the prayer he referred to me as "friend."

I shook his knobby hand and left him slumped in his pajamas, a now crumpled newspaper on his lap. This time, the tears were in my eyes.



# In Search of Genesis and the Pseudogene

A pre-med student at Walla Walla College begins a quest he still pursues as a fourth-generation Adventist on the Harvard Medical School faculty.

*by Gary Gilbert*

FROM THE BACK OF THE BUS I GROANED AS another lecture began. We had been traveling all night and, at 6 a.m., were whistling along a highway in southern Utah. "If you will look at the sedimentary rock formations on our right . . ." we were directed. The heavy silhouette of gray rock had taken a pinkish hue in the dawn light and the lines, the boundaries between sedimentary layers, were barely distinguishable. The lecturer, a geologist, began to tell us about the fossils in the formation we were passing. I rubbed my eyes as the speaker explained that fossils within the mass of rocks were a record of past life at a time when this part of Utah was underwater. A college freshman and a fourth-generation Seventh-day Adventist, I started the trip believing that apparent problems with the Genesis story could be solved if you were armed with a knowledge of Noah's flood and an

open mind. Influenced by my father, who was a physicist, I did not believe that scientific findings could be ignored or trivialized; rather, I believed that God was responsible for both the natural world and for Scripture. Nature spoke both about itself and about God. Scripture gave advantageous insights to Christians, a head start in the study of nature, but its authors were not scientists and neither they nor their modern interpreters should have the last word when nature spoke clearly. The effort of our field trip guides was to understand the fossils and the many rock layers in the context of a short history of life. If not 6,000 years, perhaps 12,000. As we gazed at the wall of the Grand Canyon, turned fossils over in our fingers, and discussed the explanations in an open air Sabbath school, I came to realize that sedimentary layers of the Southwest could not all be explained by a recent Creation and a great Flood. Around the campfire I heard whispers that the two SDA geologist guides did not agree with each other about the type of natural events implied by sedimentary layers that we had seen. I can't remember the

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*Gary Gilbert, who teaches at Harvard Medical School, directs a hematology research laboratory. He received his M.D. from Loma Linda University Medical School. Gilbert wishes to express gratitude to Sandra Robb-Gilbert for persistent revisions that make this piece more accessible to the non-scientist.*



substance of the dispute or the clues that made my classmates aware. I can remember the dawn of my awareness that the story the rocks told was of many floods, not just Noah's flood, occurring over a time span of much more than 6,000 years.

Two years later, in an upper-division religion course designed for science majors, we discussed areas in which religion and science were in conflict. We discussed various methods for determining historical age: dendrochronology, carbon-14 dating, potassium-argon dating, and dating based upon scriptural genealogies. I remember the simplicity and clarity of dendrochronology and was impressed that if one counted the consecutive rings from living fossilized trees that had grown in that same grove, time marched backward right past the date for Noah's flood. Was the date wrong or did the Flood not uproot the trees? Again, the age of life on earth, as indicated by geological and physical methods, was at the center of the discussion.

What did not seem strange, at the time, was the paucity of serious discussion about evidence that animals of one type have evolved from animals of a quite different type. The most thoughtful Adventist scientists that I knew were concerned with the age of life more than the ancestry of living animals. Darwin's hypothesis, though viewed as a threat to Adventist beliefs, was not the center of the seminars or discussions. Darwin's hypothesis, that animals are related to one another by common ancestry, is not primarily about time. It is about the mechanism through which animals acquire new characteristics and change dramatically over generations.

Molecular genetics was new, slow, and cumbersome at the time of my entrance to La Sierra University in 1972. More recently, molecular genetics has moved into the fast lane, becoming the primary basis for experimental biology and for the multi-billion dollar biotechnology industry. Twenty years ago, mo-

lecular genetics offered a fresh opportunity for creationists to find support for a brief duration of life upon earth and for the separate genetic lineages of different "types" of animals. Instead, the emerging genetic information supports Darwin's hypothesis—that animals are related to one another by descent from a common Creator. Unlike older fossil evidence, the genetic data is not dependent upon the estimated age of the earth. If the Grand Canyon and all of the sedimentary layers in the Southwest can be explained by a series of catastrophes occurring over only 6,000 or 12,000 years, the genetic data will still suggest that most animals are descendants of a common ancestor. I will recount my exploration of genetic findings that illuminate the most vehemently contested relationship, the one between great apes and humans.

## Mistakes Are Best Explained by History—Not Teleology

General biology was a prerequisite for medical school, and half of my 700 college freshman classmates planned to enter medical school. As a result, all three sections of Biology 101 were crowded. Every time the professor spoke in his faded British accent, 90 pens scratched on note paper. One morning he lectured about protein molecules of humans and animals that were almost identical. With apparent disdain, he noted that some people argued that molecular similarity supported evolution. If God worked out a good design for hemoglobin once, he asked, why wouldn't he use the same design again when he created humans? Caught up in his debate against an absent adversary, he demanded to know what happened to machines left alone. Did they become more complicated, more excellent? No. Then how could the evolutionists propose that neglect and chance made animals become better and more complicated,

generation by generation? Ninety pens scratched on note paper. No one was taking chances about what might be on the quiz. Six months later, during the spring quarter, the aura of intense determination had faded from Biology 103 and, as the grades accumulated, many classmates admitted that they might never enter medical school. I was daydreaming about a summer visit to see my girlfriend during biology lectures in a classroom that now had many empty seats. My professor's arguments about similar molecules not suggesting evolution had lodged firmly in my mind—ready to prevent further questioning about molecules and evolution for 15 years.

When I entered a research fellowship at Tufts University—New England Medical Center after medical school and residency, molecular genetics had transformed the way that biology was studied. In seminar after seminar a new human gene would be described and compared to a similar gene in a mouse or a cow or a yeast. I became aware of the pervasive genetic similarity between animals. If a scientist wanted to identify a new human gene and the human tissue in which the gene functioned was difficult to obtain, a reliable way to identify the human gene was to find it first in another mammal. The genes of different animals were not absolutely identical to one another. Genes were depicted as a long string of letters (only the letters A, C, G, and T were used). If the letters from a human gene were aligned with the letters from a cow gene, about 70 percent of the letters would be identical. I gradually

became aware that this pattern was not what my professor's explanation for the similarity between human and animal proteins predicted. If God used the same plan for hemoglobin protein when he made cows and humans, then the hemoglobin proteins should be identical—or any differences between them should serve a purpose. The cow hemoglobin carried oxygen in just the same way that human hemoglobin did. In some cases, the evidence that the differences between the human and the animal protein did not serve a purpose was simple—the animal protein functioned normally in a human.<sup>1</sup> In other cases,

the purposelessness of the differences could be surmised because biochemical studies indicated that the animal and human proteins functioned equivalently in spite of a few differences. No single example changed my understanding of creation. Gradually though, I became aware that if God, like a good engineer, had used a single genetic design for a protein in different animals, then the quality control on

his production line was poor.

It was not the human genes that were similar to animal genes that finally focused my attention on genetics and Creation. At an early-morning science seminar—scientists consider 8:15 early for a seminar although doctors do not—Dr. Sadler told us about the pseudogene that he had discovered, quite by accident.<sup>2</sup> The particular pseudogene was nearly identical to the gene that encoded the protein named von Willebrand factor. A pseudogene, I learned, is a flawed copy of a

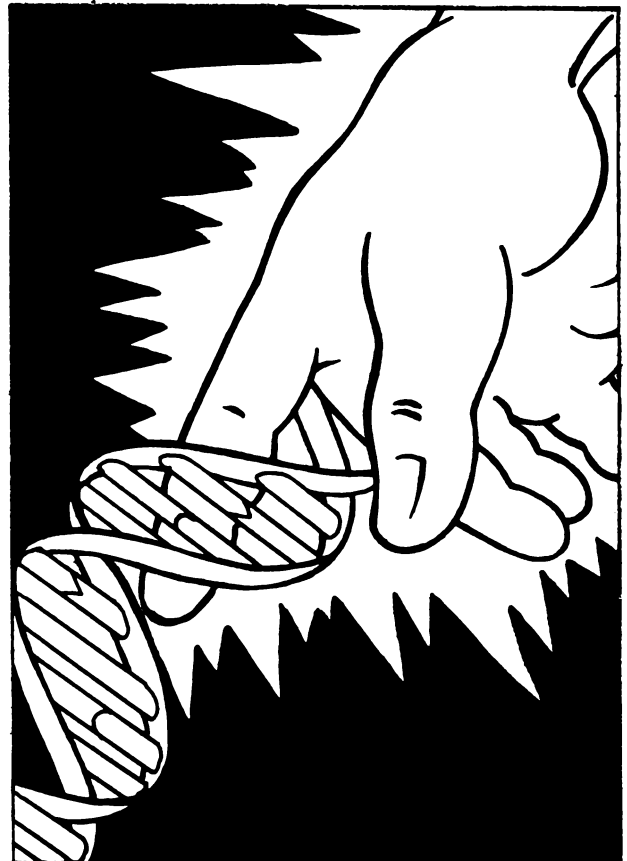
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*No single example changed my understanding of creation. Gradually, though, I became aware that if God, like a good engineer, had used a single genetic design for a protein in different animals, then the quality control on his production line was poor.*

gene. The flaw is sufficiently destructive that the pseudogene cannot possibly function as a gene. Apparently the result of a rare type of genetic mistake, a pseudogene may become an integral part of the genetic code. Like a gene, it is carried by all offspring of the individual in whom the genetic error occurred. In contrast to a gene, the pseudogene has no effect upon the person or animal who carries it. While it may be surprising that an extra gene could have no effect, it is apparently true. Because only 2 percent of the DNA in humans has a specific function—98 percent is apparently silent—an extra pseudogene may “go along for the ride” without causing impairment. The von Willebrand factor pseudogene had so few DNA letter differences from the authentic gene that our speaker predicted that it might have occurred recently in the course of evolution; perhaps after the human and chimpanzee species divergence from monkeys. I was entranced. Not by the possibility that the pseudogene might not be carried by monkeys but the possibility that it was carried by chimpanzees. Before me was a genetic marker whose presence in different animals would unambiguously indicate common heredity for those animals. Because this genetic marker had no function, there was no motive for a good designer to include it in the design of different types of animals as they were created. Therefore, its presence in different animals could only be explained by a common ancestry, not by the actions of God as designer or engineer.

Dr. Sadler is known for efficient work. I estimated that it would take him 18 months to search for the von Willebrand factor pseudogene in chimpanzees and gorillas and report his results. If the pseudogene were in chimpanzees it would be strong evidence for common ancestry of humans and chimps. I didn't want to wait 18 months for an answer and realized that there must be other pseudogenes. Perhaps a pseudogene shared by humans and chimps

had already been identified. I began to spend additional time in the library reading about pseudogenes. The information I was looking for was scattered because molecular geneticists have long believed that humans and chimpanzees share ancestry and neither the titles of the papers nor the discussions emphasized this point. I learned quickly that, genetically speaking, humans and chimpanzees are almost identical in all genes that have been decoded.<sup>3</sup> If a string of letters for a human gene is placed side by side with the string of letters for a chimpanzee gene, differences are found less frequently, on average, than one out of every hundred letters. Genetic differences occur more frequently between animals many people would see as more closely related. For example, differences between the genes of various sea urchin species from different ocean regions occur much more frequently than between chimps and humans. In another comparison, the genes of mice and





rabbits differ from each other 20 times more frequently than do those of humans and chimps.

During my pursuit of pseudogene reports, the idea of using errors to identify sources permeated my thinking. A literary example appeared in a *National Geographic* article about Christopher Columbus: a book once owned by the explorer was filled with marginal notes. How did a scholar 500 years later determine whether those notes were really scribbled by Columbus? A clue came from Columbus' imperfect use of Latin. The notes contained Latin errors similar to those made by Columbus in other authenticated manuscripts. It was not the appropriate note, even the characteristic thought, that was so compelling in identifying Columbus as it was the source of his characteristic errors.

I thought of another example. Suppose that I was examining manuscripts that were stored on the hard disk of my computer, and I discovered that the second and third paragraphs of a letter to my city tax abatement board were inexplicably trailing at the close of a book review I was revising. The wording in those paragraphs was strong and clever (at least I thought so) and was identical with the original letter to the tax abatement board. Furthermore, when I examined another copy of the book review on a floppy disk, I discovered that the same paragraphs were attached to the back-up copy of my book review. I would conclude that the paragraphs from the letter requesting tax abatement were copied by mistake—either mine or the computer's—into the book file; but that once the mistake was made on the hard disk, the computer faithfully copied the whole manuscript, with the mistake, onto the floppy disk. I would not conclude that the recording space on the floppy disk spontaneously changed in a way that gave it such a close resemblance to my original letter or the book review. I would be

able to identify copies of the book review that were made before or after the error by finding whether they lacked or included the mistakenly appended paragraphs—to identify copies made from the “genetic code” that included it.

It did not take many days in the library to identify reports of pseudogenes that were present in both the human and chimpanzee genetic code. The first examples that I found did not satisfy me. I was not convinced, in several cases, that evidence showing a particular pseudogene had no function was conclusive. Then one morning in another seminar the speaker made reference to a hemoglobin pseudogene reported six years earlier. The same afternoon I located the papers reporting the sequence of this pseudogene in humans and chimpanzees. It was the compelling example that I had been looking for.

## The $\beta$ Hemoglobin Pseudogene

There it was, a genetic signature left by an ancestor of mine . . . an ancestor that I share with chimpanzees. I sat quietly for at least an hour comparing the DNA letters of the human pseudogene and the chimpanzee pseudogene. This pseudogene, called the  $\beta$  hemoglobin pseudogene, is large and located next to the corresponding normal  $\beta$  hemoglobin gene.<sup>4,5</sup> The chimpanzee  $\beta$  hemoglobin pseudogene is also located next to the same normal hemoglobin gene.<sup>6</sup> The table on page 15 shows some of the DNA letters that I compared. All of the first 63 letters are identical in the human and chimp pseudogene, indicated by the symbol " below the corresponding letter of the human gene. Only six DNA letters of the chimp pseudogene differ from the corresponding letters of the human pseudogene out of a total of more than 500.<sup>7</sup> The six DNA letters that are different in the human and chimpanzee pseudogenes are

believed to be the result of random mutations that have occurred in both pseudogenes since they were inherited from a common ancestor.<sup>8</sup> Random changes in single DNA letters occur at a slow but predictable rate over generations. The number of single letter differences between the human and chimpanzee pseudogene suggests, using the "molecular clock" technique, that the common ancestor lived between 4 million and 6 million years ago.<sup>9</sup>

I was satisfied that this pseudogene was really a functionless segment of DNA. It was clear that the  $\beta$  hemoglobin pseudogene could not function as the plan for protein. The bottom row in the table below indicates the "meaning" of the DNA letters in the pseudogene. There is only one sequence of three DNA letters, ATG, that can mark the beginning of a protein to be synthesized. The beginning signal in the A hemoglobin gene, from which the  $\beta$  hemoglobin pseudogene originated, is changed in the  $\beta$  hemoglobin pseudogene. The symbol in the bottom row **START**, indicates this problem: no start signal. Even if the  $\beta$  hemoglobin pseudogene had a start signal, the hemoglobin formed would

stop prematurely at the position of the 15th amino acid, which has the letters that indicate STOP. There are several additional STOP signals throughout the  $\beta$  hemoglobin pseudogene, further eliminating the possibility that the pseudogene could function as a gene.

Further evidence that the  $\beta$  hemoglobin pseudogene is really a pseudogene is our ability to identify the functional gene from which it was copied and whose function it now lacks. The resemblance to the A hemoglobin pseudogene is illustrated in the table. The vertical lines between the letters in the upper and lower rows, corresponding to the A hemoglobin gene and the  $\beta$  hemoglobin pseudogene, are a visual aid to identifying the DNA letters that are identical. In the displayed region, 44 of 63 DNA letters in the sequence, or 70 percent, are identical. For the entire gene (about 500 DNA bases) the fraction that are identical is also about 70 percent. For comparison, imagine two unrelated segments of DNA aligned in this way. You would find that approximately 25 percent of letters were identical. The probability that a random process would lead to 70 percent similarity over a DNA

**Comparison of the Human  $\alpha$  Globin Gene  
With the Human and Chimp  $\beta$  Hemoglobin Pseudogenes**

Human $\alpha$ Gene	G	C	C	A	T	G	G	G	T	C	A	T	T	T	C	A	C	A	G	A	G	G	A	G	G	A	C	A							
Human $\beta$		A	C	T	G	T	A	G	T	G	C	A	T	T	T	C	A	C	T	G	C	T	G	A	C	A	A	G	A						
Chimp $\beta$		"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"							
Amino Acid Sequence ( $\beta$ hemoglobin pseudogene)					<b>START</b>		Val			His			Phe		Thr		Ala		Asp		Lys														
	A	G	G	C	T	A	C	T	A	T	C	A	C	A	A	G	C	C	T	G	T	G	G	G	G	C	A	A	G	G	T	G	A	A	T
	A	G	G	C	T	G	C	T	G	C	C	A	C	C	A	G	C	C	T	G	T	G	A	A	G	C	A	A	G	G	T	T	A	A	G
	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
	Lys	Ala		Ala		Ala		Thr		Ser		Leu		STOP		Ser		Lys		Val		Lys													

chain 500 units long is nil. The 30 percent of DNA letters that are different are believed to be the result of random mutations that have occurred in both genes since the original flawed copying of the A hemoglobin gene.

The most compelling evidence that the pseudogene has no function is that people do not need it for good health. Genetic errors causing faulty hemoglobin synthesis have been identified in hundreds of patients, yet none is traceable to defects in the  $\beta$  hemoglobin pseudogene. There are people who lack part of the  $\beta$  hemoglobin pseudogene because of a genetic mutation. These patients do have abnormal hemoglobin but it is entirely explained by loss of the adjacent hemoglobin gene. No problem can be attributed to living with an incomplete  $\beta$  hemoglobin pseudogene. Together, this information convinced me that the  $\beta$  hemoglobin pseudogene arose from another hemoglobin gene, that it does not function as a hemoglobin gene, and that it lacks any function whose absence would cause a health defect.

Subsequently, I found reports of other pseudogenes. There is a pseudogene in the (a) cluster of hemoglobin genes that is also shared by chimps and gorillas. There are several probable pseudogenes in the gene complex that codes for immunity recognition molecules, and there are others. Some of the probable pseudogenes in the complex codes for immunity recognition molecules are also present in the chimp genetic code. The existence of all of these pseudogenes supports the same idea—that humans and chimps share a common ancestor.

## Alternative Explanations

I felt anxious after my discovery. I worried that I had jumped to a conclusion while overlooking the alternatives. It was possible to imagine other explanations for shared

pseudogenes than common ancestry. I re-examined the explanations that I knew and discussed them with other Adventist scientists. For example, suppose that the  $\beta$  hemoglobin pseudogene really does have a function and is not just a flawed copy of a hemoglobin gene. If so, then presence of the pseudogene in other primates could conceivably be explained by use of a common gene design by the Master Designer, rather than by common ancestry. If there is such a function, it is not as a gene. The  $\beta$  hemoglobin pseudogene has STOP signals too frequently for this. Recent technological advances with transgenic animals and with embryonic gene insertion make it feasible to design an experiment to test the hypothesis that the  $\beta$  hemoglobin pseudogene has an important function. Perhaps an Adventist graduate student, convinced that the  $\beta$  hemoglobin pseudogene has an important function, will risk three years of her graduate program to perform the appropriate experiments . . .

It may be tempting, in view of the 19th-century evangelical beliefs about “amalgamation of man and beast,” to speculate that the shared pseudogenes may be a result of interspecies breeding between humans and apes.<sup>10</sup> This line of reasoning would require that all humans containing genetic markers common to apes be descendants of human-ape breeding (this includes all of the thousands of humans studied to date); not only those with dark skin as some 19th-century writers believed. Statistical comparison of gene differences between various primates suggests that common ancestors may have interbred sporadically, but not within the past 5 million years.<sup>11</sup>

Genes may be transferred between individuals by viruses in the laboratory. This is referred to as “lateral gene transfer” and is the basis for gene therapy that is now being tried in humans. I did not believe that this was a likely explanation for the pseudogenes, however. First, under natural conditions the proc-

ess is largely unknown. A baby gets type A blood because the genes for type A were inherited from her parents, not because her mother contracted a virus infection from a friend with type A blood during conception or pregnancy. The viruses that have the capacity to carry genes as hitchhikers do so under contrived laboratory conditions. The possibility that cancer-causing human genes are transmitted by viruses was once a favored hypothesis, but after several decades evidence that this is a mechanism for transmitting human cancer causing genes from person to person is still lacking. Second, the location of genetic material inserted by a virus is random, while the  $\beta$  hemoglobin pseudogene is always found adjacent to the normal  $\beta$  hemoglobin gene in humans, chimps, and gorillas. Third, viruses insert their own viral genes adjacent to any mammalian gene that has been carried along. Thus, viral genes in the human genetic code serve as markers of the nature and location of the gene acquisition. Viral genes have not been found adjacent to the  $\beta$  hemoglobin pseudogene.

It remains theoretically possible that the mutations that have led to pseudogenes have occurred independently in different animals. The small probability of this may be grasped by thinking back to the example of the inexplicably copied paragraph from the letter to the tax abatement board. If the faulty appended paragraphs were identical in two copies of the manuscript recorded on two different floppy disks, I would conclude that the mistake had occurred once, and then the manuscript duplicated in the normal way. It is far less likely that the rare event of flawed gene copy and insertion occurred at the same time, with the same amount of copied material, and in the same place, in chimpanzees, humans, and gorillas.

In the end the alternative explanations all seemed contrived to me. I also recalled that pseudogenes had not been the first genetic

evidence that had suggested common ancestry rather than common design. The other evidence was substantial on its own merit. Although pseudogenes may have been capable of standing alone as an elegant proof for common ancestry of humans and chimps, for me their evidence was confirmatory. The did not stand alone.

## Reflections

The thrill of a new insight was tempered by a sense of loss as I contemplated the  $\beta$  hemoglobin pseudogene. While I had long assumed that parts of the first chapter of Genesis spoke metaphorically (there was no other option after studying physics), the description of God forming a clay model for Adam followed by suffusion with life had not stimulated my doubt. My next reading of Genesis left me sad, for I felt a little closer to the animals and a bit farther from the Sculptor who wished to make us in his image.

My knowledge of geology has increased sporadically, and in small increments, since my college field trip. Reports in journals such as *Science and Nature* discuss an age for life on earth estimated in hundreds of millions of years, not a few thousand years. The Adventist claim that contradictory data prevents scientific consensus about the age of life on the earth is not supported by reports in these widely read journals.<sup>12</sup> I wonder if freshman students at La Sierra University still take geology field trips to Utah led by guides who are struggling against a barrage of scientific reports to reinterpret fossil findings in terms of Noah's flood and other events occurring over a few thousand years.

In college I found it easiest to dismiss the scientific techniques and evidence that I understood the least well. I still do. Adventist colleagues with whom I have discussed the ancestral link between people and chimps



implied by genetics have a background, like my own, in which center stage in the conflict between Adventist creationism and science was previously held by the age-of-life question. The age-of-life question is no longer an issue with which they struggle, having been resolved in favor of epochs much longer than 6,000 years. The issue of human ancestry is receiving increasing attention. While the mechanisms of molecular genetics are familiar to anyone trained in biological sciences within the past two decades, the data supporting common ancestry for humans and great apes is not widely known among Adventists. Because common ancestry has long been considered established by the scientific community, the genetic findings that confirm common ancestry are not emphasized in scientific journals. Those Adventists who are familiar with this information seem unable to dismiss it, and exploration of the implications is apparently ongoing.

I am curious about the eventual impact of molecular genetic findings upon Adventist

creationism. Because of the broad utility of molecular genetics to a burgeoning biotechnology industry, more Adventists will learn this discipline than geology. Perhaps impetus from these Adventists will lead to a re-examination of acceptable interpretations of the ancient Hebrew document, Genesis. I suspect it is more likely that those who understand genetics—and care about a synthesis between the world they study and their religious faith—will continue to limit discussion to discreet conversations amongst themselves. The outcome may be influenced by what Adventist college freshman now hear during lectures on biology and geology. It would be interesting to audit a biology class at my alma mater to see if the implications of molecular genetics have filtered into the curriculum. I would listen for a hint of a fresh Adventist approach that neither distorts the science of genetics nor equates reasoned interpretation of genetic data with abandonment of faith.

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#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Insulin is an example of an animal protein in which slightly different genetic sequence and resulting protein structure have not prevented an animal protein from functioning normally in humans. Until 1983, all diabetics received insulin that was extracted from slaughterhouse products of pigs or cows. In 1983, human insulin, produced by genetically engineered bacteria containing the human insulin gene, was first marketed for human use by Eli Lilly and Company.

2. A full report of this work was subsequently published under the title *Human Willebrand Factor Gene and Pseudogene: Structural Analysis and Differentiation by Polymerase Chain Reaction* by D. J. Mancuso, E. A. Tuley, L. A. Westfield, T. L. Lester-Mancuso, M. M. Le Beau, J. M. Sorace & J. E. Sadler, *Biochemistry* 30 (1991): 253-269.

3. While less than one percent of the common genetic codes of humans and chimps have been determined, many thousands of DNA letters are available for comparison.

4. For a review of the molecular genetics of hemoglobin, both the contribution to understanding of

human disease and the interpretation of genetic information to derive hereditary lineages, see the textbook by H. F. Bunn, *Hemoglobin—Molecular, Genetic, and Clinical Aspects* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1986).

5. Because there are diseases caused by defects in hemoglobin protein, such as sickle cell anemia and thalassemia, these genes have been carefully and frequently analyzed to identify the causative defects. A form of gene analysis is now part of prenatal testing for couples concerned that their child may have sickle cell anemia.

6. The entire sequence of the  $\beta$  hemoglobin pseudogene for human, chimpanzee, and gorilla are contained in the article by L. Y. E. Chang and J. L. Slightom, "Isolation and Nucleotide Sequence Analysis of the  $\beta$ -type Globin Pseudogene From Human, Gorilla and Chimpanzee," *Journal of Molecular Biology*, Vol. 180, pp. 767-784.

7. The number of letters (bases) to include in the  $\beta$  hemoglobin pseudogene was chosen, somewhat arbitrarily, as the number with homology to the coding portion of the  $A\gamma$  gene. The sequences corresponding

to A $\gamma$  introns have not been counted.

8. The similarity between the functional hemoglobin genes of humans and chimpanzees is even closer than the similarity between pseudogenes. That is, there are even fewer differences in the sequence of DNA bases that code for the globin proteins.

9. Although a time scale is not required to support the evidence for common ancestry between humans and chimps, the time since descent from a common ancestor can be estimated if a constant genetic mutation rate is assumed—see under “A Primer on Molecular Genetics,” below.

10. This possibility has been suggested by Dr. L. J. Gibson, a member of the Geoscience Research Institute. He suggests that genetic “sequence may have been transferred from one species to another by *introgression* . . .” (*italics supplied*). The term *introgression* indicates a hypothesis that pseudogenes were transferred via cross breeding between species. That is, humans, chimpanzees, and gorillas (species that share the  $\beta$  hemoglobin pseudogene) have interbred freely to the extent that the shared genes are present in all

members of each species. This is a peculiar hypothesis to be promoted by the Geoscience Research Institute, since the proposed interspecies breeding would provide a simple mechanism for interspecies evolution, a process they argue has been rare or nonexistent. See L. J. Gibson, *Dialogue*, 3:36 (1991).

11. M. Hasegawa, H. Kishino, and T. Yano, “Man’s Place in Hominoidea as Inferred From Molecular Clocks of DNA,” *Journal of Molecular Evolution*, Vol. 26, pp. 132-147.

12. A recent example of this claim is in *Dialogue* (Vol. 2, No. 2), the Adventist journal produced for Adventist academics. Dr. L. J. Gibson asserts that scientists who believe that life came into being 600 million years ago have about the same amount of data supporting their beliefs and about the same number of obstacles to surmount in supporting their theory as those who believe life originated 6,000 years ago. He implies that one who reads scientific reports is likely to encounter as many competent reports from researchers that believe that 6,000 years is a good estimate to those who estimate 600 million years.

## Appendix A

### A Primer on Molecular Genetics

DNA stands for deoxyribonucleic acid, a long molecular chain composed of four types of “chain links” that carry genetic information from one generation to the next. From the double helix structure scientists learned that genetic information is carried in the discrete “chain links” of the DNA. The four types of “chain links” are bases,<sup>1</sup> referred to by the letters A, T, C, and G. Information is carried by the sequential order in which they are arranged in the chain. In the same way that two symbols, 0 and 1, carry information about language, shapes, colors, and actions to a computer, based upon their arrangement in a long string of symbols, the arrangement of the four DNA bases carries information specifying a human. This means that every inherited trait a person possesses—char-

acteristics such as skin color, height, athletic ability, et cetera—may be ultimately traced to a series of DNA chains, base by base, has become widely available in the last decade so that now any graduate student can determine the arrangement of thousands of DNA molecules that may determine a specific human trait. A large national project is underway to “read” all of the DNA information present in a human being, about 3 billion units (the human genome) together with variations that determine differences between individuals. This genetic information, which is simultaneously becoming available for plants and animals, is changing traditional disciplines. Molecular genetics now has the last word in phylogenetic classification of animals, is in frequent use for identification of criminals from small bits

of tissue, and has been used for resolution of parenthood in disputed cases.

The information in DNA chains functions to specify construction of proteins. It is these proteins that carry on the business of life. For example, hemoglobin—a transporter protein—carries oxygen from the lungs to body tissues; trypsin—an enzyme—cuts food proteins into pieces so that they may be absorbed from the intestines; and myosin—a contractile element—ratchets along another protein after receiving a nerve signal, providing the muscle force to walk or run. All of these proteins are chains of amino acids, and every amino acid in the chain is specified by a corresponding DNA base sequence.

It is useful to think of the genetic code as a very simple language (see box, page 15).<sup>2</sup> In this lan-

guage the alphabet has only four letters—A, C, T, and G (each letter corresponds to one of the four types of DNA bases). There are no punctuation symbols such as spaces, commas, or semicolons; only START at the beginning of a long “sentence” and STOP at the end. Information is carried as a long string of letters such as ATTCGTCCA, et cetera. Like the English alphabet, the genetic alphabet is used to spell words, but the spelling rules are much simpler. Words contain three letters so that the string of letters above could be thought of as three words with spelling ATT, CGT, CCA. With only three letters per word and only four letters in the alphabet, it is clear that there are not very many words in the genetic language. If you like numbers you have probably already figured out that the genetic language has only 64 spellings for words. Each letter in a word can have four values, and there are three letters, so that the possible combinations are  $4 \times 4 \times 4 = 64$ . But the genetic language does not need 64 words; it requires only 21. The meaning of each “word,” as it is translated into a growing protein, is an amino acid. There are only 20 amino acids (the building blocks of protein), plus the meaning STOP, specifying the end of an amino acid chain.<sup>3</sup> This leaves 43 extra spellings after 21 are claimed for the key functions. Extra spellings provide alternates for the 21 meanings so that 18 of 20 amino acids and STOP can all be spelled more than one way. For example, STOP is spelled TAA, TAG, or TGA; and tyrosine, an amino acid, is spelled TAT or TAC.<sup>4</sup>

A gene is a segment of a DNA chain that contains all of the information to make one protein. If the genetic code is modeled as a language, then a gene is a “sentence.” It is a long chain of DNA bases that have the code for START (the DNA

base sequence is ATG) at the beginning and the code for STOP (the sequence is TAA) at the end. In addition to genes, DNA chains contain other segments with other functions. For example, sequences of DNA located close to genes respond to a molecule that carries the message “get ready to make a protein.” These sequences function much like an on-off switch. Other sequences are involved in DNA replication. Most surprising is the finding that large segments of DNA do nothing at all. Current evidence indicates that as much as 98 percent of the human genome may have no regular function. Large segments of DNA lack the START and STOP signals necessary for making proteins; therefore they are not genes. They lack the patterns that are used for functioning as on-off switches or for involvement in DNA duplication. While geneticists believe that some of the silent DNA has had a critical role in evolution over hundreds or thousands of generations—related to rare, useful genetic mutations—it apparently has no specific impact over the life span of an individual.

## Genetic Mistakes Allow Lineage Determination and Time Estimates

Every time a human cell divides it faces the formidable task of copying all DNA chains with 3 billion bases of information. It must provide a copy for each of two daughter cells. Skin cells, blood cells, brain cells, and fertilized ova all carry the same genetic information and must duplicate it during growth. What happens if a cell makes a mistake in duplication of the genetic code? The simplest mistake involves a single DNA base

substitution for another base. There are three possible results of this type of mistake. It is most likely that the new “word,” resulting from the change, will specify a different amino acid, and a modified protein will be synthesized. For example, if the second letter in a word specifying glutamic acid, GAG, were changed to C, then the new word would be GCG, which specifies valine, a different amino acid (see box, page 15). When this mutation occurs in the sixth word specifying the A chain of hemoglobin it causes sickle cell anemia.<sup>5</sup> The second possibility is that the new “word” may specify STOP. If the first letter of CGA, specifying arginine, is changed to T, the resulting word, TGA, causes synthesis of the protein to terminate at this word rather than adding an arginine to the growing protein and continuing the synthesis. This mutation has occurred at “word” number 2,307 of the factor VIII gene—causing hemophilia. It is also possible that the new “word” will be an alternate spelling for the amino acid originally specified. If the first T in TAT, specifying tyrosine, is changed to an A, resulting in ATC, the new word specifies tyrosine and now the mutant DNA will specify exactly the same protein! All of us carry genes specifying normal proteins that have alternate spellings.

The vast majority were inherited from our parents rather than occurring *de novo* in our own cells. This type of mutation is useful for tracing heredity in disputed paternity cases and in identification of criminals from tiny bits of tissue.

Again, if you like numbers, you may have already guessed that a modified protein is the most likely outcome for a randomly changed letter in the genetic language. The same protein specified by a modified code is about 15 times less

likely. Substitution mistakes occur at the rate of about 3 per cell division (or 1 per billion DNA bases copied).

The rate at which random mistakes in DNA accumulate is similar in many types of plants and animals. Because the mutation rate is constant, the elapsed time since an ancestor was shared by two populations can be estimated by counting the number of randomly distributed differences in a DNA segment that is otherwise identical. This method for estimating elapsed time is termed the "Molecular Clock." It is best applied to segments of DNA that have no function. This eliminates the bias introduced by mutations that cause a disease when present in a functional gene (such as sickle cell anemia). Defects in a functional gene may cause a survival disadvantage to the recipient and result in the accumulation of fewer mutations than anticipated based upon the random mutation rate.

A rare genetic mistake involves making an extra copy of an entire segment of a DNA chain and inserting it into another place in the DNA chain where it does not belong. This type of mistake occurs so infrequently that it is difficult to

study in the laboratory. If a "sentence" or gene is copied, the new (and extra) gene probably will not function. It may be copied incompletely, lacking the START signal, or be truncated before the STOP signal. It may lack the nearby control sequences necessary to turn it on as a gene. The nonfunctioning "sentence" is called a pseudogene with reference to the gene from which it was imperfectly copied. Once the mistake has occurred, however, it will be transmitted to all cells that are offspring of the mutant cell. The vast majority of mistakes affect only a small number of cells—for most cells divide only a few times before dying. In order for a mistake to be passed to a baby in the next generation, it must occur in a germ cell—one that will become an egg or a sperm.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. While the A in DNA stands for acid, under biological conditions hydrogen ions are dissociated from the individual acid units, hence they are referred to as bases.

2. For a more thorough but still readable introduction to molecular genetics, see B. Alberts, D. Bray, J. Lewis, M. Raff, K. Roberts, J. D.

Watson, *Molecular Biology of the Cell* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1983), pp. 98-110.

3. The meaning START does not have a separate spelling but is identical to the spelling specifying the amino acid methionine.

4. You may have noted that any string of DNA bases can be read three different ways, depending on which based you start with. The sequence ATTCGTCCA, for example, may be read as ATT, CGT, CCA or . . . A, TTC, GTC, CA . . . , or . . . AT, TCG, TCC, A . . . The way a particular sequence is recognized by the cellular mechanism to guide protein synthesis is referred to as the "reading frame." Because the signal STOP will occur about once in every 20 DNA words in a randomly arranged DNA sequence, one method for identifying a gene, and the correct reading frame, is to search for a long segment of DNA without a STOP signal. It is possible, in theory, to have overlapping genes in different reading frames. This is common in viruses where efficiency is at a premium, but it is very rare in mammals.

5. In most cases of sickle cell anemia this mutation is inherited from parents, but the original case arose, and occasional new cases stem, from new mutations.





# Muslims and Mission: An Introduction

The Seventh-day Adventist Centre for Islamic studies encourages both experimental pilot programs and academic reflection on the relation of Adventist Christianity to Islam.

*by Jack Mahon*

“YOU CAN FIND THE HEATHEN NEARER, you can help them at your door.” When I sang those words in my 10-year-old falsetto, it was the '30s, and my family had recently joined the Adventist Church. My sister, now a widow in her 80s, lives close to that rented hall where I once sang. I visited her recently. All around, in the neat red brick houses of Britain's Industrial Revolution, were the homes of thousands of Pakistani immigrants settled in the last decade. They would be shocked to be described as “heathen”; but they are a target of the church's missions outreach, for they are Muslims.

That small Lancashire town is far from unique. Bradford, its Yorkshire neighbor, has an even larger Asian ghetto. Drive through the main street of the city of Leicester in the English midlands, and the shop fronts and bright saris of passersby could persuade you

it was the Indian subcontinent. Open the car windows and the odor of Oriental spices would complete the illusion. Muslim religious leaders in Britain estimate their adherents in such communities as well over two million persons.

The phenomenon of Muslim emigrants to Europe is not exclusive to the British isles. France has opened its door to many thousands of citizens from its former colonies in Africa and the Indian Ocean. Holland likewise has seen an enormous influx of colonial citizens. Germany, bereft of its colonies since the 1920s, still has scores of thousands of Muslim immigrants. On a recent visit to Germany I became aware of the thousands of Turkish automobile workers manning the Mercedes assembly lines at Stuttgart. Promoting management/worker relationships, Mercedes has provided its Turkish-style housing complex with an ornate mosque. In fact, outside the traditional Muslim homelands there are estimated to be between one and two thousand such large communities of Muslims, forming a substantial element of the 950 million Muslims

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*Jack Mahon, recently retired near Newbold College after more than 40 years as an Adventist minister, served in the Middle East Union, Afro-Mideast Division, and most recently as Communications Director of the Africa-Indian Ocean Division.*

who make up more than one-sixth of the world population. Only 16 percent speak Arabic and, of these, a much-diminished number are able to read the Arabic of the Koran.

Of course, Muslims have long been considered by Adventists (and Christendom generally) to be geographically inaccessible and evangelistically unreachable. Now that hundreds of thousands of emissaries of the world's fastest-growing religion are "knocking at the doors" of Europe and North America, how should the Adventist Church react? Is it, in short, a xenophobic nightmare or a heaven-sent opportunity? The Muslim global diaspora has brought a revolutionary change to the evangelization of Muslims, as yet unrecognized by the church at large. Before our very eyes the ancient proverb has been fulfilled, "If the mountain will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet must go to the mountain."<sup>1</sup> The prayers of generations of Christian missionaries seem to be succeeding. Jesus did promise that the prayer of faith would move mountains and now the mountain of Islam, albeit piecemeal, has obediently moved to the West. For centuries Christian missionaries, committed to bring Christ to the most gospel-resistant community on earth, could find no foothold in the Islamic heartlands of the Middle East. To proselytize was and still is illegal, for nothing has changed in "Fortress Islam." Converts suffer stringent penalties, are alienated from their families, and may even be killed by a near relative.

In a revolutionary change, millions of Muslims, having emigrated to the West, are breathing the fresh air of religious freedom. First generation immigrants may hold rigidly to the elements of their faith, but their children, defined as "people in transition," are increasingly open to change. In terms of church growth they are "winnable."<sup>2</sup> They also have the right of re-entry to their country of origin and in future may provide the Christian, or indeed "Adventist" bridgehead that will storm

the fortress or, more likely, infiltrate its defenses. The crucial element in this changed situation is the recognition by the church that Muslim minorities in Western lands must become a priority target for the Advent message. In winning these immigrants for Christ, the church is, in effect, continuing its overseas missions of former decades, but at much less cost and in much more favorable conditions for the nurturing of the new believer and the generating of a new breed of apostles to Islam. At last, the Adventist Church can get to evangelistic grips on its own doorstep with the greatest single obstacle to the "finishing of the work," even utilizing trained and motivated laypersons to bring Muslim sheep into the Christian fold.

**I**n view of the evident favorable dispensations of Providence in thus bringing Muslims by the millions within reach of Christian agencies, what positive steps is the Adventist Church taking? Following recommendations made at the Annual Council at Rio in 1986, the Seventh-day Adventist Centre for Islamic Studies was established on the campus of Newbold College in Britain in 1989, with seven declared objectives. Briefly stated, these included the furnishing of a resource center for organizations and individuals working with Islam, developing evangelistic methods and sensitive procedures for incorporating Muslim converts into the church, and training national workers in these soul-winning approaches.

To administer the centre, Borge Schantz, a Danish national, was appointed. In the course of a lengthy sojourn in Sierra Leone and north Nigeria, Schantz encountered "folk Islam," where the five pillars of the orthodox faith are tintured with elements of African traditional religion. Such dilution makes the subject in general more open to the gospel. Schantz also served as a missionary in the Middle East, directing the sensitive work of evangelism in Muslim states. In later service in Eastern Africa,

including the Horn of that continent, he again experienced a mixture of Islam and the regional religion. When he was called to direct the centre he had completed a missiology doctorate at Fuller and had a few years teaching at Newbold under his belt.

Schantz rates the regular issue of the centre's newsletter, with at least one major article on Islamic evangelism, as his premier communications tool. Schantz has taken the Islamic centre "on location" to practically every union in the world with a sizable Muslim population. At ministerial training colleges and in the field-training conventions he has presented extensive courses on understanding Islam, and principles of Muslim evangelism. In July and August of 1991, Global Mission sponsored an "Islamic Symposium" at Newbold College. Twenty-five learned papers were presented, including a variety of evangelistic models in the context of wide-ranging and mainly practical debate.

Six major Muslim populations were spotlighted, in addition to two 20th-century manifestations of Islam, i.e., "Islam in Europe" and "Black Muslims of North America." Some unconventional but thought-provoking aspects will find a place in the published compendium, i.e., "Dreams and Muslim Mission," and Sufism. Seventh-day Adventist feminist readers are likely to turn first to "Women in Islam."

Several things became clear at the conference. To the Muslim, there is no dichotomy

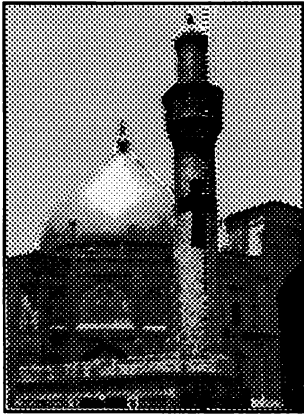
between sacred and secular; Islam is holistic, involving every aspect of life. With this yardstick, Muslims measure Christianity and Western civilization as one entity and, not surprisingly, find it wanting. The all-things-to-all-men philosophy of the Apostle Paul implies that in order to win Muslims, Christians should themselves, in a particular sense, "embrace Islam." Since Islam means "submission to God," that is not a problem! Primitive Christianity enjoins a similar holistic pattern: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

If the Seventh-day Adventist Church is ever to make significant inroads into Muslim populations, it must return to its primitive roots. Muslim converts accustomed to the ministry of the mosque five-times-daily prayers, will require daily support from "seven-day Adventist" workers. Participants left the conference to return to their experimental programs with the thought-provoking notion that in seeking to save the souls of the Muslims at their door, Adventist Christians may serendipitously save their own.

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1. This proverb is said to have originated when Mohammed was challenged to provide miraculous proof of his teaching and commanded Mount Safa to come to him, without result.

2. Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980), pp. 218, 219.



# Adventist Christians, Cultural Muslims: A Pilot Program

New Adventist communities remain within the Islamic culture.

by Jerald Whitehouse

**I**N JANUARY 1990, THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST Church launched a three-year experiment in outreach to the Muslim community in a country that must here be called Islamex to protect those continuing to carry out the project. The objective was and is to create within the Muslim community a remnant fellowship of believers in Isa, as Jesus is referred to in the Quran (Koran). This community is not only to witness to their belief in Isa as their redeemer, but achieve a level of self-support and nurture that will keep them from being dependent on outside financial assistance.

So far, 12 "change agents" are shepherding local believer groups totaling approximately 266 male believers in Isa. Local change agents

have been trained and placed in villages with basic stipend support. After gaining acceptance and respect in the village, they have gradually formed relationships and a spiritual fellowship for the study of religious matters. These groups, while remaining in the Muslim community, are building on the existing spirituality, to meet heart needs, and developing a fellowship of faith that mutually supports and encourages one another in spiritual growth. Outward forms of Islam are maintained as far as possible. Once a basic fellowship has been established, economic development activities are also implemented, leading to economic self support.

Basic religious materials are being developed to encourage and guide spiritual formation and understanding of these groups as God's last day people within the Muslim community. This work is carried out separately from any existing Adventist structures and utilizes Muslim believers in Isa to reach fellow Muslims. This article discusses this innovative program in some detail.

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*Jerald Whitehouse having worked for 15 years in predominantly Muslim areas, has recently returned from service as country director for the Adventist Development and Relief Agency. A graduate of Walla Walla College in theology, he has studied missiology at Fuller School of World Mission, and earned a doctorate in health science from Loma Linda University.*

## Surveying the Country

Islamex is a densely populated country with 87 percent of the population Muslim, 12 percent Hindu, and 1 percent divided between tribal animists and Christians. Socio-economically it is listed as one of the world's least-developed countries. In all development indicators it ranks among the 20 lowest countries. It is primarily an agrarian society with 85 percent of the population still classed as rural. Considerable foreign relief and development aid is utilized in the country annually through government to government and many non-government organizations. Frequent local and national disasters plague the country. Despite this, the people possess a high degree of ingenuity for survival and remain resilient despite tremendous odds. There are two principal language variations, one of the Muslim vocabulary and the other of Hindu vocabulary.

Islam entered Islamex first via sufi missionaries from Persia and vicinity in the 11th and 12th century A.D. Later military conquest

in the 16th century solidified the establishment of Islam. Much of the local culture remained to integrate with the Muslim practices with the result that the religion of the people today in Islamex could be described as popular Islam or folk Islam. The worship of holy men and their shrines is prominent. Beliefs in *jinns* and other evil forces are widespread. Protection against the evil eye is sought by all. Various rituals to obtain blessing and protect from evil forces are performed at the holy places.

Adventist mission entered Islamex in 1906. Mission strategy has concentrated on establishment of institutions, primarily schools and medical work through a hospital or outpatient clinics and dental clinics. Conversions are primarily from the poorer sector of the society and are almost entirely from the Hindu or tribal/animist groups. Public evangelism is used as the primary reaping method, with most of the meetings being held by guest evangelists. During the 86 years of mission presence I have been able to identify 22 baptisms from the Muslim community into the Adventist Church.



## Implementing a Pilot Program

The original pilot program plan of action drawn up in January of 1990 envisioned five growth levels for contextualized ministry to the Muslim peoples. In 1990 the pilot program achieved the projected first level, which was to create an awareness of change agents who exhibit holistic godly living through an incarnational ministry within Islam.

1990 was a learning experience. In March, an initial two-week training session was held, involving about 12 change agents. Much time was spent in follow-up visiting of the change agents. In addition, for several months there had been an urgent request from several believers in Christ in the "M" district for this



task force to assume responsibility for shepherding their area. Finally, the task force agreed to assume stipends for around 30 change agents and local teachers. This was done in the knowledge that this was obligating the entire budget for personnel costs. It seemed an opportunity that should be grasped at the time. It was hoped that some private sources of additional funds could be obtained for training and materials development.

Subsequently, this move was shown to be unwise. It obligated all the funding, leaving none for training. Private donations were not forthcoming. Spending all our funds on personnel also moved us too quickly into thinking of a large group of change agents. We should have been focusing on gaining experience with fewer numbers. We shifted our attention away from foundational activities that should have been our primary attention.

During this time in 1990 a couple of unfortunate events occurred that also hampered the work. First was the loss by theft of about \$1,000 worth of supplies from the training center. These have still not been recovered. Second, one of the other Christian groups involved in a similar ministry, due to some rather high profile activities that aroused too much attention in one locality, was attacked by mobs. Several houses were burned, two individuals were arrested, and a case was filed against the group, with a warrant for the arrest of three other individuals. Since one of our change agents had been involved with that group in past years, his name was one of those for

whom an arrest warrant was issued. This crippled the work and subsequently led to his having to leave the country for a time. Money was spent on legal fees to try to remove his name from the case, as he has not been involved with that group in recent years. The work in "M" also fell into disarray because of suspicions of individuals in our group in that area. Therefore, we suspended our activities in "M" as of October 1990.

By the end of 1990, the project had three change agents on stipend, active in three different locations. The strongest location had

32 believers, 19 of which are heads of families and the rest are single young people. There is some opposition from the local community but this is being handled well by the local change agent, who is functioning as a local village doctor and a leader of the local cooperative. A second location has about 20 believers. The third area has about 10 to 15 believers.

In December of 1990, a seminar on contextualization by

Dr. Gottfried Oosterwal, director of the Institute of World Mission at Andrews University, was disrupted by political developments in the country. Agitation for the resignation of the former government caused curfews and strikes. Dr. Oosterwal was able to spend only one day with one change agent. He did conduct a full week of devotional and instructive presentations on contextualization during the triennial session of the union.

During 1991, project coordinators continued to seek increased awareness, the first of

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*The agent has been in his village for only nine months. He first went to the mosque to talk with people. As he became identified as a religious person, one by one, they began to come to him to talk. To begin with he only discussed Islam. He also made friends with village leaders and has formed a cooperative. Now he has his own weekly meetings of 25 people.*

five projected levels for the pilot program. They also sought to reach the second level, fellowship—the establishment of a group of believers who, while remaining in the Muslim community, share a common allegiance to preparing for the coming messiah. To complement this goal, Dr. Robert Darnell led out in a training seminar that focused on understanding our identity as a reform movement, the *Hanif*, a remnant gathered out God's faithful from within Islam. Darnell led the change agents—now increased from three to 10—in a close study of the Quranic basis for the key Adventist beliefs. As a result of the seminar, the change agents felt themselves better able to defend themselves within the Muslim community. The change agents began to develop a sense of loyalty to Adventist beliefs, to the idea of being God's faithful remnant, the *Hanif*, in the Islamic community.

Also during 1991, the book *The Message and the Messenger* was translated on computer, and a few copies circulated in a pilot testing. The *Inductive Bible Study Leader's Guide* was completed and reproduced in the local language. By the end of the year, the change agents were shepherding a total of 236 believers in Jesus.

During 1992, the last year of the pilot project, efforts focused on leading the change agents and the groups they were forming to reach the final and fifth level: a sense that they were a body of Adventist Muslim believers, a remnant within Islam, able to relate to the larger body of Christ.

## Islamex's Pilot Program Today

The best way to sense how well this objective has been realized is to simply share reports from each of the change agents given in the first half of 1992. The change agents' identity is protected by referring to them only by number.

The first agent meets with 35 to 40 believers weekly to discuss the *Torah*, *Injil*, and the Quran. Twenty-two are baptized believers who invite others to come to the weekly discussions.

The second agent at first handed out the Mennonite book *Allabur Banda*, or People of God, with answer sheets. At first the sheets were returned, but people began accusing the him of making Christians out of them. Now he meets and talks with people in a mosque. He has two groups of inquirers of 16 and 13 members.

The third agent has been in his village for only nine months. He first went to the mosque to talk with the people. As he became identified as a religious person, one by one, they began to come to him to talk. To begin with he only discussed Islam. He also made friends with village leaders and has formed a cooperative. Now he has his own weekly meetings of 25 people. He begins by discussing Isa, or Jesus. People saw the books *Allabur Banda*, *Injil Sharif*, and *Lives of the Prophets* in his house and began to ask questions, so he has begun to give them copies of *Allabur Banda*. Four have been baptized. Other are asking, if I accept Isa will I become a Christian? But they understand that if they continue Namaz they will be accepted as Muslims. By now his reason for being in the village in the eyes of the villagers is both as a cooperative farmer and a preacher about Isa.

The fourth agent was baptized in June of 1991, and has already formed cooperatives in three sub-districts. This was natural for him, as he had earlier worked for a non-governmental organization as a chairman of a farm cooperative. He conducts weekly meetings that discuss savings programs, then Isa. All together he has 67 inquirers, seven preparing for baptism, and four already baptized. He discusses religious matters in the mosque.

The fifth agent organized local non-governmental organizations for development

purposes, and carried out spiritual instruction on the side, through personal contacts. Originally, only seven believers met together. Three more have been baptized, for a total of 10.

Agent six must work quietly and secretly because of the strict fundamental Islamic environment in the region where he lives. He has a total of 22 inquirers in six groups. Four persons are ready for baptism.

The seventh agent works in his sister's village and the village of his wife's family. They are influential people in the area. In the village of 600, his wife's uncle is union chairman, another uncle is a village chief. A cousin is headmaster of a primary school and a believer. This agent has started a cooperative. It is called the *Al Amin Society*. They do *Namaz*, study the Quran, the *Torah*, and do good for society, so people accept them. In their studies they use *Allabur Banda* and study *Injil Sharif* about Isa. The agent is known as an herbal doctor in the area so people ask him about herbal remedies. Of the 12 cooperative members, two are believers.

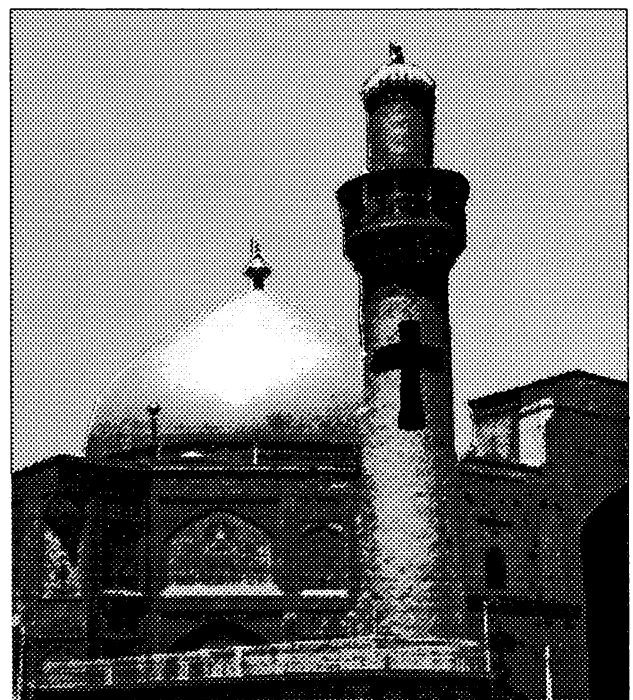
The eighth agent is a convert of one of the other agents—a local “lay leader.” He originally studied a correspondence course, and believed, but not sincerely. He then became sick, was given up as a terminal case, and transported home to die. God restored him to life and he rededicated himself to God. He has formed five groups with 22 people. He visits them regularly and tells them that before studying, they need cleansing. How? They must study the books. He feels he needs more time and some help with expenses to provide small entertainment items of food when he visits. Seventeen of the members are believers, with five more ready for baptism.

Agent nine works in his house as a village doctor. In the back of a market he talks with people and conducts meetings. He has just under 200 believers in eight villages. He anoints them with water before baptism, then sets the date for baptism. Many wives are

ready for baptism, but he has not baptized them without their husbands. He now has three volunteers who act as under-shepherds. He gives them a meal allowance to travel around and visit the eight villages.

His method is to strike up conversations in which he verifies that the person is not a spy or a thief. He then begins religious discussions with Quranic verses about Isa's greater role in salvation than Mohammed. He then gives them *Allabur Banda*. The key point in every discussion is, who can forgive your sins? He then asks, if you can be assured your sins are forgiven, will you follow a godly life? (John 5:24). He then tells them they can transfer their old sins to Isa through baptism, and a promise to live a godly life. He has lately established a cooperative called Beit er Nur. At its weekly meeting, he conducts a story telling contest. For example, who can tell the best story from Luke? He has communion monthly. Even though his family is not supportive, and doesn't invite him to special family occasions, in a crisis they will come to his defense.

Agent nine was articulate about his problems. He cannot attend the same mosque



frequently. Some believe that he is Christian, others that he has no religion. If he defends from the Quran, they say that it is only your *tafseer*. Some have rumored that when they become believers, at baptism they step on the Quran. Those who become believers are told to come to his shop because he has no community, no organization. When the supervisor visits, he should wear village dress.

The tenth agent has been in his village only six months. His wife is a Christian. In order to be reintegrated into his home as a Muslim, he said he is not a Christian. He is now accepted as a Muslim, as one of them. His mother and brother understand that he is a believer in Isa. Villagers have stopped questioning his wife, who comes from a Christian family. He attends mosque and occasionally asks questions. He has formed a cooperative of destitute ladies. On Saturdays he has a Bible study. He has good contact with about 12 inquirers whom he feels will be baptized by the end of the year.

Incidentally, I counseled him to stop saying that he is not a Christian, but rather to answer any questions or accusations about his identity by stating what he is: a true believer in the faith of Abraham, a *Hanif*. He follows the Quranic injunction to study the *Torah* and *Injil*.

Agent eleven has been in his village only nine months. During that time he has formed two cooperatives—one female, and one male. He is known as pump operator/owner, cooperative leader. The cooperatives meet weekly on Friday evenings. The male group has 10 members, studying *Allabur Banda*. Two members of the group are baptized. There is a *Tariqa* in the area which he visits regularly on Saturday also, who strongly believe in the soon coming of Isa. They have two leaders, one Iraqi and one Indian.

The twelfth agent has just moved to his village in April and is just getting established.

An assessment of the spiritual formation

among these groups indicates that we have successfully introduced the concepts of a remnant of God with Islam. We are now beginning to introduce Adventist beliefs in the context of the three-angels' messages.

## Implications for Mission

In Islamex, when a Muslim wants to join the Adventist Church, the father of that person (it has usually been a young man) is required to give written permission for a change of name and religious identity. This is taken to the local government office for the official transfer of identity. Consequently, he is totally rejected by his family, his community, and he has lost his identity. Since names are the basis of one's identity as a member of a particular family, this person then becomes dependent on the church for survival. Usually it means the person leaves the home area and possibly the country.

Even when the family accepts the new convert, the family and the economic unit of which the convert is a part of can be ostracized. Before our pilot program began, a young Muslim was converted in the traditional manner. The father of the young man was a headman. The surrounding community would not purchase produce (this being an agrarian-based village society) from the offending *para*. The religious leaders refused to visit and hold regular prayers. The *para* survived because they stuck together, assisting each other to sell produce to more distant markets. It was a year and a half before the ostracization gradually lessened.

When traditional Adventist evangelism extracts an individual from his or her Muslim communal context, we often produce a situation where the person has no identity and no reference points for a value system. Almost all exhibit a high degree of disorientation, instability, deviances in sexual conduct or other

moral behavior, or even a freer association between sexes in the Christian community.

Converts from Islam to Adventism that I have talked to feel a high degree of bitterness toward the church for various alleged mistreatments. Almost all are no longer associated with Adventism. Those that are reveal an attitude of dependence on the church.

We should not be surprised. Traditional Adventist evangelism requires a cultural transfer. Conversion requires that certain attitudes and cultural ways be transformed, but a total cultural transfer is never required in the Scriptures. Acts 15 and Paul's declaration in 1 Corinthians 9 makes this quite clear. To put it succinctly, we have required two conversions: one of the faith allegiance and one of the total culture. The first is biblical. The second has no scriptural support.

We need to get away from confronting Muslim communities with a "crusade." A crusade can only be responded to with a *jihad* (holy war, struggle). The term *crusade* should never be used in an Islamic setting.

Instead of a crusade, the pilot project is a community-forming endeavor. We are trying to create basic groups which will hang together, protect and defend members of the group, survive economically through difficult times, and nurture its own religious and social life. These groups are larger than a family, but smaller than a village—a minimum of about 20 families with a leader. Existing natural networks in the community are used to ensure survivability and sustainability in the commu-

nity. Utilizing people centered development concepts, we are endeavoring to raise the economic level of the groups through increasing farm production, and starting small businesses. Simultaneously, we are training *jamaat* leaders to care for the spiritual needs of these groups.

One of the questions confronting a fellowship group that is different from the surrounding culture, but aims to continue witnessing to its host community is, what identity should this group adopt? Some have suggested they be known as *Isai Muslims*—Jesus Muslims. In seeking to give an additional

"Adventist spin" to what we're about, we have developed the concept of the remnant not only from biblical sources, but Quranic as well. We are endeavoring to create a sense of identity as God's remnant—*Hanif*—within the Muslim community and within other religious communities. God is calling out within each cultural group a particular people to represent him in the community. He desires a remnant in the Hindu

community, the Buddhist community, the secular community, the Muslim community. Adventists are part of God's remnant that will be united when he reconciles all things to himself at his coming.

Since one of the basic assumptions of this ministry is that God has been at work in all cultures to preserve a measure of true spirituality, so far as biblical principles permit, we aim to reinforce traditional values in the Islamic society. We live, act, and speak in ways that allow the community to say: there is a

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godly person, a caring person, a praying person, a spiritually powerful person, a person who can help me be a better person. We must be perceived in the eyes of that community as strengthening noble and spiritually uplifting values.

Consequently, the pilot project uses the Quran as much as possible. Change agents show simple respect for Islam's holy books, thereby gaining much credibility in the Muslim community. "Quranic thought patterns" are used to explain biblical truths. A number of biblical truths are at least mentioned, if not substantiated, in the Quran. Muslims do not develop a questioning mind. *Takleed* (traditional interpretation) is more powerful. We have found it helpful to first introduce them to principles of study and interpretation with their own book. The pilot project has also encouraged the believers to continue certain practices. Believers wear the white cap during prayer. They continue to attend the mosque, fast during Ramadan, wear local village dress, including locally acceptable dress for a Muslim woman, and in the "house churches," sit informally on the floor. Observing *Eid el Adha* (the Islamic feast of sacrifice) has been a little more controversial. We have been open to either observing or not observing. The main objection has come from those of a Christian background who don't understand the original meaning of the feast.

In short, Islamic forms are encouraged as long as they are useful in communicating

Christianity. When they cease to communicate appropriately, they will be abandoned.

Obviously, the pilot project is not involved in a typical church planting. Institutionalizing the project into the traditional church structure would compromise many of the key principles and strategies of the project. It would also threaten the existing church. At present, the church structures and policies have no place for a contextual people movement along the lines we are pursuing in the project. We need to discuss the implications of the pilot project. We need to set up enough flexibility in our Global Mission and church structure to ensure the continuance of such "R&D" projects.

What structure should this contextual ministry develop? Are we willing to encourage and work with a rather unstructured underground house church situation similar to what occurred in China? What structures and support mechanisms perhaps outside the country do we need to provide to ensure the continuance of such movements?

A concluding word regarding the needs of those involved in ministry to Muslims. This is in reality a power ministry. The forces of evil arrayed against this ministry are real. Those forces take a number of negative forms, undermining the work that is being done. Much of the evil is directed at individuals involved in such a ministry. It is a lonely work. Those involved in such ministry need special prayer for their personal survival.



# Tentmakers in the Arabian Gulf

A family of laypeople explore the role Adventist professionals can play in penetrating closed Islamic societies.

by Headley King

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH CAN BE SERVED by laity—"tentmakers" traveling to "closed" countries, working in the employ of non-church organizations: the diplomatic service, multinational corporations, foreign companies needing expertise, and international voluntary organizations. With an overseas posting will come a number of opportunities, challenges and conflicts. What is one's objective in moving away from home? Is it primarily to serve God or one's self? Will a person integrate with whatever local Christian community there may be, or remain segregated? How will a person, particularly in Muslim countries, continue to keep the Sabbath? Will a lay person try to "make a difference," or blend into the background? Will the lay expatriate presence have a lasting impact, or disappear as quickly as a footprint in a sand dune?

An assessment of the United Nations

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*Headley King is a pseudonym for an Adventist professional layperson employed in the Arabian Gulf.*

country program through 1991 for one Arabian (Persian) Gulf nation concludes that "... the country program . . . too often lacked essential energy, focus and *lasting impact*." *Sustainability* is one of the current buzz words guiding services the U.N. provides. Sustainability is equally important for the church. Under the "Global Mission" program, the General Conference is seeking to establish a durable and meaningful Adventist presence in many more parts of the world.

It should be remembered that Seventh-day Adventist work is not considered to be established in an area or country because of the presence of a few members there, but when one of three criteria is met: an organized church meets there regularly; a mission station, health-care facility or school is functioning regularly; or a regular full-time denominational worker is based in the country, carrying on outreach or soul-winning activities through such units as Sabbath school, an organized company, or a language school.

## Come Over Into Macedonia, and Help Us

After spending 10 years working as a lecturer in a polytechnic in England, my wife and I decided that the time had come for a change. An overcrowded timetable left little time for more important family and other responsibilities. I started looking around for possibilities—at first with little success. Replies to letters of inquiry telling me that I had “too many children” (high education costs), or asking if I was a Jew, tended to discourage. However, I was selected for a position in a United Nations specialized agency. After one year, in September 1983, I found myself on a flight to the Arabian Gulf. I was taking a year of absence from the polytechnic, to work as chief technical adviser to a program funded by the Arab League, with around 300 trainees each year coming from 14 Arab countries.

The first challenge was, of course, the Sabbath. My new college worked a five-and-a-half day week, as do most companies in the gulf states, with the Thursday afternoon and Friday free. However, God works in mysterious ways. I discovered the staff of the college were debating the change to a five-day week. Should we take Thursday and Friday or Friday and Saturday off? I was, needless to say, very concerned over the decision and gave the director a note listing six reasons in favor of closing on the sixth and seventh days. He went to the staff meeting, at which the staff had already decided on a Thursday/Friday week-

end, and, praise God, told them that *he* had decided to close the academy on Friday and Saturday instead. So it remained for the five years I had the privilege of helping to train and qualify many of the Arab world's best and brightest young men.

The first year in the Arabian Gulf was a time for learning and, to some extent, isolation. Before leaving England, we asked the denomination about other Adventists in our new country. In essence, the reply was “Good luck.” In a country that had no Adventist work at the time, and no other Adventists as far as we were aware, we had to rely on our own resources for

worship each Sabbath. With our two pre-school children (the elder two were in boarding school in Europe), we organized services at home.

The country is wealthy, which means that it has a substantial expatriate population, and churches are allowed to operate under fairly stringent restraints. Fellowship with other Christian groups in churches and house groups was soon a vital part of our lives:

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After the first year, we were invited to remain working in the Arabian Gulf and our two elder children joined us. It was a further year before we discovered that there were other Adventists living 15 kilometers away. We began to get together for services in the flat of an Indian lady. A company of some 30 members in time became a church. New members were baptized by an Adventist minister in a neighboring country. Over five years

several other small Adventist companies were established in the country where I was employed. When the Adventist companies were able to get together, this formed (for us) a large gathering. Those attending were mainly expatriates, but we have also been very happy to welcome "local" businessmen, members of the security forces, and others who would not be expected to enter a regular church. Many opportunities were available for Adventists to meet with other groups, in our home, in the interdenominational church, or at Christmas and Easter events. The small Adventist Filipino singing group was able to witness in song at many of these ecumenical gatherings.

As with most overseas work, contracts eventually come to an end. However, in 1988 I was given a contract to continue my technical training in another Arab state. As had been the case five years before, we arrived in a country that, as far as we could determine, had no other Adventists. Initially, only 100 or so "Western" expatriates lived in the country, although with the discovery of oil reserves in the 1990s, this number grew substantially. As before, we conducted family worship, developed new friendships, built an essential web of social activities, all of which led naturally to introducing and sharing with others the Christian message. What started as our family's Friday evening worship has become a meeting regularly attended by a dozen or more employees of oil companies and other international organizations. It is a heart-warming surprise to meet with Christians from distant parts of the country, or even from outside the country, who tell you that they've heard positive reports of these meetings. While I have been establishing a training program for the whole country, my wife has organized an elementary school.

Keeping the Sabbath still remains a challenge. In this second Arabian Gulf country, people work from Saturday to Wednesday. However, this has not, so far, proved to be an insurmountable problem. One of the senior U.N.

staff commented during a recent post-Sabbath meeting that he "did not want to disturb me" on Saturday, as he knew that I do not work that day.

There is still, at present, no formal Adventist presence in the country. However, we have been able to help ADRA visit governmental ministries. We have also assisted other Christians who are working or wish to work in the area. For example, we are helping Anglicans to reclaim a church from the government for interdenominational worship. We have also given advice to Pentecostal-run English language programs and work closely with a Baptist hospital. Their minister was recently able to conduct two Remembrance Day services here at our invitation.

What "general principles" can be gleaned from our family's nine years of "secular" work in the Middle East? Of course one should remember that, in most cases, a Western tentmaker will be working in a situation where initial interactions will be with other Christians in the country. Support from them will come *in advance* of any witness beyond the Christian community. In picking out principles that may assist the Adventist Church in reviewing its program, I have chosen those approaches that have been most important to me and my family.

## O Taste and See That the Lord Is Good

Fortunately for all of us, God can see the end from the beginning. We cannot, so we must trust him to lead us. At the end of my first year overseas, I had to make up my mind whether to stay in the United Kingdom or resign from my permanent job with my English polytechnic. My contract with an international organization assigning me to the Arabian Gulf came to an end in August, with no guarantee of a renewal. The crunch came when I was told by the polytechnic that they

wanted my decision by 9:00 a.m. on Monday, September 10. I awoke at 5:00 a.m., with still no news from the organization, and discussed the decision, again, with my wife. The letter of resignation was ready, and she said to “go ahead in faith.” I handed in the letter at 9:00 a.m. and, returning home at 9:40 a.m., was met by our son, telling me that my office had called saying that a telex had arrived confirming my new contract for another four months. I’d been unemployed for 40 minutes, and subsequently continued in the Arabian Gulf for nine more years.

In 1988, we had to choose between service in Malawi and the Arabian Gulf. Malawi had been described as “the Switzerland of Africa” and we were quite excited over the thought of going there. After two weeks waiting for confirmation of my Malawi contract, I called my international headquarters. They said, “We heard that you are not interested in Malawi.” I asked for an explanation. A call came, not from the African section, but from the executive for the Middle East. He told me that he wanted me to remain in the Arab world, and that he had arranged for me to go to a second country there. My appointment had already been approved by all the relevant government officials. The choice, between an “easy” country (Malawi) and a difficult one was ours. The factor that decided us was that Christian, and particularly Adventist, work in the Arab states was meager or nonexistent, and we knew that Christian friends had, for many years, been praying for the work there. As a result of this decision, we have helped strengthen Christian outreach in a very isolated non-Christian country.

## As a Vesture Shalt Thou Change Them, and They Shall Be Changed

**S**ometimes one has the opportunity of speaking up for what one believes to be right,

others listen, and changes are made. This needs to be done tactfully, and I have made several mistakes because I was so certain that I was right. However, under his guidance, God can work through us if we take positive action at the right time. For example, in offices of two very strict Muslim countries, I enjoyed Sabbath privileges. An interdenominational church in the gulf decided to use non-alcoholic wine for communion services. A young British Adventist, who explained why he wanted to keep Sabbath to his company office, influenced the management to decide that all 200 employees could take Friday and Saturday as their weekend. A French school in Aden where my wife was asked to work part-time for a year agreed to work from Sunday to Thursday instead of Saturday to Wednesday. Several embassies, and now the U.N. offices in the present country, now take the last two days of the week as the weekend, instead of Thursday and Friday.

Tentmakers all need to pray for Sabbath privileges, for themselves *and for others*. In Arab countries these privileges are *far* from being the norm, and as all one’s colleagues leave for work at 8:00 a.m. each Saturday morning, one can certainly feel the difference.

## In Whom Ye Also Are Builded Together for an Habitation of God Through the Spirit

**T**entmakers should be prepared to be involved with other Christians and in community service, as opportunities for service come in many forms and from many areas. It is *normal*, if one is willing and able to join other Christians for worship, to find oneself asked to lead Bible classes, participate in fellowship and all-night prayer groups, and preach in churches and house meetings. Many people know little or nothing about Adventists, and what little

they may know is generally negative. One can have a great work by simply showing that one is a (fairly) normal Christian who actually believes in the deity of Christ and the other major Christian doctrines that they share.

Community service is a means of demonstrating that one cares for more than a salary check at the end of the month. With the situation in many countries deteriorating as time goes on and the increase in refugees around the world, there are more than enough ways to help. Joining community-service programs involves Adventist tentmakers with people of other religions, with obvious opportunities for witness to Muslims. Involving ADRA in this can, of course, be very beneficial. Lines of communication with ADRA should be kept open.

## Because the King's Business Required Haste

Tentmakers should look for opportunities, not wait around for them. I initially misused a lot of time while in the Arabian Gulf by not finding out more about other Adventists in the country at an early stage. It finally came together, after some two years, when a minister visited us, with the news that other Adventists lived in our end of the gulf. The church now appreciates the need for better data on isolated members in closed countries. It can only assemble this data when members inform the church of their whereabouts.

Creating openings for Christian witness can be a challenge, something you either tackle positively or leave dormant, but full of possibilities for exciting results. In the second country (in which we still live), we suggested that we could organize a Christmas service at the British embassy. That resulted in a group of 80 persons gathering in the residence garden, with three ambassadors, most of the

expatriate community and a number of local friends who met to sing carols and listen to readings. Last year, we held a New Year's Eve worship service for a mainly Dutch group, attended by a number of our friends. Ninety people came to the United Nations compound to enjoy the 1991 Christmas play put on by the school children and there are plans for the expatriate community here to put on a "Christmas Message" play and program at the end of 1992. Creating these openings may not lead to immediate baptisms, but our task, as always, is to sow.

## Then Abram Went Forth

We assume that Abram had, to the extent possible in his day, undertaken "contingency planning" prior to his departure. Modern tentmakers should do the same. Sources of information on the country you plan to work in are available in such places as company or organization briefing papers, reports in annual publications, and in journals such as the *Economist*. Pre-departure preparations should include a "what if" exercise. To quote an Arab proverb, "Trust in God, but first tie up your camel."

Tentmakers need a committed source of help "at home": friends in the church who will pray for you, keep you up-to-date with local church news, get information, arrange for magazines to be sent out, and inform you about the condition of your house. On the other hand, tentmakers need to take time to communicate with friends and family at home, sending them news of what they are doing. A positive witness can result from non-Christian members of your family wondering why you're so keen to live in places that others would carefully avoid.

It is worth considering "different" educa-



tional opportunities for children of tentmakers. While they are overseas, there are normally four methods of educating children: an “international” school in the country; using distance learning materials or correspondence courses; a church school in your home country or in a third country; or a non-church, private school in your home country. We have used a mix of all four, and based on this experience, believe that church members, in general, make far too little use of the educational facilities available through the church in other countries. We have sent our children to church schools in Collonges, Lausanne, Bogenhofen, and Sagunto, where they have benefited tremendously from the friendships developed with Adventists in other countries. There is perhaps little point in belonging to a church that states that it works and educates in around 600 languages if we are determined to learn only one.

We have found that distance learning materials, presented by my wife, a teacher, give us a highly effective—and low cost—means of providing our children with a very satisfactory education. Holiday periods at church-run children’s camps in Europe, and the time spent at European church schools, have given them language skills far better than those they would be likely to have developed in any school “at home.”

### But if Thou Canst Do Any Thing, Have Compassion On Us, and, Help Us

**A**s a tentmaker, you carry the responsibility of representing Christ in a foreign country. You may be working there on a temporary assignment, on a fixed-term contract, or as a consultant for a voluntary organization. Whatever position you find yourself in, always remember that you are working for God, not man. Working within a different culture and

work ethic, slow rates of progress, inability to make decisions—all are frustrating. Demonstrating very clearly that you have the best interests of your host country at heart, not only in a religious sense but also in a secular sense, will make its mark on those with whom you work. Identifying closely with the country and its people is important: “*We* need to solve this problem,” not “*You* have to.”

In doing so, you will inevitably have opportunities to explain why you are so interested in your hosts’ welfare. Why are you so keen to work hard, to try and improve their situation, to find other sources of help for the country? Because the love of Christ so constrains you. Otherwise, better to stay at home.

### Giving No Offence in Any Thing, That the Ministry Be Not Blamed

**H**ighly public witness to Muslims in most Muslim countries could well result in the closing of the church and the eviction of the minister; if, of course, they were allowed to work there at all.

In our time, we are developing unprecedented opportunities for radio witness, and satellite TV is a fast-growing potential means for evangelism. Satellite dishes are an interesting amendment to local architecture, setting rather strangely on mud-brick houses. However, to back up the electronic ministry, some “live” evidence of what Adventists are all about, on the ground, is a great asset.

There are many barriers between non-Adventist Christians and Muslims (alcohol, food, general life-style, etc.), and we should use—to the full—the tremendous advantages we have as Adventists in witnessing to Muslims. It is difficult for Muslims to believe that some Christians do not drink, as a matter of principle; do not eat pork, because they

understand this prohibition *from the Bible*, and do not smoke, because of the principle of caring for the body that God has given us prevents this practice. An appreciation of these points puts the Muslim and the Christian on a much more equal footing, in contrast to the normal mind-set in which Islam, because of its “superior” teachings, is so clearly better than Christianity.

Having established this base-line, and after building a relationship of trust and friendship, inviting Muslims to one’s home, and being invited to theirs in return, is not difficult. Inviting Muslims to Christian meetings, even to take an active part in them, also becomes possible. Very profitable discussions on religion can result. One should, of course, develop a good understanding of the Koran and of the difficulties facing Muslims who try to understand Christian beliefs—and let no one underestimate these. Many publications are available to help you and them. Remember, always, that one’s standards of behavior are constantly under review, by both Christians and Muslims, and one should be careful “not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother’s way” (NIV).

In Muslim countries, we need to be circumspect in our witnessing. There are certainly, on occasions, opportunities of speaking to contacts after a very short period of time, to influence an individual for Christ. However, tentmakers are not tourists and the longer term view is important. One cannot push “foreign” ideas down a brother’s throat, and getting thrown out of the country does not help one’s witness there.

Some organizations will enter an area and immediately distribute tracts, New Testaments,

and other publications in Arabic around the countryside. Talking to other Christians who have worked, for many hard years, in the same countries, one quickly discovers that they are definitely not in favor of this approach. Far better to be known and accepted by the society and to have its members want to know why you are able to relate to them in ways that show that you care.

Respect for local customs is critical. Certain things are simply “not done.” Eating with the left hand, keeping shoes on in a host’s house, sitting with the bottom of a foot toward the host, being too interested in female members of the family, will not be well received. However, being completely dominated by local customs is also not necessary. Some careful “abnormalities” from you as a foreigner can be accepted. Working as a couple or a family can only be considered a tremendous advantage in “breaking the ice” within the structure of society.

## For I Will Work a Work in Your Days, Which Ye Will Not Believe, Though It Be Told You

**T**he past nine years have brought us some of the most rewarding events of our lives. The benefits from spending time in such fascinating and different lands have been beyond all expectations. And again, returning “home” each year, the fellowship of church members takes on a new value. Tentmaking may be a difficult trade to train for, but none comes so close to reassuring us that our footprints will endure the shuffling of the sands.



# Prophets in Parallel: Mohammed and Ellen G. White

Adventism and Islam share a respect for the prophetic gift.

*by Hugh Dunton*

ANYONE ATTEMPTING TO WRITE A COMPARISON between the work of Mohammed and Ellen G. White is faced with a number of hard choices, to say nothing of the possible loss of friends.

First, if one accepts either of the prophets on his or her own declarations, there is only one way of salvation. Neither way permits much flexibility, if any. To move to a position of religious pluralism is to go beyond what either of the protagonists believed. A pluralist view would therefore be almost a “higher revelation,” and falsify the original messages.

Second, arising from the first issue is the painful alternative of deciding that one or the other was a false prophet. It is not easy to deal deeply and sensitively with both prophets, believing one to be the messenger of Allah/God, and the other to be speaking with another voice.

Third, if one of the prophets was deceived,

was it by evil forces? Here a writer verges on blasphemy in suggesting this explanation for the prophet in the eyes of Adventist or Muslim.

Fourth, it is tempting to use a reductionist approach that will attribute the work of both Mohammed and Ellen White to the psychological forces within or upon them. Attempts have been made to write psycho-medical histories of both. This approach gets us nowhere in Muslim-Adventist dialogue. A reductionist approach leaves us with only individual, or sometimes group, psychological phenomena. Moreover, the whole of religious experience, even of a less charismatic form, would soon be encompassed in such a scheme.

## Milieu and Work of the Prophets

The Old Testament prophet was *nabiy*, an inspired person.<sup>1</sup> Mohammed has the cognate title *naby*, one whose mission lies within the framework of an existing religion.

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He is also called *rasul*, messenger or envoy, a prophet who brings a new revelation or a new religion.<sup>2</sup> Both John the Baptist and Jesus are spoken of as prophets. Our Lord gave the title to John.<sup>3</sup> Jesus was called a prophet, but never specifically applied the title to himself.<sup>4</sup>

The New Testament indicates that prophets—male and female—and prophecy were a recognized part of the worshiping community of Christians.<sup>5</sup> Jesus warned of false prophets in the church,<sup>6</sup> and both the *Didache* and *Hermes* give directions for detecting such false prophets.<sup>7</sup> The Catholic tradition assumes that prophetism died out in the early church, “its final decline caused by Montanism with its exaggerated emphasis on the prophetic gift.”<sup>8</sup>

The *kabin* (compare the Hebrew *kohen*) or soothsayers were common in Arabia. Although Mohammed may have shared some of the traits of the *kabin*, he himself was not one of them. There seems to have been an expectation in the air that some great events were about to happen.<sup>9</sup>

Tongues and prophecies seem to arise in the Christian church at periods of extraordinary expectation, notably relating to the Second Advent, as in the case of the Irvingite ecstasies.<sup>10</sup> Ellen White, when only 17, received her first vision after the Millerite disappointment of October 1844. She had lived through the exaltation and the despair of that experience. She was one of at least six people, all but two female, among the Millerites who claimed to have visions.

The conservative understanding of the work

of prophets has several parts:

- The message is given by God, either by thought inspiration or verbal inspiration.
- The message is more than an encounter between the prophet and God.
- Propositional truth is conveyed.

Some parts of Scripture claim to be the direct word of the Lord through the prophet. Other books are histories or stories. The canon of both the Old and New Testaments took many years to evolve, with the Apocrypha achieving a twilight status.

The use of Aramaic as well as Hebrew in the

book of Daniel suggests that the *language* of revelation is not a critical factor. The translation into Greek, the Septuagint, showed that the message of Yahweh was not confined to a particular language. The message could be carried over into another tongue, even at the danger that some nuances would be lost. The incarnational model of Scripture is that God’s Word can appear among people in a familiar and

intelligible guise, an extension of John 1:14.<sup>11</sup>

The Adventist “pioneers” insisted on the *sola scriptura* principle. The use of the Revised Version of 1881 and the 1883 revision of the *Testimonies* indicated that Ellen White and the General Conference did not believe in verbal inspiration, but such beliefs were held by some Adventists, even after 1883.<sup>12</sup> Ellen White clearly denied verbal inspiration for the Bible and for herself, and pointed out the difference between common matters and spiritual issues. She encouraged translation and authorized compilations of her work.<sup>13</sup>

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*If one accepts either of the prophets on his or her own declarations, there is only one way of salvation. To move to a position of religious pluralism is to go beyond what either of the protagonists believed. A pluralist view would therefore be almost a “higher revelation,” and falsify the original messages.*

By contrast, the Muslim believes that

the revelation of the Koran was the ordering of the Prophet's soul in the form of sacred words acceding to the Divine Command to God's disposition of things. Once the re-ordering took place, the stories of the Koran were no longer stories of a particular time and place, but became archetypal situations of past, future and present which were mysteriously oriented so as to reflect the Divine Unity from whichever direction one approached them. Through the new arrangement became visible a celestial Koran which was in essence the untreated word of God.<sup>14</sup>

The Koran cannot be translated. It was revealed by God in a form of Arabic, which, though closely corresponding to the refined usage of Mecca, "cannot be equated with it, for in every respect the Koran is subject to no rule, to no measure, to no standard; it is itself its own law."<sup>15</sup> The language of the Koran is part of the revelation in a way that the language of the Bible or Ellen White is not. "It is a fundamental doctrine of Islam that the Koran, as the speech of god, is eternal and untreated in its essence and sense, created in its letter and sounds. . . ."<sup>16</sup> The text is regarded by Islamic believers, including devout scholars, "as immutable and unchangeable, not metaphorically or symbolically, but literally." "Even Mohammed could not change a word of it."<sup>17</sup> Yet there remains the problem, for some, of the abrogations. However, these are not the work of the prophet. "Do you not know that Allah has power over all things?"<sup>18</sup> Variant readings, recognized as of equal authority, arise from the fact that the kufic script in which the Koran was originally written contained no indication of vowels or diacritical points.<sup>19</sup>

The Koranic text is a primary document, the normative revelation, to be learned by

heart and to be recited. There is virtue in the recitation, and considerable skill is involved in reciting well. The structure and rhythms of the text are significant, and recitation is both a religious observation and a sacred art form. There could be no question of in any way tampering with the text. Only by inflection or emphasis could a reciter in any way color the sense of the text. In this sense the Koran represents an oral culture, while Ellen White worked in a written culture.<sup>20</sup> The Koran does not illuminate a previous revelation as Ellen White does; it surpasses the Bible. It is in one sense the Koran, and the Koran only, yet there is the mass of the prophet's sayings collected in the *Hadith*, and the *Sunnah*, or tradition.<sup>21</sup> Mohammed may have been influenced by, or should we rather say, built upon, pre-existing systems, but Jesus and certainly Ellen White did not start from nothing. In each case we may say that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.<sup>22</sup>

## Call of the Prophets

ABOUT the year 610, Mohammed was meditating, when on the "night of power" or "destiny," the angel Gabriel first spoke to him, the Koran was revealed, and the divine mission began.<sup>23</sup> In one sense the revelation was completed in one night, but Allah did not give the spoken record at one time. In this sense, the revelation continued sporadically over a number of years. To charges that the events mentioned in the Koran do not always agree with the biblical or historical record, it may be pointed out that "sacred history is a secondary preoccupation; the subject of the Koran is above all the Divine Nature and the means of salvation."<sup>24</sup>

Ellen G. White received knowledge through visions and dreams. She had one very significant dream before her first vision, but she did not consider that dream to be the start of her

prophetic experience. That commenced with the first vision in December of 1844. As she developed in experience, the number of visions declined, but she continued to have impressive and revelatory dreams, and from time to time sensed the divine presence very strongly.

There is some evidence that Mohammed sought to induce revelation after his early experiences, but Allah rebuked him.<sup>25</sup> Ellen White never, as far as the record goes, sought to induce an ecstatic experience, for she knew that a vision would mean she might have to carry rebuke to someone. This she found painful. Ellen White did not need external human stimuli to induce a vision. Rodinson compares Mohammed's experience with that of St. Teresa of Avila.<sup>26</sup> Could Ellen White's experience be so compared? Adventists would be reluctant to do this, as it raises the question of whether a true revelation can teach or condone error.

Do prophets seek their vocation? Amos 7:14, 15, and Jeremiah 1:6 clearly say no. Ellen White did not seek visions, although she had a hunger for God.<sup>27</sup> Mohammed was seeking for a deeper experience, although he may not have fully known what he sought. He was a *hanif* and like Isaiah, was in a place or attitude of prayer when he received the revelation.<sup>28</sup>

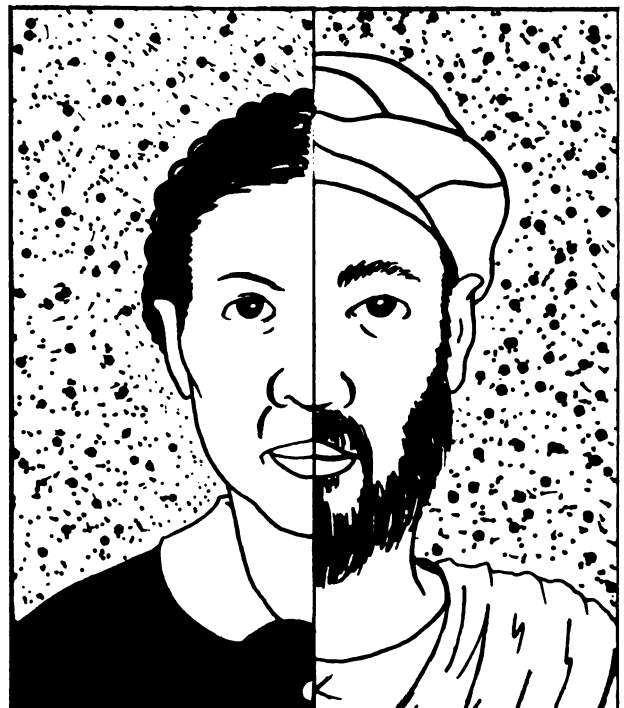
Ellen White did not deny the prophetic gift, but her work encompassed much more than that of a prophet. She was instructed that she was the Lord's *messenger*.<sup>29</sup> As noted above, Mohammed was both *naby* and *rasul* (messenger). As the *words* came direct from Allah, Mohammed was spared the task, which Ellen White found difficult, of putting thoughts from God into human speech.

Both Mohammed and Ellen White had limited education. It is uncertain whether Mohammed was literate, but he did not claim supernatural power in writing down the messages. The miracle was in the utterance, not the writing. That was done by *amenuenses*,

men who wrote down the prophet's words. The important editorial work was not so much altering the text as arranging the suras in a particular order. The very strong oral tradition, with the emphasis on the value of recitation, would have ensured the relative purity of the text.

Ellen White recognized that she was not a scholar, and her first writing was corrected for spelling and grammar by James White. The student can gain an impression of her style and literary skills in looking at the earliest original manuscripts. Some literary assistants, notably Marian Davis, were more than correctors of spelling and grammar. White called Davis her "bookmaker," responsible for the compilation of earlier Ellen White writings to form new books. This work was done under the guidance of Ellen White herself, but the greatest Ellen White classics combine the inspiration of Ellen White plus the industry, but not the thoughts, of Marian Davis.

Mohammed lived in a period of social and political turmoil. There were prophets before him.<sup>30</sup> He may have shown extraordinary spiritual awareness in his childhood.<sup>31</sup> He was





married to a woman 15 years older than himself, in a society where there were plenty of young women available, but not to him. He had no male child, and was therefore an *abtar*, mutilated one. Conscious of his abilities, he was not yet stretched. He made retreats to the cave in the hill of Hira for the all-night vigils already practiced by some *banifs*, monotheists, belonging neither to Judaism or Christianity. After his call, he occasionally went through periods of "anguished doubt,"<sup>32</sup> but he does not appear to have suffered from the strong melancholic and introspective tendencies of Ellen White. However, there is a little direct autobiographical material for Mohammed.<sup>33</sup>

Critics of Ellen White have looked for non-supernatural causes for her visions. Mesmerism was the earliest charge. Physical explanations were sought later, for example, some form of epileptic seizure.<sup>34</sup> The reductionist would argue that Ellen White's precocious spirituality was a sign of abnormality. How much did this spiritual hunger predate her accident? Is the increased spirituality causally or coincidentally linked, i.e., the spiritual struggles developed as she grew, unrelated to her invalid state? Here believers in divine revelation may have to admit that they do not fully understand how the divine and the human interact. Physical debility may be used by deity as a path to the soul. The onset of puberty may also have awakened deeper emotions.

Graham's discussion of "The Psychic Individual" provides an analysis with which the work of both Ellen White and Mohammed can be examined in various facets.<sup>35</sup> Possibly those to whom extraordinary revelations of the supernatural are given are themselves unusual personalities. This is not in itself a reductionist approach, but the devout believer then is faced with the question of whether the "psychic individual" may receive false messages, for only a highly relativist approach can reconcile the revelations given to Mohammed

and to Ellen White.

Little is said concerning physical phenomena in connection with Mohammed. The fact that the revelation was given is the significant fact, not the phenomena that accompanied it. The prophet was physically and emotionally shaken by the "Night of Power," and we are told that "the camel upon which [he] . . . was mounted during the [last] sermon buckled under the numinous weight which often came upon the Prophet when the Spirit settled upon him."<sup>36</sup> Modern Adventists do not emphasize the physical phenomena accompanying Ellen White's visions, regarding them as significant for the time, but not proof of genuineness.

## Authority of the Prophets

Ellen White vigorously rebutted the idea that there are degrees of inspiration in the Bible, which would incidentally have suggested different degrees of inspiration within her own writings.<sup>37</sup> While she does not claim that any doctrine is founded upon her writings, she does claim that doctrines that the Spirit of God had endorsed with power are not to be tampered with.<sup>38</sup> To this extent, Ellen White may be said to have considered her writing to be normative for doctrine on some basic issues, such as the sanctuary, the Sabbath, the condition of the dead, and the three angels' messages, but only in the sense that these are Bible-based. She never claimed infallibility, but did state that there was no heresy in what she had written, and that though she might die, "these messages are immortalized."<sup>39</sup>

If Ellen White were the infallible interpreter, would this mean, *de facto*, that she was placed above Scripture, a "Third Testament," a role analogous to tradition within Catholicism? Ellen White wrote primarily for Seventh-day Adventists (the *ummah!*), and her work is not to be used to demonstrate or support Advent-

ist beliefs to non-Adventists.<sup>40</sup>

Did Mohammed claim to set an example of how to act? "The importance of the Sunnah (the spoken and acted example of the Prophet), arises from the function of the Prophet as the founder of the religion, and hence the inspired and provident nature of his acts, and the Koran's injunction to pattern oneself after him. 'You have a good example in God's messenger.'"<sup>41</sup>

People held up Ellen White as an example, either to emulate or criticize. She liked neither role.<sup>42</sup> She recognized that she was a sinner and did not at all draw attention to herself, except sometimes to rebut slanderous charges of misconduct or inconsistency.

Mohammed's many roles ensured that he would be consulted on many issues. After he had given some wrong advice concerning grafting date palms, he said, "I am a mere human being. When I command you to do anything about religion in the name of God, accept it, but when I give my personal opinion about worldly things, bear in mind that I am a human being and no more."<sup>43</sup> After his death, his work, both in the Koran and the collections of the Hadith, provided ongoing guidance for the community.

Ellen White was given the role of counselor in a variety of situations and problems in the *Testimonies* and in personal conversation. There were limits to what she saw as her authority. She could make mistakes on mundane matters. The sheer volume of work facing Ellen White was formidable. Members were using her as a shortcut to guidance when

they should be consulting the Bible, fasting, and praying. This attitude encouraged mental and spiritual laziness. She was not a guru, dispensing her own wisdom. She pointed to the source of wisdom. Where God gave her light, she would speak. Where she had no God-given information she would usually refuse to give her own opinion, lest it be taken for divine counsel. She did make a distinction between "common" matters, and spiritual issues.

Seventh-day Adventists may find themselves in a tension between a literal reading of the biblical and Ellen White statements on geochronology and origins, and the generally accepted scientific view.<sup>44</sup> Many Christians have sought a reconciliation between the Bible and science, and there is a wide spectrum of Adventist attitudes toward a strict interpretation of the Ellen White scientific statements. There is also among many Muslims an ability to live with the tensions

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*"I am a mere human being. When I command you to do anything about religion in the name of God, accept it, but when I give my personal opinion about worldly things, bear in mind that I am a human being and no more."*

—Mohammed

between the claims of science and the statements of the Koran. In both faith communities there are those who posit two different realities, the religious and the scientific; who believe there can be no contradiction, for religion and science each describe distinct realities.

In his last year in Mecca, during the month of Ramadan, Mohammed experienced a nocturnal ascent to heaven, even to the presence of God himself. Was this a bodily or spiritual experience? As Nasr points out, "the *miraj* journey to the higher states of being and not simply through astronomical space," is one of the most difficult elements in Islam for adher-

ents of the modern scientific world view to accept.<sup>45</sup>

As far as the *miraj* is concerned it refers to a journey to the higher states of being and not simply through astronomical space. The ascension of the Blessed Prophet *physically* as well as psychologically and spiritually, meant that all the elements of his being were integrated in that final experience which was the full realization of unity (*al-tawhid*).<sup>46</sup>

Islamic scholars do not agree as to the literality of the *miraj*. Some use the “economy of miracle” principle, and do not assume the miraculous beyond what the prophet actually states, or what very strong evidence supports. There is a tendency for lives of great and holy people to be embroidered with marvels. The reaction comes later, when in the course of demythologizing, not only the excrescences, but the core of truth may be questioned. The vision may be compared with Ellen White’s visions of heaven. So far as I have read, no one has suggested that Ellen White was physically transported in her visions. The body was actually there for the congregation to view in many cases. “While I was praying at the family altar, the Holy Ghost fell upon me, and I seemed to be rising higher and higher, far above the dark world.”<sup>47</sup>

The word *seemed* implies that the experience was a vision, not some form of physical journey. However, she writes as an active participant in *future events*. Two *dreams* occurred in 1842, two years before the first visions. She wrote, “I seemed to be sitting . . . ,” but then the narrative proceeds as if the events had actually taken place, as in the visions.<sup>48</sup> These celestial visions, or journeys, invite comparison with Paul’s experience. “Whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know” (RSV). Ellen White uses this as a test of whether a prophecy may be genuine. She did

not define her own experience.<sup>49</sup>

Mohammed is by title and definition the “Last Prophet.” There can be no revelation beyond him. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908) was by definition a false prophet since he came after Mohammed.<sup>50</sup> Ellen White did not claim to be the last of the prophets, though she was the prophet of the end time. The arguments used by her supporters would not rule out a successor, but Ellen White herself never encouraged the idea that there would be a successor. If she should die before the Advent, her writings would continue to speak.<sup>51</sup> There were those who claimed to have visions during Mrs. White’s ministry. She dismissed their claims not because she claimed the exclusive right to be the messenger to the remnant, but because the Lord had not called these other claimants; their messages did not bear the stamp of heaven.<sup>52</sup>

## Teachings of the Prophets

Most of Mohammed’s teaching is concerned with righteous living in the world as preparation for the next. Paul Gordon notes that it has been estimated that “less than five percent of [Ellen White’s] writings contain a predictive element.” Here Gordon notes that false prophets make prediction their major claim for attention.<sup>53</sup> What Gordon says is correct concerning Ellen White and prediction. However, in traditional popular Adventism, the predictive element has featured quite prominently, as members study for signs of the eschaton.

The Islamic moral code was a restriction of the laxity of the prophet’s own time. It may be compared with the law of Moses, which allowed the less than ideal, but was an advance on the mores of the surrounding nations, and of the conditions that slavery would have imposed upon the Israelites. Mohammed is very frank and approving of sex within a

legal framework, although passion could be a disturbing force.<sup>54</sup> There is strong concern for the poor (*sadaqa*, or charity), condemnation of usury,<sup>55</sup> and gambling.<sup>56</sup>

Ellen White had to write in the guarded language of her time. She has therefore appeared to some to be anti-sex. The erotic element in marriage could be suggested only in euphemisms, and her cultural background would suggest that the subject would not be high on her personal agenda. The Song of Solomon was allegorized, and the Bible describes the afterlife mainly in terms of a restored Israel, but without a paradise of sensual pleasures. Ellen White's new earth has many physical activities, but she specifically ruled out marriage, on the authority of Christ's own words. She was not anti-marriage, although she believed many marriages were unhappy, and the sensual played too great a part. Ellen White denounces sharp dealing and all forms of dishonesty, the *suggestio falsi*, as well as outright deception. She was active against slavery and denounced hard bargains, especially with the poor.<sup>57</sup> Both she and Mohammed had a concern for orphans.<sup>58</sup>

Islam is a way of life, with distinctive conduct, dress codes, diet, social, economic and political laws (the Shariah) and exclusivity. Adventists vary in attitude from seeing themselves as the remnant, with all other Christian bodies as "fallen churches," through a milder *ecclesiola in ecclesia* view to a de-emphasis on the differences between Adventist and other Christian communions. This shift has gone so far as to permit some Adventists to question whether there may be salvation through Islam, *faute de mieux*. Islam set itself up as a theocracy. The remnant church could not aim at that since the very remnant concept implies a minority that would remain politically powerless. Adventists have strongly endorsed the separation of church and state, and the principle of liberty of conscience. God's kingdom is not to be set up by human beings,

but by God.<sup>59</sup> Augustine and Mohammed believed in coercion. Adventists stand in the Anabaptist tradition.

Mohammed allowed his followers to wash with sand before prayers, if no water was available. There were exceptions to not fighting in the holy month. Prayers might be shortened if there was a fear that unbelievers might attack. Unclean food might be eaten if hunger constrained.<sup>60</sup> The Koran, like the Levitical law, does not go into distinctions between unclean and unhealthy.

Ellen White was flexible in health practices. It is clear that for her it is a *health* issue and not a distinction between clean and unclean in a *ceremonial* sense.<sup>61</sup>

"Those who offend God and His Prophet will be damned in this world and the next." "Those who despise the Koran as" 'Old fictitious tales!' "shall bear the full brunt of their burdens on the Day of Resurrection."<sup>62</sup> Those who reject the *Testimonies* face spiritual loss, slighting the Holy Spirit. Those who despise or reject the *Testimonies*, leave the church. The final work of the deceiver will be to make the *Testimonies* of no effect.<sup>63</sup>

There are difficult things in Scripture, as Peter acknowledged. Ellen White presents Adventists with some hard sayings, antinomies, some of which arise from her adaptation of counsel to individual cases. One could, as with Scripture, compile a *Sic et Non* from her writings. In the Koran there are the mysterious letters at the beginning of certain suras. Most Islamic scholars are content to say reverently, "Allah alone knows what He means by these letters."<sup>64</sup>

## Practices of the Prophets

Both Ellen White and Mohammed have been accused of inconsistency, and the worst construction has been placed on these apparent inconsistencies. Ellen White was not

as rapid and thorough as she might have been in adopting vegetarianism. Part of the problem was her frequent traveling, when one had to eat what was available. It took time to define clean and unclean, or healthful and unhealthful, using the distinctions of Leviticus 11 as a guide. Ellen White died with debts, although she had counseled both individuals and institutions to shun debt as they would shun leprosy. Royalties anticipated from her works were to offset these debts.

Muslims are allowed four wives,<sup>65</sup> but the prophet himself had at least nine. "This privilege is yours alone, being granted to no other believer."<sup>66</sup> It has been pointed out that some of these arrangements were made to provide homes for the widows of supporters killed in battle. If Mohammed did indeed visit all nine in one night, does that demonstrate that he showed equal concern for them so that they would not feel second-class wives, rather than lust? The story is Hadithic, not Koranic.<sup>67</sup> Some of the Old Testament heroes might have understood this more than Christian saints.

Both Ellen White and Mohammed have been accused of having "convenient" revelations to suit their own purposes. Mohammed was able to circumvent the taboo against marrying the widow of a son, by a revelation that distinguished between relationship by blood and adoption.<sup>68</sup> Ellen White has been accused of having a vision to avoid explaining difficulties in her work. On examination, the charge fails.<sup>69</sup> It has also been asserted that Ellen White was influenced to

write testimonies by the brethren who wanted her authority for what they thought needed to be done, especially in fundraising.<sup>70</sup>

Mohammed did not claim to work miracles, although the splitting of the moon is mentioned in the Koran.<sup>71</sup> Legends grew up attributing miracles to him, "but there is nothing conclusive in their nature; they play no part in Islamic theology, nor do they embody any essential element in the life of the Prophet."<sup>72</sup> Although he healed, he attributed the power to Allah,<sup>73</sup> preferring simple remedies.

Ellen White made no claims to work miracles, and Adventists were sometimes taunted that if

she were a real prophet she should be able to demonstrate miraculous powers.<sup>74</sup> Adventists did claim that there were remarkable instances of healing in response to her prayers,<sup>75</sup> but her own writing downplays her own role, and emphasizes the prayer of faith which all may exercise. She records healing brought about by God through the prayers of others.

Has the role of Mohammed changed between the living and the dead prophet? Even before his death there were some who sought to deify Mohammed. This he strongly resisted, not even allowing a monument on his grave. There is one God. "Muslims will allow attacks on Allah; there are atheists and atheistic publications and rationalist societies; but to disparage Mohammed will provoke from even the most 'liberal' sections of the community, a fanaticism of blazing vehemence."<sup>76</sup>

There are at least 200 names of the prophet. Most of these are post-Koranic. Some of these lift him far above the ordinary mortal: "The

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*Ellen White's work has been represented as far in advance of anyone in her own time. The miracle is not in the originality, but in the selectivity, in the strong emphasis on the spiritual basis of health and education, and implanting these ideas into the very marrow of the Adventist Church.*

City of Knowledge, The Key of Paradise, The Holy Spirit, The Pure, The Good, Liege Lord of the Two Worlds.”<sup>77</sup>

“Doctrine follows devotion.” In the case of Mary and the saints, the theologians have usually given doctrinal shape to the beliefs and practices of devotees, rather than the theologians developing devotional practices. No Adventists, not even the perfectionist wing, have ever attributed sinlessness to Ellen White. Since she died in 1915, she did not live through the final conflict without an intercessor. On the other hand, the Adventist Church has been slow to acknowledge the foibles and weaknesses of Ellen White, this despite her own statement that biographies of the immaculate bring discouragement to the reader. Christians do not expect sinlessness; they do expect holiness in the life of God’s servants.

Muslim creeds have tended to attribute sinlessness to the prophets, and among the Shi’ites, to the immams. The incomparability of the Koran is paralleled by the sinlessness or immunity to sin of the prophet (Ismah), which is an evidence of prophethood. Yet the Koran clearly teaches that Mohammed sinned, and could be saved only by grace, not even his own good deeds.<sup>78</sup> Some Muslims argue that the sins refer to the time before the call.

There has been a tendency among Adventists to “mythologize” Ellen White since her death. The 1919 Bible conference was an attempt to look at issues honestly and frankly, but the issues were too explosive to go public.

Although Ellen White refused to be manipulated in her lifetime, some have felt that her writings have been used to provide information and guidance for any topic the church leadership found necessary. Issues include the degree of originality of the ideas on health and education in the Ellen White writings. Her work has been represented as far in advance of anyone in her own time. The miracle is not in the originality, but in the selectivity, in the

strong emphasis on the spiritual basis of health and education, and implanting these ideas into the very marrow of the Adventist Church. Adventists may find it hard to accept a prophet with human foibles, even though she herself was well aware of them, and realized that she could be lost.<sup>79</sup>

Concerning the life of Mohammed, there are three levels of information and, by inference, reliability: the Koran, the *Hadith*, and the tradition. The last are *Sunnah*, stories less carefully researched than the Hadith. Azami believed the *Sunnah* is essential to full understanding of some verses in the Koran.<sup>80</sup> There is likewise a cluster of tradition and legend concerning the work of Ellen White. Some will refuse to give up the legend, even when it is proved false. In fact, the challenge seems to make them cling more tightly to their belief. Of such are the most incorrigible fundamentalists made!<sup>81</sup>

Charges against Ellen White include fraud, greed, ambition, plagiarism, and selective editing to cover up changed beliefs.<sup>82</sup> Mohammed was accused of learning the Koran from others,<sup>83</sup> being merely a poet or soothsayer,<sup>84</sup> and forgery.<sup>85</sup>

## Influence of the Prophets

Adventists have from their early days emphasized that the Bible and the Bible only is our creed. We have hesitated, counseled by Ellen White, to present the Spirit of Prophecy as an argument for Adventists beliefs. So, as Seventh-day Adventists, we sometimes appear to hover between assurance that we are right because the prophetic gift has been manifested amongst us, and embarrassment, because of the Protestant rule of *sola scriptura*.

But can we turn the blessing of the prophetic gift into a more positive way of working? Can we use the fact and ministry of Ellen White in a more direct way for Muslims? While



we would not be right in placing Ellen White in the same relation to Adventists as Joseph Smith stands to the Latter Day Saints, or Mary Baker Eddy to Christian Science, yet she had a role. How could we emphasize that without getting things out of proportion to the Scriptural tradition, and possibly obscuring the central figure of God in Christ?

Ellen White could be introduced to Muslims

as the end-time illuminator of Scripture, bringing into sharper focus the cosmic drama of good and evil depicted in the Koran. Muslims might respond to the Ellen White who called people back to clean living away from pig meat and alcohol as part of holistic holiness. Just as Mohammed did, Ellen White called a community into existence to lead a complete way of life.

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## Bathing at Kiamba

O  
n his first mission into bush country  
after leaving the seminary    my father  
for three weeks    follows  
an old missionary  
who's been asked to retire

With the day's brick hot edge    gone  
they make Kiamba village    where  
after a cornmeal supper the missionary  
strides into the river

Soap bubbles ride away  
on clay brown eddies  
He speaks for the first time all day

*A chief's only daughter is taken by crocodile  
Naturally, the chief wishes the body returned  
for proper burial. The witch doctor says he  
will do the job—for a price—seven head of  
cattle and all must believe: three days fasting  
three days with no one moving from their huts  
until his call. On the third day he shows her  
body returned—crocodile tracks coming from the  
river, the girl at his feet, tracks going back*

My father soaps his body clean  
The missionary now on the bank  
looks away, throws his towel over his shoulder  
says, *Where you wash  
the chief's daughter was taken  
I don't know what you believe  
or I    but you must know  
I can't go back*

In sermons    I've heard my father  
use this story    again and again  
But after    after the sabbath meal  
when asked for the medicine man's secret  
or what happened to the missionary  
he does not answer  
but speaks instead of the power  
of baptism

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*John McDowell, professor of English and dean of the Division of Arts at Canadian Union College, received his Ph.D. in 20th-century literature from the University of Calgary. His poetry has appeared in such journals as Blue Buffalo, Free Fall, The Fiddlehead, and Dandelion. McDowell has also been poetry and managing editor of Dandelion, a Canadian national literary magazine. The work here is from a manuscript entitled Against the Friction of Light.*

*The accompanying illustrations are by artist Myken Woods, of Calgary, Alberta. Woods has studied with master calligrapher, painter, and seal carver Chin Shek Lam, and has had numerous exhibitions of her work.*



## Supernova 1987A: Chile

*i*

*n a cataclysmic blast it explodes, brightening to outshine a hundred million stars. From a billion, billion miles away the light from this Large Magellanic Cloud reaches us. This is a phenomenon fundamental to the structure of the universe and even to life itself. Its release of x-rays, gamma and cosmic rays, and neutrinos is rewriting the text books.*

*"I was sure it was some flaw on the plate. Finally, I went outside and saw the star with my naked eye."*

I know what I've seen at dusk  
not up here but in town  
or rather what I heard  
shots    heavy-heeled footsteps running  
in the moment I turn with the crowd  
Only a child  
lying on the darkening street

What science to turn  
on a night of brilliance  
windswept    cold    on the mountain  
miles from La Serena  
here all reference  
beyond this world    Just  
universe    Just

observatories around the globe  
fix instruments on this

What words to say    creation  
death    This  
little I read  
"one among so many"  
or thought I did  
This    is/was  
a    telescope to focus light  
a    child shot dead

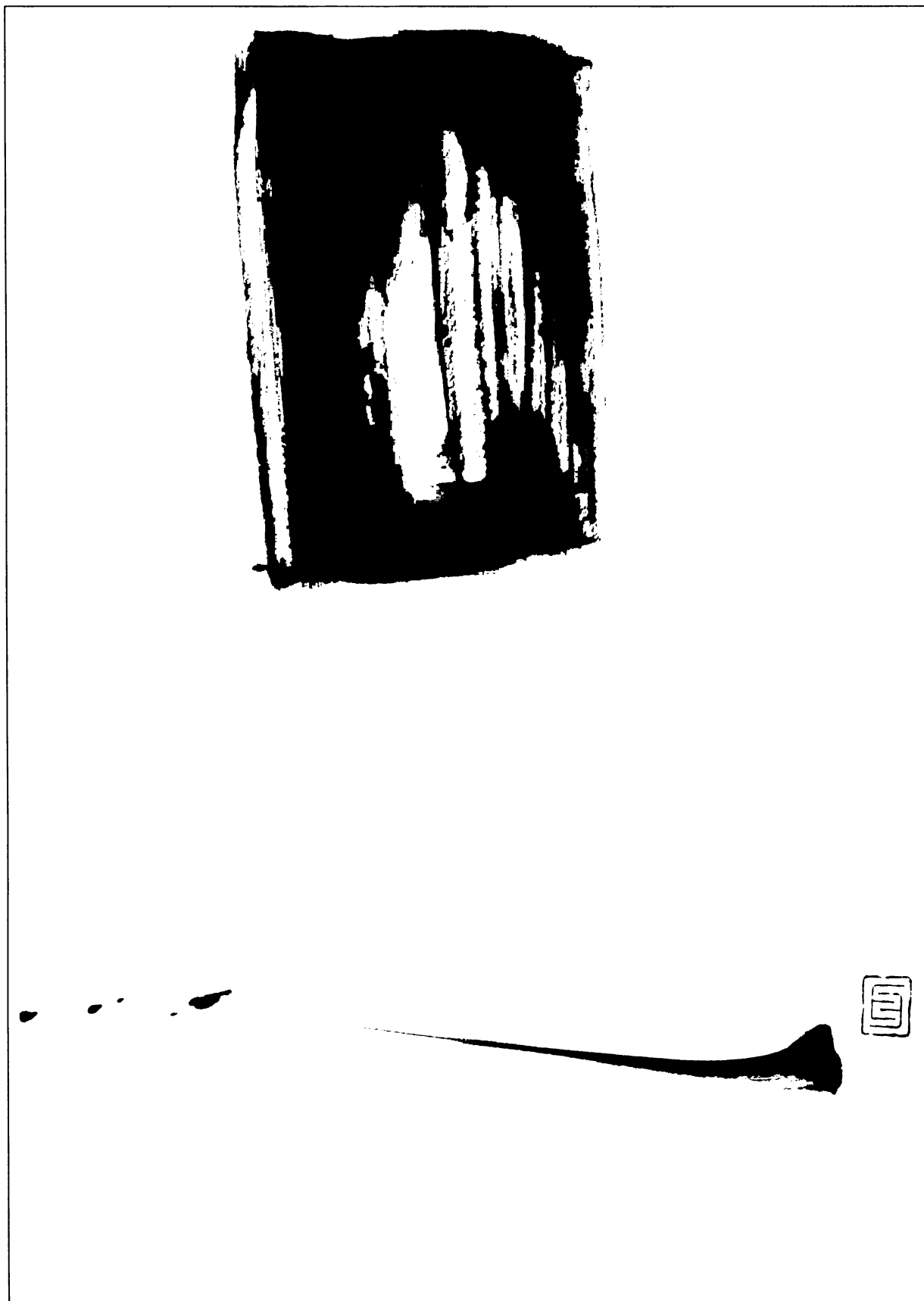
No light shines

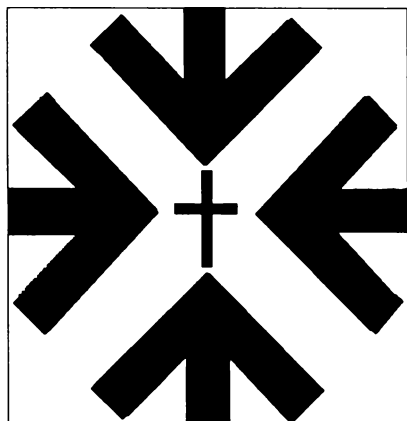
So for this child    I will say  
I see something fundamental  
her hand raised  
perhaps in farewell

I see flowers  
but not ones she would have picked  
and candles  
not the ones she wanted to light  
to glow in the blessing of the Virgin

But, perhaps there is some flaw  
with the light

Her small coffin closes ground  
the season for viewing  
with the naked eye  
brief  
and clouding over





# Southeastern Will Ordain Women—Someday

by Gary Chartier

Delegates to the Southeastern California Conference's seventh triennial session sent a confusing message to their constituents and to the church as a whole as they attempted once again to address the question of women's equality in ministry. However, they also mandated constitutional changes that may make this goal impossible to achieve.

The task force report, introduced by the conference's Gender Inclusiveness Task Force, was endorsed by the constituency September 20, 1992. It articulated the conference's unwilling accession to the world church's decision that women not be ordained *for world church service*. It called, however, for "conference leaders to devise a plan by which qualified women ministers . . . [could] be ordained for ministry" within Southeastern. Further, the report's approval committed the conference to ending "further discrimination in . . . [the] conference by uniformly conducting all future ordinations of qualified men and women ministers."

Despite the session's affirmative vote on these recommendations, the delegates later delivered a series of defeats to proposed changes to

Southeastern's charter by the conference constitution committee that would have enabled the conference to move ahead with the objectives mandated by the task force report. Among the committee's recommendations was the adoption of an amendment that read as follows: "It is the desire and intent of the Conference to comply with the working of the North American Division in so far as they are in harmony with this constitution and appropriate to the needs of the Conference." However, the session decided to adopt part of the proposed amendment, while deleting the clause beginning "in so far . . ." Further, the delegates failed to endorse a constitutional amendment that would have empowered the conference executive committee to "approve and authorize all ordinations . . . issued by the Conference."

Proponents of local ordination maintain that agreeing to comply with world church polices and submitting conventional ordination requests to the union for approval need not prevent the conference from ordaining anyone for ministerial service within its own territory. Such local ordination, they observe,

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Gary Chartier, a graduate of La Sierra University, received his doctorate from Cambridge University. He is the news editor of Spectrum.



is all that is required for the implementation of the report.

In light of the session's decisions, some male ministers in Southeastern have discussed the possibility of requesting that their credentials be altered to match those currently issued to women pastors. Others, of course, are likely to resist any loss in their ministerial privileges. In absence of a consensus, some believe the conference would be required to issue two sets of credentials to male ministers—one to those committed to gender parity in ministry, and another to those more comfortable with the status quo. Such a disparity would, of course, render out-of-conference ministerial transfers chaotic. It might also have unforeseen legal implications.

Just what the conference as a whole decides to do about the status of its women ministers will be largely influenced by F. Lynn Mallery, the new Southeastern president. Mallery, a former La Sierra University faculty member who holds two doctorates (one from Berkeley's Graduate Theological Union), is widely supported throughout the conference. But his election at the October 18 session was the culmination of a protracted and somewhat difficult process.

At the constituency's first session, September 20, the nominating committee indicated that its choice for president was Craig Newborn, a Loma Linda Academy religion instructor who had previously served in church leadership roles in the Middle East and Africa. In the first speech following the presentation of the committee's proposal, Pacific Union president Thomas Mostert called attention to Newborn's relative inexperience and asserted that a number of Newborn's former administrative superiors did not sup-

port his nomination as Southeastern's president. Immediately after Mostert's speech, another delegate—employing a parliamentary technique that would be used on several occasions to stifle debate throughout the session—successfully moved that the report be returned to the nominating committee for reconsideration.

Following its extended re-evaluation of the nomination, the nominating committee returned to the session late on the evening of September 20, determined to place Newborn's name in nomination again. Though delayed by procedural wrangling, a vote on the nomination finally took place. Tired by the ongoing debate, the delegates—who still had heard relatively little from Newborn's supporters, and who had in fact rejected a request that the nominating committee describe its reasons for endorsing Newborn—finally voted “No” on Newborn's nomination at approximately nine o'clock that evening.

Discussion had continued for perhaps half an hour on the committee's second-ranked nomination—Pacific Union vice president for administration David Taylor—when it was concluded that a quorum was no longer present and the meeting was adjourned. By the time the session had reconvened a month later, Taylor had withdrawn his name from the candidacy.

At the second session, October 18, nominating committee chair Jay DuNesme asked for—and received—a vote of apology to Craig Newborn from the session for the way in which he had been treated at the September meeting. He then placed Mallery's name in nomination; and, as expected, Mallery received a sizable majority of the votes cast.

Also at the second session, delegates voted early in the day to

exempt Tom Mostert, president of the Pacific Union Conference, and Al McClure, president of the North American Division from the three-minute time limit imposed on other speakers. Several speakers explained their support as a way to make amends for the booing Mostert had received from delegates on September 20, when his speech opposing Newborn's election had exceeded the time limit.

The decisions limiting the effectiveness of the Gender Task Force, coupled with procedural votes affirming the special status of church executives, were typical of a session that seemed unwilling to advance the movement toward lay empowerment and local autonomy begun at earlier Southeastern constituency sessions. Whether the session represents a new trend for Southeastern will not likely become apparent until after President Mallery has identified or forged a consensus on the issues that continue to inspire and divide the members of that conference.

Describing himself as a facilitator, Mallery emphasizes the importance of “consensus-building” and “listening” to his vision of the presidential role, and articulately voices his support for a governance model in which lay members of the conference have “true input” into determining its direction.

Thus, for example, on the much-debated issue of the status of women ministers in Southeastern, Mallery looks to further discussion within the conference's executive committee as a source of guidance. Mallery stresses that this further reflection is necessary as a consequence of, among other things, the potential conflict between the task force report and the constitutional actions taken during the session.

# Global Village Gets National Attention

*Global Village '92, a "teach-in, live-in, work-in" sponsored by ADRA International and the Stahl Center at La Sierra University, welcomed more than 20,000 visitors to the La Sierra University campus for tours of a dozen life-size habitats from four continents. The idea was birthed high in the Andes mountains 18 months ago as Stahl Center director Charles Teel, Jr., led a half-dozen La Sierra students on an ADRA project that called for them to construct a school on one of Lake Titicaca's "floating islands."*

*Millions also read or viewed images of the event in the print and electronic media. Several local newspapers and magazines gave the village generous coverage. CNN offered national and international exposure, with a dozen other television entities following suit, including the "Today" show on NBC. In addition, two representatives from the U.S. Agency for International Development were on hand to evaluate Global Village '92 as a model for development education programs at home and abroad. Plans to replicate Global Village at other locations around the country and the world are already afoot; ADRA Chief Executive Officer Ralph Watts dreams, in particular, of the day when the habitats will grace the Capitol mall in Washington, D.C. Following is the L. A. Times account of this national media event.*

—The Editors

by Stephanie O'Neill

As the large truck pulled onto the one-acre lawn at La Sierra University, Terri Whittaker's eyes grew wide with anticipation.

Heaped high in the back of the truck were her treasures: a filthy mattress, a tattered vinyl chair and, the crowning glory, a brown couch, its insides bursting through a four-inch gash and its right arm broken and dangling to one side.

"We've also got a really gaudy striped couch," she told a visitor proudly.

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*Stephanie O'Neill, a free-lance writer in Los Angeles, is a frequent contributor to the Los Angeles Times, where this piece first appeared. It is reprinted with the permission of the author and the Times.*

For the past several weeks, Whittaker, a Hollywood art director, her colleagues and dozens of volunteers have been scavenging through Riverside, gathering a large haul of roadside and back yard refuse that includes tires, siding of an old barn and even an old donkey cart.

The eclectic stash was collected as building materials and decorations for "Global Village '92," an unusual exhibit of re-creations of nine low-income and Third World "houses" on the La Sierra University campus.

The purpose of "Global Village '92," its organizers say, is to increase awareness among elementary school pupils and university students, as well as the public, of the impoverished living conditions in the less-

developed areas of the world.

"The original concept was to bring Third World conditions to the university students, to set up a couple of habitats and have students live in them," said Alberto Valenzuela, director of communications for Washington-based Adventist Development and Relief Agency [ADRA], which is sponsoring the exhibit.

"Then we thought, why not make it bigger, make the university students the hosts and let's invite the community."

Since Thursday, college students wearing appropriate ethnic costumes have guided hundreds of fifth- and sixth-grade students through the village maze. The public is welcomed after 3 p.m. weekdays and on the weekend through next Sunday.

Visitors are encouraged to walk inside the dwellings, which include a floating totora reed house, common to the Uru people of Lake Titicaca in Peru; a South American urban favela, which is a small shack found mostly on vacant land outside cities that's built from just about anything, including cardboard, abandoned signs, pieces of plastic and broken-down furniture; a full-size Southeast Asian stilt house and a scaled-down model of an urban American tenement.

Charles Teel, professor of religion at La Sierra, came up with the global village idea two summers ago, while building a floating school with some of his students in Peru.

"The students come back changed and [looking at] the world through different eyes," he said. "And we hope to mirror that here."

Whittaker said she eagerly took on the job a year ago and has found it quite challenging—especially the actual building, which began last month.

"It's been an adventure finding materials," she said with a laugh. "In some of it, we've taken a bit of creative license and had to improvise on the materials because we're

not in the native environment."

For instance, she said, the totora reed house left the team at a loss as to where they could find reeds until someone suggested contacting a Los Angeles broom factory. They ended up buying 150 pounds of "hurl"—the cornstalk portion of the broom, which proved a good substitute.

And instead of using mud, sticks and livestock dung to build the Masai kraal—a compound of low-lying huts common to Central Africa—Whittaker opted for more resilient materials—chicken wire for the inside of the five-foot-high circular structure, which she coated with a special spray-on Styrofoam painted a realistic, muddy brown.

"It won't smell the same," she said, "but that's probably to our advantage."

Casey Bahr, producer of the exhibit, said the road-finds provided some of the best materials.

"It was amazing what we found," he said. "We saw some corrugated tin that was ideal for the tenement house. Then a group of students were out on a hike and they found some shake siding from an old barn that had fallen down and that was exactly what we needed for the favela."

And a group of Pathfinders, a youth group affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist church, got per-

mission from county officials to cut bamboo from a county grove, which was ideal for the Asian stilt house.

Bahr said the project cost about \$35,000, which included buying the materials that couldn't be dredged up, hiring a construction crew and paying Whittaker's art team for designing and developing the dwellings.

Among the greatest design challenges was the last-minute modification of the tenement.

Originally, the 14-foot-high structure was intended to allow the more than 6,000

school-age children expected to visit the village to get inside by climbing up a fire escape and into an open window.

"But fire codes wouldn't allow that," Bahr said. "So we adapted the idea and created an alley where you can walk down and look inside the room we've created in the tenement."

Old fencing, garbage cans, a broken-down car and spray-painted graffiti provided an urban feel, while live goats, pigs and chickens help set the ambience for the rural habitats.

The village also includes an old Ford station wagon depicting the lifestyle of a homeless family forced to live in a car, an African refugee camp and a beached Southeast Asian refugee boat. To give the boat an aged, rickety appearance, Whittaker coated it with eight layers of paint and one layer of glue, then blasted it with a heat gun, which created a sun-dried, cracked feel.

Whittaker said actual construction and decoration of the habitat took about 20 days, with help from a professional construction company and students. Many of these same students are maximizing the experience by spending a night in the dwellings, eating only the same quantity of rice and beans as would the indigenous people.

"This lets us role-play the people," said Christopher Cao, 20, a Global Village tour guide and journalism major.

"You come away thinking, 'My goodness, and I think I have problems.'"

John Anthony, 24, a tour guide and pastoral ministries major at La Sierra, said he was shocked to see the small living quarters of the tenement house he helped assemble.

"Something so small, it would be hard for just one person to live in—a whole family would be very difficult," he said. "I just hope all this helps bring a new train of thought and a new, better humanity."





## Ford on God and Creation

I was amazed by Robert Lee's comment (*Spectrum*, Vol. 22, No. 2, p. 57) that "There is no scripture that remotely suggests that God is omnipresent. . . . that is tradition, not scripture."

May I suggest to Mr. Lee that he look again? Let him start with the following scriptures:

"But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!" (1 Kings 8:27, NIV).

"Do I not fill heaven and earth?" declares the Lord" (Jeremiah 23:24, NIV).

"... though he is not far from each one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being'" (Acts 17:27, 28, NIV).

See also Psalm 139:3-10.

Scripture is similarly clear about God's omnipotence and omniscience. Here is a selection of texts: Genesis 17:1; 18:14; 1 Samuel 16:7; 1 Kings 8:39; 1 Chronicles 28:9; Job 28:10, 24; 34:21; 42:2; Psalm 147:5; Proverbs 15:3; Isaiah 46:10; Ezekiel 11:5; Matthew 19:26; and Acts 26:8.

The fact that Mr. Lee has marshaled a host of anthropomorphic passages only illustrates the condescension of God. Calvin said long ago, "God is like a tall man who bends down to listen to a little child." Jews, too, affirm that "The Torah speaks in the language of men."

Desmond Ford  
Auburn, California

## Sexual Harassment on the Adventist Campus

*Spectrum readers do more than just read. They think—and they write. Here are some responses to recent issues covered in Spectrum.*

As others mentioned in "Sexual Harassment on the Adventist Campus" (*Spectrum*, Vol. 21, No. 5), I was the victim of sexual harassment while working for a professor at an Adventist college several years ago. I not only was his employee, but I was a student in his science class and a major in his department. I hoped to attend medical school.

My work for him gradually included more and more projects in which I was alone. His actions were

subtle, making me feel both uncomfortable and unsure as to why I was uncomfortable. He would stand with his hand on my shoulder for 10 minutes, massage my shoulders, put his hand on my leg and frequently invade my space.

The work environment got to the point where I would leave work early with the flu, but as soon as I stepped outside the building it mysteriously went away. I skipped his classes and labs, bringing my grade

down from one of the top A's to an F. After frequent absences from work, I finally quit my job, not offering an explanation to my boss or anyone else.

Unable to find another job by the end of the semester (understandable, considering my prospective employers called my former boss), I had piled a stack of empty boxes in preparation for packing up and going home. On my parents' recommendation, I spoke to the administrator in charge of student employment. She asked me at least five times why I had quit my job, but I avoided the reason, mainly because I wasn't sure why I had quit, other than because I was extremely uncomfortable. When she changed her approach and asked me what I would like in a new job, or didn't like in my old one, I blurted out, "I'd like a less friendly boss." She told me to wait in her office while she went to speak to the president.

My complaint, coupled with two others received by the chaplain, resulted in a letter of reprimand being placed in the teacher's file.

I left that semester feeling supported, and was anxious to return the following semester, but upon returning, I felt a cold shoulder from the administration. The administrator in charge of student employment to whom I first spoke promised to help me find a job that would be similar to the learning experience in my previous job. But when I returned second semester, she didn't invite me into her office. She told me between blows into a Kleenex that janitorial jobs were the only ones available.

Further problems arose when my former boss called me early one morning to tell me either I must choose a time to meet and talk things out with him in the next week, or he would choose a time. Since the academic dean was assigned my "case," I asked him if he or someone else would be there

during the meeting. He raised his arms and said loudly: "Just meet in a public place! What do you think he's going to do to you there with a bunch of people around?"

The situation with me and the teacher became common knowledge, which I admit was my fault, but my peers seemed to be the only people who would listen to my building frustration. My friends who attended his class or worked for him agreed that he had acted inappropriately with them also. But even my friends stopped short of joining in reporting the teacher's activities. They had seen the hassle I had gone through and were determined not

to commit academic suicide.

I finished the year and vowed never to return. Although I have many good memories from my two years at that Adventist college, the most vivid lesson I learned for the \$20,000 I paid was to never again report sexual harassment.

It's hard to forgive when forgetting isn't possible, but I only pray that the next student who finds him or herself in a similar situation will be forgiven by administration long enough so they'll help rather than compound the frustration and pain.

Name Withheld  
Portland, Oregon

## Adventist Singles on Saturday Night

Ms. Taylor's article, "I'm Single and It's Saturday Night" (*Spectrum*, Vol. 21, No. 5), mentions reaching out to have some "family units of two" over for Sabbath lunch. This certainly shows growth on her part, and I would hope it provides an example for other singles.

However, it saddened me that

Ms. Taylor seemed to be unaware of one of the best-kept secrets in the Seventh-day Adventist Church—Adventist Singles Ministries (ASM). ASM is an organization that, unlike some others, does not function as a dating service, and is recognized by the denomination as the "official" organization for singles within the church. Its purpose is to promote a better understanding of the special needs, concerns, and problems of single adults; to provide a blend of spiritual and social activities where Seventh-day Adventist singles can meet and associate in an atmosphere that recognizes Christian values.

With unmarried adults approaching approximately 40 percent of the membership of the North American Division, it was uplifting to see *Spectrum* devoting space to the recognition of those needs.

Blake Hall, Vice President  
Adventist Singles Ministries  
Dallas, Texas

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*Letters to the editor are always welcome, and will be considered for publication unless otherwise specified. Direct editorial correspondence to Spectrum, P.O. Box 5330, Takoma Park, MD 20913 (U.S.A.). The editors reserve the right to condense letters prior to publication.*

## Adventist Activism in the Eastern Bloc

As I am a student from East Germany (Community Counseling Program), I am very interested in the March issue of *Spectrum* (Vol. 22, No. 1).

It might be of interest to you that a number of Adventists in East Germany became involved in local politics after the shift in the society. For example, there are at least four former Adventist minister—Jürgen Gelke, Wilfried Wemes, Gerhard Miesterfeld, and Reinbeon Erben—who now work in local politics. Three of them changed directly from the ministry to local politics.

You might already know that, after the 1989 revolution, the speaker of the last East German government

was a former Adventist, Matthias Gehler, who had worked as a youth minister.

Additionally, it might be of interest for Adventists in America that the Adventist church in East Germany was actively involved in the Convention for Peace, Justice, and Protection of the Environment. The church had sent four official delegates who worked together with Christians of other denominations on the most important issues of modern society during three conventions.

Andreas Erben  
Berrien Springs, Michigan

## Adventism's Centennial in Czechoslovakia

I read with interest the recent article and photographic essay touching on Adventism in Czechoslovakia (Vol. 22, No. 1). As a retired Adventist minister and editor, I have been asked to write a book-length history of Adventism in my country. A few facts from that work may be of interest to you and your readers.

This year our churches celebrate the 100th anniversary of Seventh-day Adventism in Czechoslovakia. The Adventist Church entered the historical Czech lands and Slovakian soil with the missionary aim of reminding the descendents of the Hussites, those heroic "warriors for God and his law," that biblical Adventism was in fact a particularly outstanding part of the first Czech reformation movement.

The young church witnessed the disintegration of the Habsburgian monarchy, the birth and building progress of the Czechoslovakian Republic, as well as its tragic fall. During the two decades (1918-1938) this Republic of Czechs and Slovaks was led by Tomas G. Masaryk and Eduard Benes, Czechoslovakia was an "island of democracy." It was also the most successful period of Adventism in our land. But our missionary successes were overshadowed by the dark clouds of the international political scene. After 20 relatively uneventful years came seven years of unspeakable miseries under Nazi domination.

After World War II, the immediate post-war years of reconstruction were a new occasion for our church to finish important projects for the

future prosperity of the church. But this post-war democracy, with its religious freedom lasted only three very short years.

In February of 1948, political power was usurped by the Communist Party. All democratic institutions were liquidated. It was the sad beginning of 40 hard years of communist totalitarianism. Many were imprisoned and obliged to live in concentration camps and work in uranium mines for long years, where they lost their health. Thousands of people lost their lives in communist prisons. Consequently, many families were disrupted and children orphaned. An especially tragic chapter of this history was written by Christian believers of all confessions, with Roman Catholics suffering the most.

Although the relations of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to the state were respectful, the claims by government authorities upon our leading men, particularly with respect to observance of the Sabbath day, were unacceptable to the church. On October 1, 1952, the activities of the Adventist Church in Czechoslovakia were stopped. Church possessions were confiscated, chapels were closed, and preachers were obliged to find manual work. The homes of many Adventists were searched, mail was censored, and phone calls were monitored.

But all those measures didn't prevent our people from meeting secretly in family meetings, reading God's Word, singing and praying. The activity of preachers also didn't stop. They baptized new believers and served the Lord's Supper. Naturally, these activities couldn't be kept in the dark for long. In 1954 and 1955 some 30 preachers were condemned and imprisoned for many years as enemies of the people, traitors, subversives, and saboteurs.

I was one of those condemned at that time to a three-year prison

sentence for "subversive activities by means of translated and propagated materials from the USA." I had translated some articles from old numbers of our church paper, the *Review and Herald*, to be read in our churches in the preacher's absence. I also translated an apology for Adventism, entitled "In Defense of Faith," written by your grandfather, W. H. Branson. After a year spent in prison, I was set free. It was during Krushchev's era, when, even in the USSR, thousands of prisoners were released.

For four years I was not able to find employment because of my beliefs. Slowly, I was permitted to work in a farm, then in a paper factory, and finally from 1968 as a free-lance translator of Adventist literature. But the authorities permitted only a fraction of what I prepared for publishing to be printed.

But times, as the articles in your last *Spectrum* recounted, have

changed. The revolution of November 17, 1989, dramatically finished the totalitarian tyranny of communist ideology and practice. The new democratic regime has taken on the heavy burden of rehabilitating all injured people.

Although we are an eschatologically-oriented church, the 100th anniversary celebration of Seventh-day Adventism in our Czech and Slovak churches should be the occasion to remember, behind our wonderful statistics and heroic victories, the named and the unnamed: faithful laymembers, colporteurs, Bible instructors, evangelists, teachers, nurses, ministers, and administrators who persisted through hard struggles and aching losses to exhibit "a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7, NIV).

Augustin Stefanec  
Banska Bystrica  
Czechoslovakia

I have a different theory—one that does no violence to the traditional understanding of an all-powerful God, but strips away some of the speculative fluff I was raised on: things like a world that was built from absolutely nothing around 7,000 years ago, and a Flood that covered the whole terrestrial ball with water, for an extended period of time, 4,000 years ago. We'll leave out the understanding that the Grand Canyon was caused by Flood runoff, and shark's teeth left in the desert by beasts stranded in the Flood.

This may sound a bit "light" compared with some other theories, but let's look at it from a new perspective:

Scene 1—There is a mud ball orbiting somewhere in space that is occupied by the beasts we call "prehistoric"—from amoebas to dinosaurs. It has greenery and sea life. It has warm and cold regions—including ice-bound poles—somewhat like this place we now call Earth. It may have been God's experimental lab. He may have tried adding ice and glaciers to see what the critters would do. He may have tried tilting it to see what the effect of "seasons" would be. He may have taken the crust pieces (we call 'em tectonic plates now), and scrambled them eons ago—just to make sure the magma would burp from time to time; to see what would happen when the pieces crunched into one another; to rearrange the landscape, and to test any other ideas he may have had.

It may have looked a lot like the pictures in the *National Geographic* depicting prehistory. It makes no difference. There was something there, and it went through a number of violent upheavals for one reason or another. Only God knows why. That is why we have oil, coal, animal tracks in stone, bones, long-term erosions, and fossilized trees that show thousands or millions of years of existence.

## Genesis and All That: The Case For a Multi-Stage Creation

I was intrigued with Robert Lee's letter ("Genesis and Darwin Without Tears," *Spectrum*, Vol. 22, No. 2). I'm sure that all thinking Adventists have wrestled with the problems of increasingly convincing scientific evidences of an old earth—and trying to mesh it with the things Adventism has taught from kindergarten through university.

I first began to wonder, about 30 years ago, when the Army's Cold Regions Research Lab reported on their ice drilling in Greenland. In the cores that came up, they identified tens of thousands of layers of annual snowfalls. Whoa, there! Why was there ice still in place older than the 4,000 years since the Flood? Why didn't it float away? Last winter

the National Geographic detailed the drilling now going on in Antarctica, and they will identify hundreds of thousands of years of annual snowfalls. A recent *Smithsonian Magazine* shows animal tracks in the rocks of southern Arizona. You could fill a library with comparable scientific and popular writings.

Lee postulates a non-omniscient, non-omnipotent, and non-omnipresent God. This becomes an intriguing but overwhelming limitation to our traditional understanding of an all-powerful God. Lee buttresses his theory with many texts, but I am sure most readers recoil from Lee's God that has made nothing but a series of blundering mistakes in this earth-bound demonstration project.



Scene 2—There is a rebellion in Heaven. God has long before decided what he will do, if such a thing should happen. He reaches out into space and catches the mud ball. He takes it in hand, and fondles it like a big league pitcher, or like a small boy with a snowball, and remolds it more to his liking for the next occupants. Animals get killed and buried, green things get buried, tectonic plates get moved around. For some reason, he doesn't do much with the ice sheets at the poles. Maybe he just sort of rolled it between his palms, wiping out and reconfiguring only the temperate zones. With all due respect, it's now "without form and void."

Scene 3—Read Genesis. God spends a week doing his latest version of a renewal project. He launches the sphere back into an orbit around our sun, and sets the ball spinning. He tilts it enough to bring us the seasons. It has a lot of ice and snow at the poles, left over from the last use. He gives it a few finishing touches to sort out the water and the land, and then he starts creating life. Genesis says it all—and Genesis doesn't say it started from nothing. (You have to have something for it to be "without form.") Recall that the Genesis story was passed from person to person for eons before it was written down. That gives room for omissions, misinterpretations, and colored thinking.

Scene 4—The actors finally get under God's skin with their carousing and carrying on. He tells Noah to build a boat, because he's going to bring on a new spectacular. Water falling from above! The boat

gets built, the beasts and humans go aboard—and the rains fall. And the then-known world goes under water. God only wanted to (had to?) destroy those who might have populated a small part of a continent, and he didn't need to do any more. Maybe he put a wall, or his hands, around the area he wanted under water, so as not to damage the rest of the world. The ice caps, and probably most of the now-known world, go unscathed. All the miscreants get drowned. After a while the water recedes and God's chosen few get to try again.

Scene 5—As the people procreate, they overpopulate the area, and soon begin a series of sojourns looking for greener pastures. They spread out by land bridge, by canoe, by *Kon-Tiki* for all I know, certainly by *Mayflower*.

Either you have to come up with a theory like this that accommodates both Genesis and geology, or—if you believe in a 7,000-year-old Earth—you have to believe that God spent a lot of time during that first week creating what we now interpret as the remains of prehistory. He'd have to create the fossils, the coal fields complete with tracks, ferns, trilobites, plant and animal remains, and ancient erosions—all in place. It would have to be placed in proper paleontological chronologic sequence—or we would be able to find the errors. He'd have to plan out just how to bury gold where it would look like it was in ancient streambeds. He'd have to pre-plan the kinds of rocks, and make sure all the clues we now use for oil explorations, for example, would hold true. He'd have to me-

ticulously lay down layers of ice that we now read historical dates from, that mesh perfectly with other worldwide fossil "records." He'd make tracks in desert rocks, and go so far as to plant shark teeth on mountain tops. He'd have to create what we'd accept as the remains (and only the remains) of whole populations of now nonexistent critters of all sizes. No wonder he'd need a day off.

If you can still accept the latter theory, you also have to figure out why. And that "why" cannot be overstated. Is this prehistoric geopaleological stuff the groundwork for the mother of all practical jokes? Or is this a "test" to see if we will ignore everything our senses tell us—so that we will believe something that is best characterized, as Lee called it, "... the so-called creationism that is making headlines?"

You may have noticed that I don't address evolution. I don't have to. The jury can stay out, as far as this construct is concerned. No one has yet shown macro-, and there is evidence all around us for micro-evolution. It doesn't matter one way or the other. God could have invented everything over millions of years, or all at once. He could have played around with macro-evolution. He could have had all those critters in one or more earlier uses of this planet.

If we would just give God the freedom to have pre-used this globe, who's to say what he was doing with it before our short occupation? And why agonize over how Genesis and evolution, or fossils, fit together?

Bob Patchin  
Villa Park, CA

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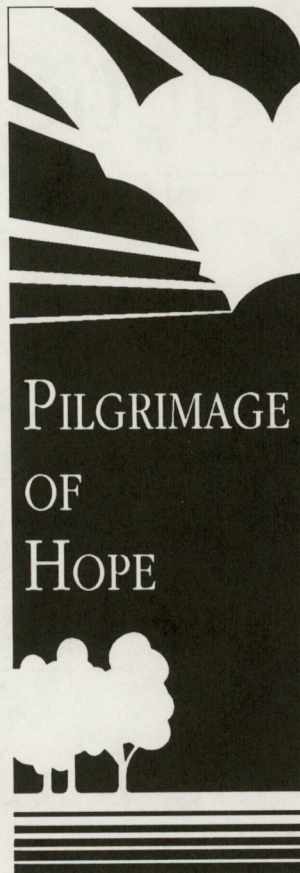
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