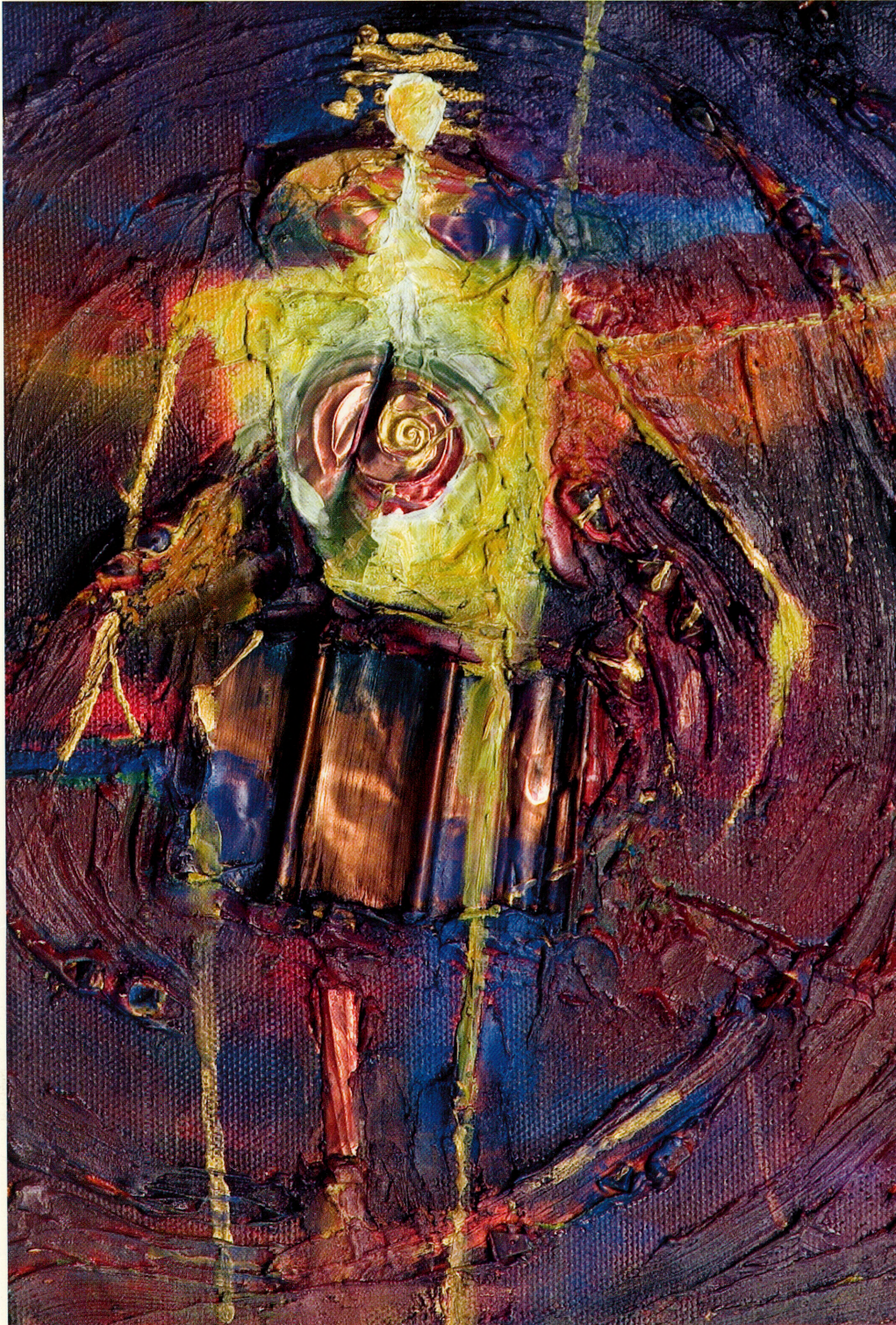




community through conversation

SPECTRUM



My Share

What is a Christian
to Make of Our
Flat New World?

The Sweet Problem of Inclusiveness

God's Voice
in My Dreams

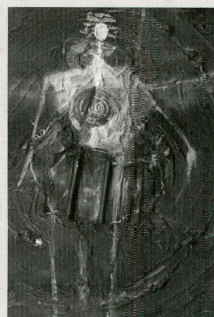
Top Ten Amazing Facts about Amazing Facts

The Accidental
Theologian

Bloggin' the Twenty-Eight

community through conversation
SPECTRUM

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED COPYRIGHT © 2007 ASSOCIATION OF ADVENTIST FORUMS



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Rod Crossman makes his living creating paintings, as a professor, and artist-in-residence at Indiana Wesleyan University. He is well-known for his sporting art and his paintings have been published on the covers and in the pages of the best sporting magazines, books, and journals. His work has been exhibited and collected worldwide—at the Smithsonian, Chicago Art Institute, the Woodson Art Museum, and elsewhere. He is interested in moments of wonder and awe, that magical state of being that conveys the idea there is something more important in the universe than ourselves.

ABOUT THE COVER ART

First Man is a painting that explores the idea of polar opposites in color, value, and materials, and the way they compete each other. To see more visit his Web site <rodcrossman.com>.

Editor Bonnie Dwyer
Associate Editor Leigh Johnsen
Advertising and Circulation Julie Lorenz
Design Laura Lamar
Media Projects Alexander Carpenter
Interns Brittany Collins, Johnny A. Ramirez

EDITORIAL BOARD

Beverly Beem
English
Walla Walla College

Roy Branson
Center for Law and Public Policy
Columbia Union College

Alita Byrd
Writer
Pretoria, South Africa

Sharon Fujimoto-Johnson
Writer/Graphic Designer
Sacramento, California

Fritz Guy
Theology
La Sierra University

Gary Land
History
Andrews University

Juli Miller
Marketing Communication
Consultant
El Dorado Hills, California

Richard Rice
Theology
Loma Linda University

Charles Scriven
President
Kettering College of
Medical Arts

Gerhard Svrcek-Seiler
Vienna, Austria

Norman Young
Cooranbong, Australia

BOOK ADVISORY COUNCIL

Terrie Aamodt
History
Walla Walla College

Gary Chartier
Business Law and Ethics
La Sierra University

James Hayward
Biology
Andrews University

David R. Larson
Religion
Loma Linda University

A. Gregory Schneider
Behavioral Science
Pacific Union College

SPECTRUM is a journal established to encourage Seventh-day Adventist participation in the discussion of contemporary issues from a Christian viewpoint, to look without prejudice at all sides of a subject, to evaluate the merits of diverse views, and to foster Christian intellectual and cultural growth. Although effort is made to ensure accurate scholarship and discriminating judgment, the statements of fact are the responsibility of contributors, and the views individual authors express are not necessarily those of the editorial staff as a whole or as individuals.

SPECTRUM is published by the Association of Adventist Forums, a nonsubsidized, nonprofit organization for which gifts are deductible in the report of income for purposes of taxation. The publishing of SPECTRUM depends on subscriptions, gifts from individuals, and the voluntary efforts of the contributors. SPECTRUM can be accessed on the World Wide Web at <www.spectrummagazine.org>

Editorial Correspondence

Direct all correspondence and letters to the editor to:

SPECTRUM
P. O. Box 619047
Roseville, CA 95661-9047

tel: (916) 774-1080
fax: (916) 791-4938
editor@spectrummagazine.org

Letters to the editor may be edited for publication.

ISSN: 0890-0264

Subscriptions and Advertising

Julie Lorenz
subscriptions@spectrummagazine.org
(916) 774-1080



contents

Editorials

- 2 Will God Hold Us Responsible for the Questions We Don't Ask? | BY BONNIE DWYER
 3 The Accidental Theologian | BY CHARLES SCRIVEN

Feedback

- 5 Letters | PAULSON, POWELL, MCARTHUR, FOWLER, CHRISTIAN, BECRAFT

Conversations

- 9 In Japan, Adventists Find Willow Creek Bridge to the Unchurched | BY JULIUS NAM
 12 The Sabbath Judge | BY BONNIE DWYER

Noteworthy

- 13 Top Ten Amazing Facts about Amazing Facts | BY BONNIE DWYER
 Radical Method, Radical Christ Discussed at Conference | BY ANSEL OLIVER

Blogs

- 14 Bloggin' the Twenty-Eight: The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ | BY RON OSBORN

Bible

- 25 God's Voice in My Dreams | BY JAMES J. LONDIS

Brave New World of Issues

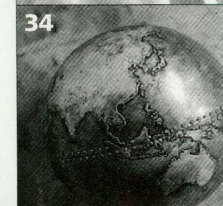
- 34 What Is a Christian to Make of Our Flat New World? | BY JAMES WALTERS AND DAVID KIM
 40 My Share: Living on One Six-Billionth | BY MARGARET CHRISTIAN
 51 The Sweet Problem of Inclusiveness: Finding Our God in the Other | BY SAMIR SELMANOVIC

Reviews

- 59 Essays on New Ideas about What It Means to Be Christian | BY RYAN BELL
 61 Watching the Mundane, Teaching the Profound | BY RAEWYN HANKINS

Poetry Plus

- cover Insomnia Literata | BY TOM WEHTJE
 Ada's Life and Work and Influence Live On | BY FRITZ GUY





Will God Hold Us Responsible for the Questions We Don't Ask? | BY BONNIE DWYER

That thought haunts Rod Crossman, our cover artist this issue. His blog-posted ponderings on the question led us to ask him to share his abstract paintings with us. Now his original question haunts me, too.

Certainly there are passages in Scripture that echo Crossman's question. James 4:17, for instance, says "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins." Sin can be a matter of neglect.

However, the phrase begins, "Anyone who knows"—so the obvious strategy is not to know, right? Not to ask questions? Then we can't be responsible, can we? The problems with that strategy are being played out within the world of American politics as judges attempt to hold the Bush administration accountable for questions not asked about numerous issues, and the president's ratings sink over a war in which more questions were not asked. The answer reshapes itself into another question—do we harm ourselves and others by the questions we don't ask?

Recently, in a conversation with friends, I tried out the idea of liabilities being connected to questions not asked. The discussion found traction when we applied it to Adventism's corporate culture, and our fixation with having all the answers. Have we hurt ourselves and others by the questions not asked? In the 1980s, did thinking of ourselves as being above questions mislead us in our corporate relationship with employees and equal wages, for instance? Did we neglect to ask questions of ourselves about our moral responsibilities?

What About the Books Not Read?

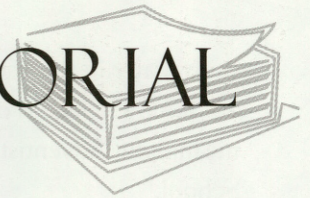
Ponder the thought of questions not asked as you read this issue. Let it haunt you as think about things like globalization, your share of the earth's resources, inclusiveness. At that point, you may, like me, also be thinking of the books not read that might help with the questions not asked. And would that possibly include the Bible?

In his book *The Last Word: Beyond the Bible Wars to a New Understanding of the Authority of Scripture*, N.T. Wright reminded me, "the Bible continues to be both a central way in which God addresses his people and a central way in which his people respond." Beyond just devotion, Wright says discipleship requires reading. "Reading and studying scripture has been seen as central to how we are to grow in the love of God; how we come to understand God and his truth more fully; and how we can develop the moral muscle to live in accordance with the gospel of Jesus even when everything seems to be pulling the other way."

Now that I've shared the guilt-inducing discussion about questions not asked, let me also comment about the joy of finding new thoughts in new books, the serendipity of an idea well-written. Staring at me as I write are several books just waiting to answer questions: Kent Hansen's newest book on prayer, *Cleansing Fire, Healing Streams*, catches my eye. Next is Lourdes E. Morales-Gudmundsson's tome, *I Forgive You, But*, which Doug Morgan plugged in the *Adventist Peace Messenger*, another must-read.

Speaking of his new book *I Love the Lord, But . . .* Columbia Union College student Sylvester Paulasir says, "The writing process gave me a chance to ask questions and attempt to answer them on issues like sinfulness, pride, lack of trust, reverence, and others." He concluded, "My spirituality has taken shape because of this book."

My question for Sylvester would be whether he found his spirituality in the writing or the asking of questions. ■



The Accidental Theologian | BY CHARLES SCRIVEN

Kyra, age three, is the daughter of my wife's niece, and several weekends ago she was in full voice, singing like a diva: "Jesus loves me this I know, / for the Bible tells me *sto-ries*."

I wasn't sure I heard that right.

But Kyra was still singing: "Little ones to him belong. / They are weak but he is strong." And then, beaming with confidence: "Yes, Jesus loves me. / Yes, Jesus loves me. / Yes, Jesus loves me. / The Bible tells me *sto-ries*."

By the next time through the song, I figured she was on to something.

A week later, one of the preachers on 3ABN, the Adventist satellite network, was saying that being a "peacemaker" comes down to bearing personal witness to your personal relationship with Jesus, so others can enjoy the same peace with God that you do. That was clueless—peace dimmed to a shadow of its biblical self—and all at once Kyra's point seemed truly critical.

The preacher just wasn't paying attention to the stories behind the Beatitude that he was quoting, nor to how these stories make up one Big Story. Certainly he hadn't succeeded in *following* that story. If he had, he would have known that peace cannot be summed up as *personal* religiosity. He would have known that a (merely) *personal* relationship with Jesus is a disastrous aberration.

For individuals to feel good—or better, to flourish—communities must flourish. You don't find (biblical) peace until you find a world without fear or injustice, without tedium or loneliness. That's a truth the Bible story again and again affirms.

That truth is what explains Moses: he knew God wanted the slaves to go free and to live in completely different circumstances. That truth is what explains Daniel: he knew God expects the downfall of corrupt and egomaniacal regimes. That truth is what explains Jesus: he knew his "father's business" would get him into trouble with Herod, a political authority.

That truth is also what makes Ezekiel 34 so priceless. Here, unforgettably, God's peace is no mental teddy bear but a whole new world, a whole new common life.

For all practical purposes, anyone who does not follow the Bible *story* is biblically illiterate. A thousand key texts, stored in memory, are nothing if you don't follow the story. Without knowing where the Bible is going you can interpret those texts the way you want, or the way the dominant culture wants you to want.

I aspire to be a back-to-the-Bible guy, and to belong to a back-to-the-Bible church. It makes me ill to see Sabbath schools dozing into irrelevance, then thinning out or dying off. It makes me ill to see younger (and many older) Adventists forsaking Bible study for sleep or Starbucks or the sports page. For me, really great discussions, like many in the Branson-Ortner class at Sligo Church, or the Choir Room class at Pacific Union College, are as bracing as a breeze. I think no truer thing was said, ever, than that the Bible is "profitable" for "teaching" and for "training in righteousness"—for how we think, that is, and how we live.

I felt ideas gathering into a nice updraft a few weekends ago when the *Spectrum Blog* took on the state of Sabbath School in our congrega-

**A thousand
key texts, stored
in memory,
are nothing if
you don't follow
the story.**

tions. Early in the back-and-forth, Chris Blake, whose class at Union College is one of the best, declared that “any meaningful Adventist renaissance must begin in Sabbath School.”

Then, highlighting the Gospel Commission to “make disciples [Blake’s emphasis] of all nations,” he said that “the best, most effective, most resonant and relevant teaching enables the student to actually do what is being taught.”

Study matters, he was arguing, and study is best when it’s practical, and helps us to *do* what is best.

A story I learned by way of Martin Buber, the Jewish sage, makes the same point. During the time of the czars, a guard in a St. Petersburg jail comes to an imprisoned rabbi’s cell. Sensing opportunity, he stops and asks: “If God knows all things, why, in the Garden of Eden, does he call out, ‘Adam, where are you?’”

The rabbi sees right away that the question is distracting. It’s about a puzzle; it’s not a quest for a better self. So he asks, “Do you believe the Bible has a meaning for every person in every age?”

When the guard nods Yes, the rabbi goes on. “Well, in every age God comes to every person and says, ‘Where are you? Where are you in the living of your life?’”

With the question God is not digging for information, in other words, but posing a challenge: Are you growing as a person? Are you living the best way you can?

Yes, the whole point is the practical. The whole point is living, and living well.

That takes me back to Kyra, the accidental theologian. Sayings aren’t clear apart from the stories that surround them. And the stories themselves have to be read in light of the Big Story. And that story, remember, takes us from a world divinely made through the rescue and growth of a lowly people to... Jesus, the zenith of Jewish generosity, the human face of God, the center of Christian life.

According to the Christian faith, Jesus is *where the Bible is going*. The point of Bible study is discipleship. Bible stories illuminate, and in turn are illuminated by, the master teacher.

W. C. Fields once cracked: “I have spent a lot of time searching through the Bible looking for loopholes.”

Loopholes you can find. The Bible is a record of growth, with some wrong turns in the story and some right. When you’re feeling ungenerous or narrow-minded you can always find something inside of Scripture to fit the feeling. An eye for an eye is there; male privilege is there; holy war is there—each dressed up as the will of God. But when you take Jesus to be where the Bible is going, these loopholes close up, and the Bible becomes a coherent guide to thought and attitude and action. You can know what is Christian, and what falls short of it.

All this is why I think Chris Blake hit the bull’s eye. The Sabbath School (or something like it) is the key to “any meaningful Adventist renaissance.” And that is so only when it aims at discipleship, when it takes us, that is, to where the Bible is going, *and where it calls us to go*. ■

Coming soon...

SPECTRUM’S NEW WEBSITE

connecting Adventists for thoughtful conversations

FEATURING:

Spectrum Blog

Book and movie reviews

Sabbath School commentaries

Thought-provoking articles and interviews

Your comments, discussions, and opinions

More ways for *you* to interact than ever before

Be on the lookout...

www.spectrummagazine.org



Charles Scriven is
president of Adventist
Forum.



Miracles, Bondage, and Irrelevance

Christ and Bibliolatry

CHARLES SCRIVEN AND David Larson cite Bible texts in support of the so-called “Christ-centered” approach to biblical authority (Matt. 28:18; John 1:1,14; Col. 1:15–19; Heb. 1:1–4) (summer 2006, 68; winter 2007, 8), what Scriven calls the “ascending line” theory versus the “flat-line” theory, which sees all Scripture as equally authoritative (fall 2006, 6). But no straightforward reading of these verses could possibly lead one to conclude that God’s revelation in Christ contradicts his revelation elsewhere in Scripture. Indeed, the New Testament depicts Christ as the Guide of Israel during their wilderness wanderings (1 Cor. 10:4, 9). God declared through the prophet Malachi, “I am the Lord; I change not” (Mal. 3:6). Jesus stated, “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30).

Whether one wishes to ask, in Scriven’s words, whether Christ is captive to “Bibliolatry”—that strange word so often used to subvert the Bible’s supreme authority—it is clear in Scripture that Christ in his earthly ministry was captive to the Bible. Why else, when confronting Satan in the wilderness, would he have relied on the written Word for his defense (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10)? This would hardly make sense if Christ possessed greater authority than the Old Testament

Scriptures. Why, indeed, would the Son of the eternal God need to fall back on tattered, flawed representations of the divine character in his struggle with the adversary?

Gane and Neall have done a masterful job marshalling evidence in support of biblical revelation on the subject of Israel and genocide (summer 2006, 61–65; fall 2006, 7–10; spring 2007, 5–6), as well as in contrasting what Israel did with the Crusaders and jihadists of later times (summer 2006, 62–64; fall 2006, 8). But one point, alluded to by Gane, deserves closer attention. Gane speaks of the “resident, manifest Presence of the divine King” in the midst of Israel (summer 2006, 64). According to the Bible narrative, the supernatural evidence that God was with Israel was as visible to the surrounding cultures as it was to God’s people (see Exod. 7–14; Josh. 2:9–11; 5:1). We aren’t talking here about sightings of the Virgin Mary in some pilgrim town, visible only to believers. The miracles that attended Israel were seen by all who were anywhere near. By contrast, no rivers or oceans parted before Richard Lion Heart, no pillar of cloud goes before Osama bin Laden, and certainly no Urim and Thummim guide George W. Bush!

Larson correctly warns that such manifestations fail to prove divine

endorsement (summer 2006, 67–68). The Bible is clear that demonic powers can work miracles (Matt. 24:24; 2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 16:14), and Ellen White likewise warns that miracles are not a test of God’s favor (*Selected Messages*, 2:48–55). But signs and wonders such as those attending ancient Israel do demonstrate transcendent intervention, divine or satanic, superseding the normal play of ideas and the natural course of events. In view of such signs attending Israel, and similar ones in heathen culture (Exod. 7:11, 22; 8:7), any outside observer—whether Pharaoh in Egypt or Rahab in Jericho—would be compelled to consider other factors in determining which power to honor and serve.

The record of God’s dealings with his followers and the world would have to be compared with the record left by other gods, cultures, and peoples. With miracles found on both sides, obviously such demonstrations couldn’t rightly decide one’s ultimate choice. But they would clearly give evidence that something higher and greater than ordinary, natural causes was at work.

Let us also bear in mind that, unlike human beings, when God orders the death of anyone, he does so knowing their hearts, motives, and future choices. The Bible declares of

God, "Thou, even Thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men" (1 Kings 8:39). Understanding this, we can see how mortals cannot rightly undertake such actions as those in question unless unmistakably guided by the divine hand.

KEVIN D. PAULSON

New York City

Charles Scriven Responds:

PAULSON'S POSITION is clear: "God's revelation in Christ" nowhere "contradicts" what Scripture elsewhere commends.

Equally clear, however, is that Paulson cannot follow a story. The Bible represents God as commanding genocide—mass killing of whole peoples, including babies. But the story moves forward, through Isaiah and others, to Jesus. Jesus, facing a murderous empire, asks us to love our enemies. Then he walks the talk by asking God to forgive his own executioners.

It is just here, in the story, that the Bible's picture of God comes, for the first and only time, into perfect focus. That, remember, is what the resurrection means.

Paulson covers his eyes. He doesn't see how the story develops, or even, in the letter, acknowledge Christ's nonviolence.

Had Paulson actually followed the story, he would see that it demolishes his theory of the Bible. He ends up, instead, with a God (and presumably a Christ) who orders human beings to murder other human beings.

This is catastrophic. But not for the vengeful, and not for tyrants.

Sabbath Justice

IN "Sabbath Justice," by Kendra Halo-viak (spring 2007), I truly enjoyed the author's point of view that Sab-

bath is about healing and release from bondage.

But I am afraid we forgot that bondage is bigger than women's ordination. Bondage is the way we live and close out those people less fortunate than us from living in our communities. Bondage is also the way we refuse to allow young adults to participate in meaningful ways in church leadership.

I hope this article awakens in many Adventists the desire to act boldly about equality on Sabbath and every day of the week.

LARRY M. POWELL

Newport Beach, Calif.

Seeking a Sanctuary

I MUCH ENJOYED Herbert F. Douglass's review of the second edition of Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart's *Seeking a Sanctuary* (spring 2007). To his comments I would like to add a few other observations about this remarkable book.

First, I doubt if we as Adventists sufficiently appreciate the accomplishment this work represents. I'm not a specialist in American religious history, but I do have more than a passing familiarity with the literature. Despite the considerable scholarly attention paid the religious tradition of the United States (and to the Mormons in particular), I doubt whether there is another work out there that combines the historical/sociological sophistication and literary elegance that *Seeking a Sanctuary* does. We are honored that Bull and Lockhart chose us.

That said, someone owning their first edition (which appeared in 1989) might wonder if the second offers significant differences. Yes. It is, first, almost one hundred pages longer and

includes a number of well-chosen illustrations (the first had none). By themselves, the eighty-eight pages of endnotes make the study worthwhile as a guide to Adventist literature. Some topics have been refashioned. The chapter on "Blacks," has become "Race," reflecting the ethnic plurality that so much defines our contemporary church.

Of course, the seventeen years between the two editions witnessed notable developments in American Adventism, which in itself justified updating. In 1989, for example, few Adventists paid attention to the Davidians, nor did the original edition give them any mention. This changed after events at Mount Carmel in 1994. In response, *Seeking a Sanctuary* has a completely new chapter, "The Ethics of Schism," which sketches breakaway groups going back to the 1860s and includes a thorough account of the Davidian offshoot and ultimate shootout.

My professional field is American cultural history, an endeavor that seeks to find unities among the endless varieties of our cultural life. That background gives me particular admiration for the authors' grasp of the American church (and they're English!). *Seeking a Sanctuary* is chockablock with insights, all of them suggestive and most persuasive. They observe that Adventism is a peculiarly feminine religious denomination, for example. This claim is only partially based on the unusually high percentage of women in our church and the fact that we are by far the largest church in America founded by a woman (George Knight might contest that Ellen White is our "founder").

More to the point, our response to the dominant—and as we view it,

often hostile American society—has shaped our feminine quality. In good Victorian fashion, just as women responded to their social limitations by staking out their own delimited sphere, so the Adventist Church has created its own subculture (this process being a major theme of the book), one that does not contest the political sphere of the nation.

“At no stage have they [Adventists] attempted to confront the state,” write Bull and Lockhart. “They have, rather, remained quiet and malleable, not seeking to draw attention to themselves, lest this provoke a hostile reaction” (259). One might argue that our church’s readiness to engage in court litigation when religious liberty issues arise represents a bow to masculine values. That notwithstanding, the authors’ point carries general persuasiveness.

The most commonly cited observation of the book—indeed, the work’s conclusion—is the contention that Adventism is a revolving door, bringing in relatively low-status converts, elevating them and their children into the educated middle class, only to see the grandchildren frequently leave the Church, having been fully assimilated into American life and now finding Adventism an irrelevance or inconvenience. This disturbing contention seems as intuitively true now as it did in the late 1980s.

The ambitious sweep of Bull and Lockhart’s work brings inevitable errors of fact. Southern Missionary College, for example, voted to admit black students in 1965 not 1968. But given the indefatigable research the book represents, it seems petty to scout for such moments. More inter-

esting to debate are the intriguing arguments they advance. Their discussions of the endemic conflict between physician and pastor for the soul of Adventism and of the impact of the Adventist medical establishment on contemporary Adventism are fascinating. Has, in fact, a medical template (in the theological dress of holism) essentially superseded Adventism’s traditional theological one? Worth discussing.

Likewise, their penultimate chapter dealing with the self-supporting movement offers wonderful reflections on those traditionalists who have sought to realize the Adventist vision outside church polity walls. For all the tension and internecine battles that have occurred between institutions such as Hartland and church leadership, the self-supporting movement (in the manner of the monastics or of Ignatius Loyola within Catholicism) nevertheless represents a healthy trend within American Adventism, suggesting that reform and reinvigoration still exist.

Bull and Lockhart don’t miss much, but one recent development seems to fly under their radar. This is the revival of “last generation” theology, which stresses the Adventist chestnut that a final generation on earth will replicate God’s character and usher in the Second Coming. Nor do they mention the thriving General Youth Conference, which since the early 2000s has helped reinvigorate a form of traditional Adventism in hundreds of young people in North America. Yet if unacknowledged by name, the emergence of the General Youth Conference supports another point of the authors,

namely, that this sort of restorationist movement reveals the resilience of traditional Adventist theology through the decades.

I always felt that the original edition of *Seeking a Sanctuary*, despite its enthusiastic critical reception, never had the exposure and broad impact on the Church it deserved. Perhaps this was due to its timing, appearing when the Church was still exhausted from the theological battles of the early 1980s and rather disinterested in self-analysis. We can hope that the current moment is more propitious for a careful study of their work.

This is important not because Bull and Lockhart offer prescriptions for a clearer theology or more vigorous church growth (theirs being purely a work of analysis). The great value here lies in encouraging us to reflect on their central argument: that we have been willing—indeed anxious—to live unobtrusively apart from mainstream society, asking little of and receiving little from America.

Are we content with this? Or with a church demographic characterized by an aging Anglophone population and requiring a steady flow of converts to maintain numbers? Might there be another path, one that depends on social engagement of a more ambitious type and that speaks to people’s need for spiritual nurturance in more encompassing ways?

Such a departure would test the very core of our institutional culture. But to fail to seek new departures would be to consign Adventism to increasing irrelevance in American life.

BENJAMIN MCARTHUR
History Department
Southern Adventist University
Collegedale, Tenn.

Ellen White and the Bible

I HAVE JUST READ the interview with Graeme Bradford regarding the work and writings of Ellen White. I find it disturbing that someone who claims to support the work and writings of Ellen White would instead subtly attempt to undermine confidence in the same.

Bradford insinuates that her writings are no longer relevant to young people because of her style of writing and the words and language that she uses. Quoting from his response to Bonnie Dwyer—"I think most of the young people today are going to find their spiritual help from more contemporary authors. We are not going to change that since contemporary authors deal more with the real world the young people live in."

In a single stroke, Bradford has eliminated, in addition to the writings of Ellen White, entire sections of the Bible because they were written in an entirely different age and setting using language sometimes very difficult to understand regardless of the version that you read.

Where now are our young people and even our more mature members to turn for counsel? If counsel from these older sources is no longer comprehensible, then what contemporary sources would you suggest?

ALLEN FOWLER

Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada

The Branch Dividians

I APPRECIATE David Larson's review of Kenneth Newport's *The Branch Davidians of Waco* (spring 2007). Yes, Newport's thesis places undue emphasis on Koresh's beliefs, and I like Larson's suggestions for other keys to understanding (Koresh's psychological wounds and "intense drives for sex and power").

I'd like to add another that applies to the whole community: emotional conditioning. Though few Seventh-day Adventists joined him, Koresh was only successful recruiting among people who already were equipped with the same web of feelings—that is to say, feelings of anticipatory victimhood, of being right (though the heavens fall), and of innocence performing before a cosmic audience.

As Kindergarten Sabbath School leader and lower divisions coordinator in my church, I think a lot about how we transmit religious feelings—ones that would lead to "doing the right things." I would hope we can train children (and adults) in assurance—not that "I'm right" or "we have the truth," but that "Jesus is taking

good care of me right now, so I can care about you"—or, in the time of trouble, "Jesus is taking good care of me, so I won't shoot back."

I congratulate the Children's Ministries Department for addressing this need for emotional education through its new Sabbath School curriculum, GraceLink.

MARGARET CHRISTIAN

Fogelsville, Penn.

Building Community Life

I ENJOYED YOUR editorial "Out of Africa." As we build a world communion of faith, the fostering of media productions from all corners of our faith community will be needed: books, blogs, radio, television, film, Internet, and media arts and crafts yet to be discovered.

We need, I think, to build into our community life music and storytelling from all nooks and crannies of the rich cultural fabric of our world, focused on the love of God. Such stories, music, and images incorporated into our spiritual culture, I don't believe, need be unique to the "Christian" community, but should also come from those "Jewish" and "Islamic" communities so precious to the humane experience, as well as from diverse ethnic "converts."

For myself, with *Spectrum*, I want to see more of a global emphasis. I want to see less nitpicking on theological nuances and more on the simple Grace, the Peace, the Love, that is our Calling, our Vocation. The validity of Ellen White as a prophet, for me is not worth arguing about. It's sort of like the Trinity—a discussion almost always leads nowhere except to help harden opinions, which are not verifiable except by using *artificial intelligence*, it seems. I want to see thoughtful articles about what's going on in our movement—our conversation—to foster the God Jesus worshipped as Messiah (See Deut. 6).

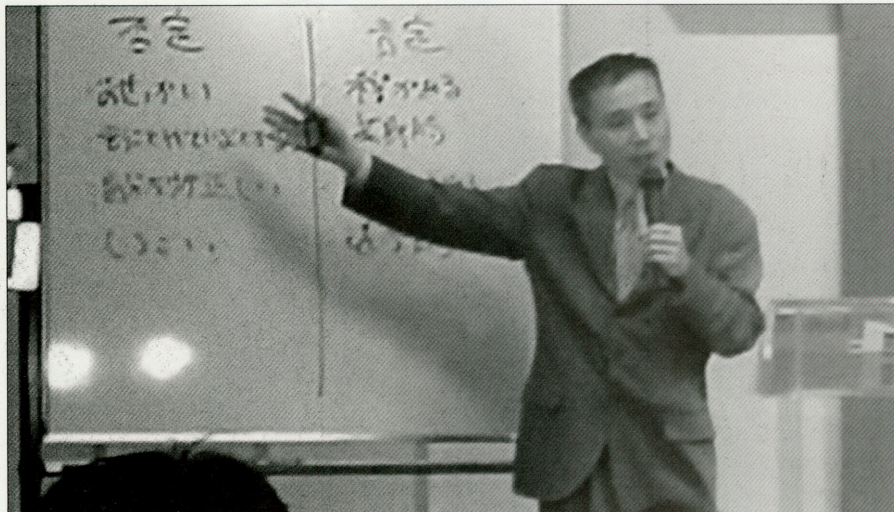
Also, when it comes to media and the world church, I am pleased to see *Spectrum's* movement into digital media, an excellent strategic move. One day, a paper edition of the magazine may be a waste of paper and postage. ■

JIM BECRAFT

via the Internet



In Japan, Adventists Find Willow Creek Bridge to the Unchurched



An Interview with Yasuki Miyamoto

BY JULIUS NAM

Editor's Note: Yasuki Miyamoto is pastor of Kashiwa Seventh-day Adventist Church, located outside of Tokyo, Japan, and director of Willow Creek Network Japan, which is the Japanese agency of Willow Creek Association <www.willowcreek.com>. When it was launched in 2000, he was Sabbath School, personal ministries, and children's ministry director at Japan Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. He received his ministerial training—both a B.A. and an M.A. in religion—at Avondale College in Australia.

NAM: You studied at Avondale for your bachelor's and master's degrees in religion. Is it a normal or common thing for Adventist ministers in Japan to be educated abroad, or are almost all of them products of Saniku Gakuin

College, which I believe is the only Adventist college in Japan?

MIYAMOTO: Most of our ministers in Japan are trained in Saniku Gakuin College and some get further training at Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies in the Philippines. Few go to the United States.

NAM: Why did you choose Avondale? And why pastoral ministry as your career?

MIYAMOTO: I went to Avondale because I heard that it had a strong theological department. Plus, Avondale offered fees cheaper than colleges in the United States. I thoroughly enjoyed my stay Down Under.

I am a second-generation Adventist. I picked up my career because, in

humbleness, I was called to do this work. After high school, I dropped out of the Church because of weariness of church life. Back then, the Church was very legalistic. However, through a sequence of interesting events, I was led back to the Church and I sensed that God had a plan for me.

NAM: I've been told that only 1 percent of the population in Japan is Christian, and 1 percent of Christians Adventist. What do you see as the reasons for the difficulty in comparison to Korea, and even China, for example?

MIYAMOTO: It is said half-jokingly that Japan is the graveyard of missionaries. So much effort and time have been spent on evangelizing Japan, but there has not been much of a harvest. Japan is considered the most difficult country to be evangelized apart from Muslim countries. There have been many studies done on this matter. I'd like to mention a few of them by comparing the success of Christianity in Korea.

National characteristic is one reason. In Korea, people have always faced the threat of invasion from



Julius Nam is assistant professor in the School of Religion at Loma Linda University.

other powerful countries, such as China. They had to decide who was enemy or friend. It was a matter of black-and-white when they had to make a decision. In Japan, we have never been invaded by foreign powers. Rather than distinguishing themselves, everyone is expected to live harmoniously with others by diminishing individual identity. Individual people see things or identify themselves in terms of group consensus.

This has created an ambiguous attitude in our national character. However, the Bible is not ambiguous in a sense that it always asks us to make a clear decision on whom to follow, which does not fit easily into our way of feeling and thinking. To an average Japanese person, religious difference does not play a big role. He or she is happy to have a wedding at church, yet when a family member dies they have a funeral at a Buddhist temple. They are happy to go to the church on Christmas, but also happy to go to the Shinto Shrine on New Year's Day—something that always puzzles Westerners.

History is another reason. In Korea, Christianity played a resistance role to Japanese imperialism [in the first half of the twentieth century]. Through this, Christianity became well-integrated into the national identity of Korea. But when you study Japanese history, the only period during which we had many Christians was the Warring State Period (1493–1573). During this time, we had seven to eight hundred thousand Christians (back then, the entire population was one-tenth of the current population).

One reason for this success was the harshness of social conditions,

which made people more religious. Also, becoming a Christian brought the advantage of gaining profit from foreign trade, and there existed more religious freedom. However, after the Warring Period came the Edo Period, and Japan closed the door to Westerners and severe persecution of Christianity was carried out. During this time, the religious policy forced everyone to become a Buddhist and register their names at local Buddhist temples. This period lasted about three hundred years and Christianity was virtually wiped out. To this day, we have not been able to overcome the effect of this weighty history.

The last reason is climate. The abundance of rain makes our culture wet and rather gloomy. Even popular songs that sing about love and lovers have many gloomy words like “drizzle,” “farewell,” “tears,” “waiting,” “bearing,” “dreary,” and so forth. Our emotion is drawn to these subduing words. On the other hand, the Bible expresses bright and hopeful emotions. Though the Bible contains negative expressions, they all turn into positive ones at the end. The Japanese feel that the emotion of the Bible is too bright and too clear. Emotional expressions of Koreans are also different from the Japanese. Rather than subduing their emotions like the Japanese, Koreans are more expressive.

Christianity is said to be like a Western-style dress, which we have not been successful in turning into the Japanese Kimono.

NAM: *What is the size of the Adventist church membership in Japan and how many pastors are there?*

MIYAMOTO: Membership in Japan is 15,000 on the books, but church attendance is around 6,000. There are 84 pastors working among some 180 churches.

NAM: *What about Saniku Gakuin College? How many students attend the college, and how many of them are theology majors?*

MIYAMOTO: We have 230 students altogether; many of them are nursing majors and only 13 theology majors (a number just over the 12 disciples of Jesus!).

NAM: *In my correspondence with you, you've mentioned that Adventists in Japan tend to be less conservative than their counterparts in Korea and probably elsewhere in East and Southeast Asia. What did you mean by that? Could you give some examples with explanations as to why?*

MIYAMOTO: What I meant by “less conservative” is that if you want to reach out to 99 percent of the population who aren't Christians, you are bound to think differently than people in a country in which the presence of Christianity is dominant.

As far as the Seventh-day Adventist Church is concerned, a few years back, we changed our structure for more effective use of our resources for evangelism. We got rid of the conference bureaucracy, leaving only the conference president. Now, all the administrative and departmental work is done at the union. Even these union departmental directors are pastors at local churches. I think we made our structure as streamlined as possible. Right now, the General Conference is proposing different models of restructuring,

and our current structure is considered one of them.

Another example is our wedding guideline. We don't recommend that an Adventist marry a non-Adventist, but our guideline leaves room for an Adventist marrying a non-Adventist to have their wedding ceremony at an Adventist church. This guideline was drawn because we had more ladies than men in our church, and there were increasing cases of marriage between Adventists and non-Adventists. We used to require them to have their weddings at different venues, but it created a negative image of Christianity among non-Christian partners and families. This guideline helps a non-Christian partner have a better understanding of Christianity and a more cordial attitude toward the Church after the marriage. We paid attention to the religious tolerance of our culture, which I've mentioned already.

NAM: *In addition to being a local church pastor, you're a director of Willow Creek Network Japan, which provides Willow resources through the Adventist publishing house. That's fascinating because I've never heard of an Adventist pastor—much less a denominational entity—involved with Willow Creek to that extent. How did this relationship come about?*

MIYAMOTO: The SDA Church in Japan has been facing the challenge of aging within the church. The strategy we considered at the union was to implement Natural Church Development (NCD) <www.ncd-international.org>, which measures eight elements (leadership, worship, spiritual gifts, and so forth) of local church life. It was about eight years ago that we started implementing it,

but we faced lack of resources to help improve each element.

I had a chance to visit Willow before, so I checked to see if we could bring its resources to support the churches. Willow was already known then to be a most effective church to reach out to secularized, materialistic, unchurched persons in the United States, and we in Japan have a somewhat similar type of people that we are trying to reach. Fortunately, the Adventist Center for Creative Ministry <www.creativeministry.org> produced a resource on spiritual gifts—*Connection*—which is an Adventist version of *Network*, produced by Willow Creek. Thanks to the center, we did not have any trouble securing the copyright from Willow and Zondervan to translate the material into Japanese.

The translation of the *Network* kit took us about three years. Since then, we have been able to publish other resources like *Becoming a Contagious Christian*, *Courageous Leadership*, *Building a Church of Small Groups*, *Too Busy Not to Pray*, and so forth. We have marketed them to general Christian churches because, with only the SDA church market, we cannot cover the cost of publication. At the same time, we also wanted to help not only SDA churches, but also other Christian churches to grow as well.

NAM: *Why has this been important to you?*

MIYAMOTO: It is important not only for making a church growth tool available to the SDA Church as well as to other churches, but also to help break down the barriers that we used to build between us and other church-

es. To an average Japanese, seeing infighting within religious groups does not provide a positive image. Japanese consider it a sign of immaturity. When we face the fact that 99 percent of Japanese are non-Christians, it is of no use to continue infighting. Rather, we must have cooperation among Christian churches to spread the gospel.

Getting involved with Willow has been our way of saying that we'd like to reach out to other churches and we are here to cooperate with you so that the gospel could reach 99 percent of people in Japan. My work involves providing Willow resources, conducting seminars in other churches using those resources, organizing a tour to Willow and to their Leadership Summit conference, and so forth. Sometimes, I am even asked to speak at worships at Sunday churches. I am happy to see that God is doing wonderful things through SDA churches as well as other churches.

NAM: *What have been some of the positive outcomes of this relationship?*

MIYAMOTO: Evangelical newspapers and magazines used to refuse any advertisement that had to do with the SDA Church. Christian bookstores did not sell any books from our publishing house. It has all changed now. Advertisements of our hospital, books, health foods, and schools appear in these papers and magazines. You can find our books in any Christian bookstores. We even published a book that introduces the SDA Church with the recommendation of two promi-

Continued on page 62

The Sabbath Judge

BY BONNIE DWYER

Careening through the streets of Nairobi in a state-issued Mercedes Benz, Kenyan High Court judge Mary Ang'awa deftly shows that the key to driving in this city with traffic-clogged circles is to keep moving. And that she does, hardly stopping for guards to salute and lower chains at crossroads.

On this Sabbath afternoon, she hurries to get to the Adventist church on the south side of town to pick up her niece and nephew, who have attended services all day. Stories spill out along the way about her experiences as a young lawyer and the history of the church to which we are headed.

She was only twenty-seven when members there asked her to chair the building committee. It was a small company at that time. Potlucks were often held at her (then) nearby home. Plus, she was the only one not discouraged when they lost their lease on rented space. Her talk about the opportunity that the company had to build their own place got her the building committee position. And with a church home, the congregation has grown.

It is Pathfinder Sabbath, so uniformed children and adults mill around in the parking lot when we arrive. We get out and take a brief peek inside the large sanctuary with beautiful cathedral windows. Back at the car, six more people have piled into the backseat. We head off to the home of her brother, where we drop off the children, their neighbors, and their nanny.

Making sure that these children have a way to and from church and a good Sabbath School—even though it sits across town from the place she regularly attends—is important to the judge. A



single woman who loves children, she plays auntie to many others beside her brothers' children.

Patron may be her title, but Sister Mary is what she is called at the University of Nairobi Church, where she regularly attends. This congregation of five hundred students recently went through the official process to be declared a church. On this Sabbath, its members nominate the nominating committee, which will spend Sunday coming up with a list of officers. More importantly to Mary, this is "Pearls' Sabbath," the time when the women lead out in all aspects of the service.

Sister Mary offers the pastoral prayer, leads the choir, bounces from back to front to introduce a visitor, but mostly sits smiling at the polished young women who preach, sing, and lead out. Everyone is invited to stay for potluck. Within minutes after the service, a table is set on the platform and food spread out for all to enjoy. A small group gathers by the microphones and begins to practice music for the afternoon session, which is scheduled to run until four. It is five when we leave, and the meeting still goes strong.

Mary says that Adventist students have gathered together at the University of Nairobi for Sabbath services ever since she studied there in the late 1970s. But only during the last year have they decided to become an official congregation. Many of the planning sessions for this congregation

were also held at her home. When we get there, she pulls out her photo albums; the majority of the images are of her church family.

As she shares the stories of her colorful life, Sabbath plays a recurring role. As a law student, her refusal to attend the bar preparatory classes on Sabbath impressed one of her professors—particularly when she was one of the few students to pass the exam. He was so impressed that he nominated her for a magistrate position. However, the Kenyan government works on Saturdays, and when she declined to work on that day, her pay was docked.

After a year and a half, she wanted to resign. But the elders encouraged her to stay. And every two years she received a promotion. By 1990, she was the chief magistrate of the First Anti-Corruption Court in Kenya. In 1996, she became the resident judge of the High Court of Kenya in Mombasa, a court known for its corruption. It was a mess, she says. The advocates fought her because she took steps to clean it up.

"There was evil all around," she says. "Going to church on Sabbath was such a refuge."

How so?

"Just doing the normal things, singing, praying."

Just spending a Sabbath day with Judge Mary has similar rejuvenating qualities. Her love for the Sabbath and her church family shine irresistibly. In *Fahrenheit 451*, people became books to preserve them. Mary becomes Sabbath. ■



PHOTOS: BONNIE DWYER



Top Ten Amazing Facts about Amazing Facts

Regarding the Merger with 3ABN

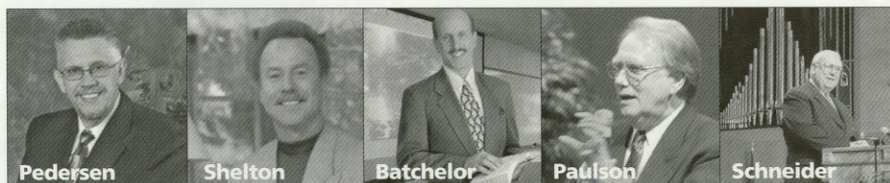
BY BONNIE DWYER

When Three Angels Broadcasting network and Amazing Facts announced in April that the two organizations planned to merge, there was much speculation about who would lead the organization and what it would mean. As of June 20, there were signs that the deal was in major trouble. Or, "dead in the water," as one official described it. Here, then, are ten facts that may explain why.

TEN. Amazing Facts is not truly an independent ministry. It is a supporting ministry of the Northern California Conference and Jim Pedersen, president of the NCC, chairs the Amazing Facts board. The assets of Amazing Facts cannot be transferred without the vote of the Northern California Conference Executive Committee, which is a major part of the constituency of Amazing Facts.

NINE. A lengthy letter from General Conference president Jan Paulsen and North American president Don Schneider to Amazing Facts and 3ABN listed concerns about the planned merger.

EIGHT. Employee credentialing may be a major deal breaker. The denomination would most likely decline to credential the employees of 3ABN.



Credentialing of employees is one thing that the Northern California Conference does for Amazing Facts.

SEVEN. One deal breaker for the Northern California Conference would be any suggestion of a property transfer to an entity outside the denomination.

SIX. Becoming a denominational entity could negatively affect the fund-raising efforts of 3ABN.

FIVE. Danny Shelton's personal and legal problems present a major liability.

FOUR. Doug Batchelor's responsibilities as senior pastor of the Sacramento Central Seventh-day Adventist Church need to be clarified.

THREE. Control of the 3ABN programming could be another deal breaker.

TWO. The more likely merger is Amazing Facts with Weimar Institute. That merger is on track to strengthen Amazing Facts College of Evangelism, Church Empowerment, and Health Programs, rather than broadcasting.

And the number **ONE** Amazing Fact about Amazing Facts is that

Doug Batchelor's mother-in-law is his administrative assistant. (Perhaps if Danny Shelton had hired his mother-in-law he would not have the problems he is now experiencing and talks of a merger would have remained only a dream.) ■

Radical Method, Radical Christ Discussed at Church Conference

BY ANSEL OLIVER/ANN

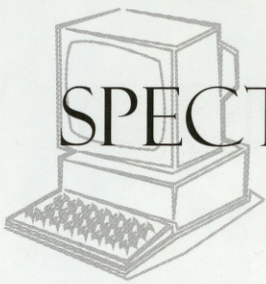
Learning new methods of evangelism brought together about 100 Adventist Church leaders, communication professionals and technology experts from around the world for the fourth annual Global Internet Evangelism Forum at Newbold College in Bracknell, Berkshire, Britain, June 28 to July 1.

"Those who are still not with us need to know that there is a deliberate approach to the Internet in the church," said Rajmund Dabrowski, communication director for the Adventist Church world headquarters, which sponsored the event.

"Some are stuck with the predictable approach to evangelism," Dabrowski said.

However, he was encouraged from the energy and amount of newcomers at the event "buying in" to utilizing technology, even if people had different ideas on what the conference was about.

Source: Adventist News Network.



Bloggin' the Twenty-Eight:

The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ | BY RON OSBORN

June 26, 2007

Campmeeting 2.0: Bloggin' the 28 Adventist Beliefs
By Alexander Carpenter

Welcome to a summer series of posts around the Adventist blogosphere exploring the ethical call of Adventist beliefs. Behind this experiment lies a simple question: How does this belief translate into habits or actions today?

Centuries before Jesus' birth, Jewish apocalyptic writers, struggling to understand the theological meaning of Israel's exile in Babylon, concluded with paradoxical audacity that pagan oppression was the result not of YHWH's weakness but of his actual justice and strength: Israel was being punished by the Creator God for its failure to keep the covenant.¹ Things would grow progressively worse, Jewish eschatology predicted, until a final, decisive moment when God would at last send a warrior-prince to restore his Chosen People to their rightful place among the nations.

Jewish apocalyptic literature used cosmic and fantastic images to describe this future event, but Jewish hopes were firmly rooted in the realm of concrete, earthly politics. When God's kingdom arrived, it would be plain for all to see by three material facts: (1) the Davidic monarchy would be restored in Jerusalem with unparalleled justice and prosperity; (2) the Temple would be rebuilt with unsurpassed splendor; and (3) the downtrodden Jews would emerge a triumphant superpower with their pagan enemies humiliated and defeated beneath them.

Jesus shared many of the basic assumptions of this traditional Jewish eschatology. He declared that oppression

would increase before finally being overcome by God's saving activity (Mark 13:7–13). He urged his disciples to be steadfast and courageous in the face of evil (Matt. 10:16–42). And he taught them to pray not for a "spiritual" kingdom somewhere in the sky but for God's kingdom to come "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

When Jesus talked about the kingdom, though, he did not talk about it in the future tense. Israel was still suffering under foreign oppression, economic injustice, and religious corruption. Jesus talked about the kingdom like it had already arrived. Even more shocking, the Gospel writers record, Jesus talked and acted like the kingdom was happening in him and through him. "But if I cast out demons by the finger of God," Jesus said, "then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20).

Jesus' kingdom announcement implied that conventional Jewish eschatology, with its vision of two successive historical ages, was either deeply flawed or had been gravely misread. Hebrew apocalyptic literature had depicted the coming of YHWH's kingdom as a dramatic, earthshattering event that would radically divide the old aeon from the new. But Jesus declared, against all of the seeming evidence, that the kingdom of God was an already present, in-breaking reality, manifest in his own life and program of miraculous healings, and best grasped through metaphors of secrecy, simplicity, and subversion.

The kingdom, Jesus said, is not like a conquering army but like a mustard seed that inexorably consumes the garden (Luke 13:19). It is like the yeast or leaven that invisibly causes bread to rise (Matt. 13:38). It is like a pearl of great price that only the passionate seeker will buy (Matt. 13:46).

In first-century Palestine, anyone talking about "the kingdom" was, by this fact alone, treading on perilous political ground. Caesar Augustus had already staked

out Rome's exclusive claim to kingdom vocabulary, and the cult of the emperor brooked no rivals. Caesar was, according to one public inscription, "the beginning of all things"; "god manifest"; the "savior" of the world who "has fulfilled all the hopes of earlier times"; the one whose birthday "has been for the whole world the beginning of the good news (*euangelion*)."²

We should not be surprised, then, that Jesus encoded his kingdom politics in parables, metaphors, riddles, and cryptic sayings that did not explicitly defy Roman rule. But for those who had ears to hear, mustard seeds and pearls of great price were the rhetoric of a revolution. Jesus—the true Savior of the world—was calling for his followers to embody YHWH's actual kingdom of compassion and justice as over and against Lord Caesar's blasphemous parody.

He was telling them to incarnate God's reign in history by building a new kind of community—a countercultural "polis on a hill" (Matt. 5:14)—that would stand in nonviolent but subversive opposition to all those forces responsible for grinding down the poor, the weak, the ritually unclean, and sinners of every kind.

The fact that Jesus calls for his followers to incarnate or embody God's kingdom as a social reality in the present does not contradict but defines and animates Christian hope in the Parousia as a future event in space-time. According to John Dominic Crossan, Jesus proclaimed a sapiential as opposed to apocalyptic eschatology. *Sapientia* is the Latin word for "wisdom," and, according to Crossan, Jesus offered human beings "the wisdom to discern how, here and now in this world, one can so live that God's power, rule, and dominion are evidently present... rather than a hope of life for the future" (my emphasis).³

But the Jesus of the New Testament—the only Jesus we know—offers his disciples both a Way of living that manifests God's kingdom in the midst of the present reality and a hope for the future that invests this Way with its power and meaning.⁴ It is precisely because of their confidence in the Parousia that believers are free to live out the dangerous and demanding politics of the gospel. Conversely, it is only the social witness of believers that manifests Jesus' life and lordship over history to a watching world.

Absent such a witness, as Martin Luther King Jr. saw, there can be no authentic Advent hope. "Any religion that professes to be concerned about the souls of men and is not concerned about the slums that damn them,

the economic conditions that strangle them and the social conditions that cripple them is a spiritually moribund religion awaiting burial."⁵

"The Favorable Year of the Lord": Economic Justice

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus' first action at the start of his public ministry is to enter the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth and read from the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor...to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18–19). Only real debt cancellation would have come as real good news for real poor people, Ched Meyers points out.⁶

When Jesus claims the "favorable year of the Lord" as central to his vocation, he is therefore not assuming a "spiritual" as opposed to a political messianic role. He is, rather, directly alluding to a powerful vision of social justice contained in the Law of Moses that had been systematically suppressed and evaded by Israel's ruling elites for hundred of years, an economic ethic that would have come as welcome news indeed to the impoverished and exploited peasant masses of Galilee and Judea.

The "favorable year of the Lord" in Luke-Isaiah, Andre Trocmé and John Yoder show, is the Sabbath year or year of Jubilee commanded by God in the Hebrew Bible (particularly Lev. 25 and Deut. 15).⁷ Every seventh year, according to the Covenant, Israel was to enact a program of radical debt forgiveness, and in the fiftieth year land redistribution to benefit the poor. Among God's people, there was to be a systematic leveling of wealth on a regular basis and dismantling of what we would today describe as oppressive financial and banking institutions designed to maximize profits for creditors.

Jesus does not attempt to instate these Jubilee commandments in a rigid or programmatic way, but he does reclaim the basic principles, metaphors, and imagery of the Sabbath Jubilee for his followers.⁸ He has more to say in the Gospels about issues of wealth and poverty than any other topic—and his message remains as challenging for those of us who live in affluent countries today as it was for the wealthy Herodians and Sadducees in first-century Palestine.

Against the assumptions of laissez-faire capitalism—which posits a world of unlimited human needs, individualism, and competitive rivalry for scarce resources—Jesus

declares that we are stewards rather than owners of property, that God's creation is abundant and our earthly needs limited, and that God's liberation of Israel from slavery is normative for how we should treat the poor among us.

His warnings against capital accumulation and "Lord Mammon" are unrelentingly severe (Matt. 6:16–24; Mark 10:23–25). He tells his followers to live lives of dangerous generosity, giving and expecting nothing in return (Luke 6:30). He tells them to forgive each other's debts (Matt. 6:12), not to worry about their own material needs but to live out a lifestyle of trust and simplicity (Matt. 6:25–34; 10:9–10). And he instructs them to pursue justice actively (Matt. 23:23). Material care for the poor, the oppressed, and the hungry, Jesus declares, is the primary mark of discipleship—and the only question at the final judgment (Matt. 25:31–40).

Jesus' radical economic teachings were epitomized among his early followers in the practice of "breaking bread," which was not originally a rite of sacral liturgy or mystical symbolism but an actual meal that embodied Jesus' ethic of sharing in ordinary day-to-day existence.⁹

When the Holy Spirit is poured out at Pentecost in the book of Acts, the practical result is that believers voluntarily redistribute their property. "And all those who believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. . . . breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart" (Acts 2:44–46).

The Apostle Paul also emphasizes the sociopolitical nature of the Lord's meal, delivering a blistering rebuke to those upper-class Corinthians who excluded poor believers from their table fellowship and sated their own stomachs while other members of the community went hungry (1 Cor. 11:18–22).

"You Are All One in Christ": Equality in the Body of Believers

We can begin to see, then, why Jesus' message had such an electrifying effect on the impoverished and socially marginalized peasants of first-century Palestine who flocked to hear him speak—and why he so frightened and angered those guardians of public "order" for whom divisions of wealth and class were a useful rather than an oppressive reality.

But Jesus challenged not only structures of economic injustice and inequality in first-century Palestine. He also

challenged patterns of social inequality, hierarchy, and domination of every kind. In his treatment of women, of children, of Romans, of the ritually unclean and sinners of every stripe, Jesus repeatedly and provocatively overturned deeply ingrained cultural and religious assumptions about who was "first" and "last," "above" and "below" in the eyes of God.

There is no place in God's in-breaking kingdom, it turns out, for "great men" or "rulers" who "lord it over" others through the exercise of political or religious authority. Such, Jesus tells his disciples, is the way of the "Gentiles," that is, the pagan unbelievers and Roman occupiers. But among his followers, Jesus declares, "whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave" (Matt. 20:26–28; Mark 10:43).

Jesus goes so far as to command his followers to avoid using honorific titles of any kind, including the title of "leader." The only title Jesus permits is an address of familial equality and solidarity: "brother" (Matt. 23:6–10). In the polis of Jesus, the New Testament suggests, there simply are no individuals in positions of status or hierarchical control.

Instead of offices, the earliest Christian communities appear to have been ordered along quasifamilial lines and according to the idea of spiritual gifts, including gifts of teaching, preaching, and stewardship. Spiritual gifts are charismatic, functional, provisional, and divinely rather than humanly bestowed. They are not restricted to special classes, genders, or tribes, for "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ" (Gal. 3:28).

The most prominent functionaries in the early church, the "elders" or *presbyteroi* who helped to preside over the households where the early Christians gathered, were to lead by humble example rather than by "lording it over" the younger believers (1 Pet. 5:1–3). The title of "priest" or *hiereus* (the root from which the English word hierarchy derives) is not applied to any Christian in the Gospels or Pauline corpus (although in Rom. 15:16 Paul does describe himself by way of metaphor as a minister who works "as a priest" presenting God with "my offering of the Gentiles").¹⁰

Jesus is the only person described (in the book of Hebrews) as a priest for the church; but he is the final priest who makes all priesthood obsolete—not merely the performance of ritual sacrifice, but also the office, pomp, and circumstance of priestly authority and hierarchy itself.

"Do Not Resist an Evil Person": Nonviolent Enemy Love

It was the fatal error of many Latin American liberation theologians to conclude from Jesus' concern for economic justice and his summons to radical, nonhierarchical community formation that the Way of Jesus may be harmonized with the way of violent revolt against oppressive social, economic, and political structures. But Jesus of Nazareth, unlike Judas the Galilean, taught his disciples to turn the other cheek, to put away their swords, and to love their enemies as themselves. Perhaps the most important hallmark of the politics of Jesus lies in his teaching and example of nonviolent enemy love.

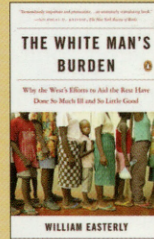
Jesus' ethic of nonviolence finds its fullest statement in the Sermon on the Mount, which is presented in Matthew's Gospel in a programmatic fashion as the new Torah, a definitive moral charter to guide the community of believers.¹¹ Jesus does not seek to negate or overturn the Law of Moses with his own novel teaching, but to reclaim the deepest meaning of the Law by intensifying and internalizing its demands. The Law forbids murder, Jesus forbids even anger. The Law forbids adultery, Jesus forbids even lust.

When it comes to the matter of violence, though, Jesus does not simply radicalize or intensify the Torah. On this point—and this point alone—he decisively alters and actually overturns the teaching of the Hebrew Bible:

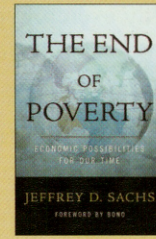
You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. . . You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. (Matt. 5:38–45)

The *lex talionis*—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth—is spelled out in several passages in the Hebrew Bible, but particularly in Deuteronomy 19:15–21. If in a criminal trial a witness gives a false testimony, the Law declares, that person must be severely punished in order to preserve the social order. "Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot" (v. 21). Political stability is the goal and fear is the mechanism by which it will be achieved. Jesus shatters this strict geometry, however, with a startling injunction: "Do not resist an evil person." This does not imply passive capitulation to violent

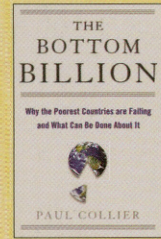
For Further Reading



The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good, by William Easterly. (Penguin Press, 2006)



The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time, by Jeffrey Sachs. (Penguin Press, 2005)



The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done about It, by Paul Collier. (Oxford University, 2007)

UN Millennium Development Goals

Selected targets to be met by 2015



1. Halve the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day.
2. Ensure all children complete primary school.
3. Educate boys and girls equally.
4. Reduce the mortality rate among children under five by two-thirds.
5. Reduce the maternal mortality rate by three-quarters.
6. Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other major diseases.
7. Halve the proportion of people without access to safe water and sanitation.
8. Increase aid and improve governance.

Source: UN; <<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/index.html>>.

There is nothing sentimental, naïve, meek, or mild about Jesus' Way of dealing with enemies.

people but physical nonretaliation as a dynamic and creative force in human relationships.

By exemplifying the courage and forgiveness of the Beatitudes, the believer confounds and shames the aggressor, creating an opportunity for the hostile person to be reconciled with God. By absorbing undeserved suffering and not retaliating in kind, the disciple destroys the evil inherent in the logic of force. Instead of an endless cycle of bloodshed, fear, and recrimination, there is shalom, there is peace. There is nothing sentimental, naïve, meek, or mild about Jesus' Way of dealing with enemies.

When we recall the concrete historical realities of Roman occupation in first-century Palestine, the shocking and scandalous political implications of Jesus' teaching of nonviolence immediately become clear. To grasp the forces arrayed against Jesus and his fledgling kingdom movement, we have only to imagine the fate that would befall a charismatic young man from a rural village in present-day Iraq should he travel to Baghdad with a band of followers and begin publicly announcing that God, through him, was about to free the land from the yoke of foreign occupation—and that prominent imams and respected government officials were vipers and hypocrites—and that the insurgents should lay down their weapons and love their enemies as themselves. Subversive? Disturbing? Dangerous? Clearly. Yet this was precisely the path that Jesus followed in his perilous journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem.

Whether Jesus' Way of nonviolent enemy love leads to an ethic of strict pacifism, as John Yoder convincingly argues, or whether it allows for Christians to engage in what Glen Stassen calls "just peace-making" (preventive or "policing" actions that involve use of force in exceptional cases but remain sociologically and morally distinct from the calculus of war making), the presumption of the New Testament is therefore overwhelmingly against believers killing their fellow human beings for a "just cause," whether as social revolutionaries (on the

Left) or "just warriors" (on the Right).¹²

There is not one word in the New Testament to support Linda Damico's claim that Jesus' concern for the liberation of the poor led him to embrace "the violence of the oppressed."¹³ We must ponder whether disciples can even legitimately serve as military chaplains insofar as chaplains are not allowed to proclaim fully Jesus' teaching and example to soldiers, but must ensure that "all efforts... maximize a positive impact on the military mission" and "enhance operational readiness and combat effectiveness."¹⁴

Against the above reading of Jesus' kingdom announcement—as essentially subversive of political authority, involving concern for matters of economic justice and social equality, and giving rise to a community of nonviolent nonconformity with power—some scholars have quoted Jesus' aphorism: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17).

According to Geza Vermes, this saying indicates that Jesus was not concerned with the burning political matters of his day but remained a wandering, apolitical sage who only accidentally and somewhat naïvely stumbled into conflict with the Jerusalem authorities.¹⁵ Did not Jesus also say "My kingdom is not of this world"? Vermes's reading of Jesus as an apolitical rustic rabbi fails, however, to account for the historical and narrative contexts for Jesus' words and actions in the Gospels.

When Jesus says his kingdom is not of this world he does not mean that his kingdom has nothing to do with this world; he means that his kingdom does not derive its tactics, platform, or goals from any of the competing political movements of his day, and particularly from the zealots: "If my kingdom were of this world *my servants would fight*... but my kingdom is not *from here*" (John 18:36 NKJV, emphasis mine).

Nor is "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" an abstract teaching about the separation of political and religious matters.

The aphorism is Jesus' answer to a specific, historically inscribed trap devised by a group of Pharisees and Herodians, whose goal is to force Jesus into one of their rival camps.

The trap comes in the form of a question that appears to admit only one of two answers: Should Jews pay the poll tax to Caesar? If Jesus says they should pay the tax, he will have compromised with the Roman occupiers and betrayed his people. If he says that it is not right to pay the tax, he will have openly defied Caesar's authority and be guilty of sedition along the lines of the zealots.

But Jesus does not take either path in this false dichotomy. Instead, he deftly transcends and subverts the question.¹⁶ His reply contains irony, non-cooperation, indifference, and even scorn.¹⁷ Bring me a denarius, he tells his inquisitors (Mark 12:15), showing that he is not himself in possession of "Lord Mammon" while at the same time forcing his questioners to reveal that they are the compromised bearers of Caesar's image and divine title. Whose image and inscription is this? Jesus then asks, as if he did not know. So it is the Pharisees and Herodians, not Jesus, who are forced to bear recognition to Caesar in the story.

When told that the image is Caesar's (v. 16), Jesus at last declares that Caesar can keep his idolatrous scraps of metal: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's." But what are the things that truly belong to Caesar? Does Caesar have the right to wage wars, to impoverish nations, and to inflict violence on God's people? Not at all, Jesus' listeners would have understood. Lord Caesar has no claim whatsoever on any human being; for human beings, unlike coins, are made in the image of God.

But what about the Apostle Paul's statement in Romans 13 that God has ordained secular rulers as agents of his will, as "avengers" who do "not bear the sword for nothing" (v. 3)? Do Paul's letters—the oldest texts in the New Testament canon—in some way contradict, invalidate, or "balance" Jesus' seemingly more radical words and actions in the Gospels, which were written some forty years later?

According to Martin Luther, the book of Romans is the New Testament's definitive statement on Christian politics, and it shows that we must serve God "inwardly" and the secular authorities "outwardly." "Therefore, should you see that there is a lack of hangmen," Luther wrote in 1523, "and find that you are qualified, you should offer your services and seek the place."¹⁸

Protestants have been offering their services ever since. Yet Romans 13, Luther failed to see, is part of the same literary unit as Chapter 12, which ends with these words: "Repay no evil for evil... Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. Therefore: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:17–21).

Next come the instructions about submitting to earthly authorities. But lest there be any doubt on the matter, Paul returns to the theme of Christian nonviolence, driving his point home with systematic rigor. First, he instructs believers to render to all their due (13:7). Then he says that believers should owe no one anything except love (13:8). Next he defines what love is: "Love does no harm to a neighbor" (13:10). Read carefully, and in historical context, Paul is telling the early Christians in Rome, in the face of increasing persecution by a brutal and tyrannical pagan regime, to assume a nonviolent, nonrebellious stance as their reconciling ministry.

He is also telling believers to trust in God's controlling power over history. God can use the secular authorities and their pagan armies for his own redemptive purposes and, ironically, even as instruments of his justice. That is God's power and prerogative. But there is not one word in Romans—or anywhere else in Paul's writings—to suggest that believers should volunteer to serve in Assyrian, Egyptian, or Roman legions, or that violence is an acceptable tool for followers of the Way.¹⁹

Quite the opposite, Romans 13 makes clear: Christians are called to a different path. And it is precisely the political character of this path that explains the regularity and persistence of both Roman and Jewish persecution of the Jesus movement during the first three centuries of its growth:

*Mere belief—acceptance of certain propositional statements—is not enough to elicit such violence. People believe all sorts of odd things and are tolerated. When, however, belief is regarded as an index of subversion, everything changes. The fact of widespread persecution, regarded by both pagans and Christians as the normal state of affairs within a century of the beginnings of Christianity, is powerful evidence of the sort of thing that Christianity was, and was perceived to be.*²⁰

Resurrecting the Life of Christ

When we strip away the layers of ritual, culture, and abstract theology that have accreted to the Gospels over the past two thousand years, we thus find that although Jesus did not fit into any of the rival political categories or ideologies of his day—although he did not “run with the hares or hunt with the hounds,” in Wright’s words—he was nevertheless deeply, in fact centrally, concerned with politics: with questions of power, money, allegiance, and violence, and with the liberation of human beings from all forms of oppression, social and political as well as individual.²¹

For Jesus, the things that are God’s are not other-worldly things—the heretical, earth-denying claim of the Gnostics—but precisely this-worldly matters—matters of justice, mercy, and community. Jesus’ political stance, Jacques Ellul and Vernard Eller convincingly argue, may best be described as that of an anarchist—not anarchist in the popular sense of advocating destruction of property or the violent overthrow of governments (as in Damico’s reading), but in the root sense of the word: an arche—no

rulers, no dominion but God’s alone.²²

The anarchist dimension of Christian discipleship does not remove but in many ways heightens the demands of citizenship in a secular polity since service to God cannot be separated from loving service to humanity, and because violent resistance to “Lord Caesar” is no longer an option. Still, “We must be faithful in our own way,” Stanley Hauerwas reminds us, “even if the world understands such faithfulness as disloyalty.”²³ A church that does not stand “against the world” in fundamental ways, Yoder points out, “has nothing worth saying to and for the world.”²⁴

Followers of Jesus are not called to defend the ramparts of “liberal democracy,” or any other political system or ideology. Nor are they called to create a “Christian nation” in which Christian leaders assume control of the means of violence and power and exercise them for righteous ends. Rather, they are called to incarnate the kingdom of God by modeling an alternative or “remnant” community of economic justice, equality, and peace, with Jesus at its center. They are called to bear witness, amid all of the ambiguities and ironies of history, to the “minor-

2007: Our Sabbath Year of Jubilee for the Poor | BRIAN SWARTS, JUBILEE USA

“Proclaim liberty throughout the land and to all its inhabitants; it shall be a Jubilee for you.”

—Leviticus 25:9–10

“Must we starve our children to pay our debts?”

—Julius Nyerere, former President of Tanzania

About Jubilee USA and Debt Cancellation

It has been seven years since people of faith worldwide launched the Jubilee 2000 campaign to cancel debts for the world’s poorest countries. Although some debt has been canceled, rich countries have not kept their promises. Today, this work is continued in the United States by Jubilee USA <www.jubileeusa.org>, a nationwide network of faith groups

working for justice for the poor.

As the national field organizer at Jubilee USA, I get the opportunity to speak to people of faith around the country about the Jubilee movement and how it changes lives. Like other faith-inspired movements, such as abolition or civil rights, Jubilee is a movement of conscience.

In the world’s most impoverished nations, the majority does not have access to clean water, adequate housing, or basic health care. These countries are paying debt service to wealthy nations and institutions at the expense of providing basic services to their citizens. The United Nations Development Program estimated in 2003 that thirty thousand

children die each day due to preventable diseases.

Debt service payments take resources that impoverished countries could use to cure preventable diseases. Debt cancellation frees up resources to reverse this devastating reality. Today, the world has committed to the UN Millennium Development Goals to cut global poverty in half by 2015. This can happen—and is happening—but we will only be successful if we end the resource drain caused by unjust and unfair debt collection.

Our 2007 Sabbath Year

Two thousand seven is a big year for the Jubilee movement—our Sabbath

ity report": the good news that Jesus' creative weakness is still God's saving strength.

If true to their calling, followers of Jesus may expect to pay a high price for their political witness and their refusal to play a part in the mechanisms of violence and coercion that lie at the heart of every social order, including the project of American democracy (the imperial "beast" of Revelation 13 marked by its powers of shock and awe—making "fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men"—and by its control of the global economy—dictating who is "able to buy or to sell").²⁵

They will at times be charged with being unpatriotic, ineffective, or irrelevant. Like the Anabaptists during the Protestant Reformation, they may face ridicule, social ostracism, and even persecution for their nonconformity with power. In some times and places, they will lose their lives as a result of their obedience to their Master.

The Way of Jesus is ultimately the Way of the Cross. "To accept the cross as his destiny, to move toward it and even to provoke it, when he could well have done otherwise, was Jesus' constantly reiterated free choice," writes

Yoder. "The cross of Calvary was not a difficult family situation, not a frustration of visions of personal fulfillment, a crushing debt, or a nagging in-law; it was the political, legally-to-be-expected result of a moral clash with the powers ruling his society."²⁶

Because the Way of Jesus is the Way of the Cross, the politics of Jesus only fully make sense to those who see the dilemmas of power in "cosmic perspective," to those who are living in the light of Jesus' resurrection as the historical fact upon which the once-hidden meaning of the universe hinges. "As a mundane proverb, 'Turn the other cheek' is simply bad advice," Richard Hays points out. "Such action makes sense only if the God and Father of Jesus Christ actually is the ultimate judge of the world and if his will for his people is definitely revealed in Jesus."²⁷

Put another way, because following Jesus—not simply as a matter of individual spirituality but as a matter of concrete community formation—may involve real sacrifice, suffering, and even martyrdom, and because there is no guarantee that this suffering will be politically effective as the world measures effectiveness, there is no reason to fol-

Year. In Scripture, Jubilee is rooted in the practice of Sabbath. As an Adventist, I can see my own values and traditions reflected in this work. I was brought up in a church and a family where faith is a lifestyle and not simply a belief system.

For me, the Jubilee movement is about living out not only my faith, but also my commitment to "Sabbath" perspective on life. Adventists recognize the importance of the Sabbath—not simply as a day of rest, but also as a reminder of God's original vision for creation. In his first Sabbath sermon, Jesus proclaimed that he had come to bring Jubilee for the oppressed, and in honor of the Sabbath Year we are calling on God's people to do the same for those who live in slavery to debt and poverty around the world.

The Jubilee Act

During the Sabbath Year, we are calling on the U.S. Congress to pass the Jubilee Act (HR 2634), which will lead to debt cancellation for the sixty-seven poorest countries in the world. The highlight of the Sabbath Year is our "Cancel Debt Fast" advocacy campaign. It is a forty-day rolling fast, during which supporters of debt cancellation will fast for one day or more.

During their fast, supporters will call their members of Congress to urge support for the Jubilee Act. The "Cancel Debt Fast" runs from September 6 to October 15, and it ends with a Week of Action in Washington, D.C. On October 15, antipoverty advocates from around the world will meet for a prayer breakfast, public demonstrations, and lobbying on Capitol Hill.

What Does the Jubilee Act Do?

- Calls on the Bush Administration, the IMF, and the World Bank to keep their promises on debt cancellation,
- Calls for expanded debt cancellation for impoverished countries that will use the freed resources well and require debt cancellation to meet the Millennium Development Goals for cutting global poverty in half by 2015,
- Calls for new standards for responsible lending and creditor transparency, by calling for measures to address the problem of vulture funds, as well as audits of odious and illegal debts from the past. ■

low the Way of Jesus unless the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith are one and the same.

If Roman brutality left Jesus buried somewhere in the hills of Palestine alongside all the other messianic revolutionaries of his day, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (1 Cor. 15:32). But if Jesus is who the New Testament writers say he is—the suffering Savior of the world who has overcome the principalities and powers and has defeated the final tyranny that is death—then let us "be imitators of God" (Eph. 5:1), bearing a more faithful witness to the Way of Jesus and the political shape of his life. ■

COMMENTS:

Ron, thank you for this probing piece. Your exegesis of Romans 13 is particularly enlightening and helpful.

Posted by: Chris Blake | June 26, 2007 at 09:13

Amen...This is a cogent, lucid exposition of "kingdom" theology. As Adventists, our read of the Gospels has tended to ignore the present aspects of Jesus' kingdom proclamation/teaching, misreading it as if it were only talking about the future end of the world.

Posted by: Zane | June 26, 2007 at 12:36

Amazing! Thank you, Ron. This is a gift. I'm sure when this is published in the journal, folks will see that the footnotes comprise a year or more worth of essential reading. Thanks for distilling your work with these issues.

But I have a question....When it comes down to real Christians coming to terms with the meaning of "witness" in real communities around the world, what is the role of the cross? Another way to ask this, maybe, is this: what you have written here is a powerful, political Christology. What kind of soteriology issues from this Christology? I have ideas about this myself, but I'm painfully curious what you would say about this. Wish I was traveling with you; we could discuss it as we bounced along on the bus.

Posted by: Ryan Bell | June 26, 2007 at 15:00

Notes and References

1. Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 188–93.
2. Richard Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 24–25.
3. John Dominic Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 46–47.
4. See Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 101.
5. King, "Pilgrimage to Nonviolence," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington (New York: HarperCollins, 1986), 38.
6. Meyers, "Jesus' New Economy of Grace: The Biblical Vision of

Sabbath Economics," *Sojourners Magazine*, July–Aug 1998, on the Web at <<http://www.sojo.net>>.

7. Andre Trocmé, *Jesus and the Nonviolent Revolution* (Farmington, N.Y.: Plough, 2004), 11–38; John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1972), 60–75.
8. N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God: Volume 2* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 295.
9. John Howard Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World* (Penn.: Herald Press, 1992), 20.
10. See Garry Wills, *What Jesus Meant* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 68–71.
11. Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 321.
12. Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 169–74.
13. Linda H. Damico, *The Anarchist Dimension of Liberation Theology* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 173–92.
14. The U.S. military's manuals spell out the role of the chaplain in no uncertain terms, suggesting that chaplains who encourage their soldiers to follow Jesus' teaching and example of nonviolence to their enemies will soon be chaplains without jobs. See, for example, "Air Force Policy Directive 52–1: Chaplain Service," available through the Publishing Division Office and on the Web at <<http://afpubs.hq.af.mil>>.
15. Geza Vermes, *The Passion* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 55.
16. N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 507.
17. Cullman, *Jesus and the Revolutionaries* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 46–47; Jacques Ellul, *Anarchy and Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988), 71.
18. Martin Luther, "Secular Authority: To What Extent Should It Be Obeyed," in *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger (New York: Anchor, 1962), 374.
19. See Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 331.
20. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 450.
21. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 97.
22. See Ellul, *Anarchy and Christianity*; and Vernard Eller, *Christian Anarchy: Jesus' Primacy Over the Powers* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987).
23. Stanley Hauerwas, "The Church and Liberal Democracy," in *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 1981), 85.
24. Yoder, *Body Politics*, 79.
25. See Douglas Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic: The Public Involvement of a Major Apocalyptic Movement* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001).
26. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 129.
27. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 338.

Ron Osborn is a PhD candidate in political philosophy at the University of Southern California.



Adventism in the Present Tense:

Pondering Our Pasts/Plotting Our Futures

September 28–30, 2007

Adventist Forum Conference

SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA

FEATURING:

Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, authors of
*Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism
and the American Dream*

Red Books: Our Search for Ellen White—
an original play

INFORMATION:

916-774-1080

www.spectrummagazine.org



B I B L E

God's Voice in My Dreams | BY JAMES J. LONDIS

During a Sabbath camp meeting service many years ago, I heard a widely respected Adventist preacher claim that God had told him in a dream that Jesus would come before a specific date (which has since passed). His comment startled me. Why would he accept that dream as an authentic communiqué from God? Why would he not doubt its content (and therefore its source) given the biblical warnings about such speculation? Did he not understand the implicit arrogance behind his prediction; namely, that of all the people in the world, God had chosen *him* to be the one who would *know* the year Jesus would return?

English philosopher Thomas Hobbes once asked: "What is the difference between saying 'God spoke to me in a dream,' and 'I dreamed God spoke to me'?" This pointed question makes clear that, experientially, there is no difference. "God spoke to me in a dream" claims that God gave the dreamer—through an immediate experience—direct (and by implication), error-free knowledge, whereas "I dreamed God spoke to me" claims that the subconscious provided a vivid experience of the divine that may or may not be a vehicle for knowledge of God. Hobbes's question is an epistemological challenge to believers: If God spoke to you in such a dream, how would you *know* it? How could you prove it, even to yourself?

Your inner states and dreamworld are incontrovertible events you cannot deny or ignore. If you had the experience, you had

the experience. No one can prove you did not (nor can you prove you did—we take your word for it). In your subjective world, you always know *that* you had the experience.

What you may not be certain of is *what* you experienced. Do your private events yield knowledge of realities outside of yourself?

Epistemology, like many philosophical terms, comes from two Greek words; *episteme* for "know" and *logos* for "science of," and is one of the most vexing subjects in philosophy. Christian epistemology is particularly contentious since believers make claims about knowing the transcendent, infinite, and invisible God who can only be known if and when he chooses to reveal himself.¹ Religious experiences are varied.

Some people allege that religious experiences bring a unity with the divine (mysticism, for example), whereas others insist they provide a powerful sense of separation (God is "other") or a profound feeling of dependence on God. Some philosophers will argue that one cannot have a direct encounter with the external world (or God); we can only experience our representations and images of that world.

Without going into the details of this debate, let me say that I believe we can directly experience the world (and God), but that the experience is always mediated through our senses and our minds. This makes error possible, but it also means that we are experiencing the world and not simply our own impressions or feelings. For this reason,

**If God spoke
to you in...
a dream, how
would you
know it? How
could you
prove it, even
to yourself?**

we usually trust that what we experience really exists. Our experience of the tree means a tree is there (even though hallucinations are possible).

Epistemology in My Personal Journey

My passion for religious epistemology developed long before I knew what it was. My paternal grandfather was born in Anavryte, Greece, a peasant village high in the mountains overlooking the plain of Sparta. Orphaned in his early teens, he found his way to the United States and settled in a Greek community in Brooklyn, New York. At some point, he abandoned his Greek Orthodox heritage, joined the Pentecostal church downstairs from his Coney Island apartment, and eventually became a lay minister who easily read New Testament Greek.

His son—my father—was (and still is) something of an agnostic, and an uncle on my mother's side was also an agnostic (with an engineering degree) committed to evolution as a theory of origins. My mother, however, had no interest whatsoever in religion. Out of this mixed soil, I decided—along with my maternal grandparents and younger brother—to become a Seventh-day Adventist when I was fourteen years old. Within months of my baptism, I felt drawn to the ministry.

Family reaction was swift.

Uncle: "How do you *know* the world was created six thousand years ago when all the scientific evidence suggests otherwise? How do you *know* the Bible is God's revelation to humankind?" He tried to bribe me, in a way: If I would give up my belief in creation and go to the University of New Mexico (his alma mater) to pursue engineering, he would pay for it (a tempting offer to a boy raised on welfare).

Grandfather ("Papou"): "How do you *know* that Colossians 2:14–17 is not talking about the weekly Sabbath? How do you *know* that Ellen White received the prophetic gift?" Papou also argued that Adventists misinterpreted the New Testament doctrine of righteousness by grace through faith (most notably in their insistence on the seventh-day Sabbath).

Mother: She breathed a sigh of relief that I was not going to get into trouble with the police. My father—living elsewhere by this time—said nothing, though I cannot imagine him being very enthusiastic. Years later, he would say, "I wish I could believe as you do, but I

can't." Nonetheless, he never questioned my decision and always took pride in what I accomplished.

Desperately wanting to convince the skeptical family members that I did "know," I spent hours reading anything I could get my hands on that would buttress the Adventist case. I peppered the local pastors and Bible workers with questions. Years later, I realized my epistemological passion was leading me to apologetics, a subset of the philosophy of religion that musters evidence and arguments for the Christian faith.

Before we go back to Hobbes and epistemology, let us briefly touch on why epistemology and philosophy are so important to theological reflection.

Epistemology and Philosophy as Unique Disciplines

In Western thought, philosophy is a unique intellectual enterprise because it is less about a specific field of study (though it can be studied as such) than it is about pushing every field of study to examine its assumptions and presuppositions. Are those assumptions supportable by reason (thinking coherently, consistently, and in conformity with the laws of logic), experience (the entire range of experience from sense perception to mysticism), or other relevant evidence (such as the testimony of others)?

People unfamiliar with the philosophy of science are surprised to learn that debates still rage over the nature of the cause-and-effect relationship, one of the conceptual foundations not only of the scientific method, but also of our daily living. We read books, but how many are aware that major disagreements exist about where meaning is to be located: in the text, in the reader, or in some intersection of the two?

Examining questions of this sort deals with the foundation of literature, and therefore comes under what is known as "literary criticism" or the "philosophy" of literature. The philosophy of history examines the adequacy of the historical method for discovering the past (is there any way to know what "really" happened and, furthermore, what does "really happened" mean?). The philosophy of art (or aesthetics) seeks to determine: "What is the nature of beauty and how can we recognize it? What can we learn from it?" And, of course, the philosophy of religion looks at religion's basic assumptions: "How do you know God exists? How do you

know that God's revelation is in your particular sacred Scriptures?"²

I took my first philosophy course as a college student from Jean Zurcher (Ph.D. in philosophy, University of Basel) and my first philosophy of religion course from Gerald H. Minchin (M.Div., Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary). While at the seminary, I gravitated toward electives that focused on these issues, though few were available. Once I decided on a doctoral program, for a variety of reasons, I chose to pursue philosophy rather than theology or biblical studies. This afforded me the opportunity to study epistemology in depth. I had hoped to find some answers to the issue of what it means to "know."

One of my early epistemology seminars studied sense perception and the debates concerning how we are able to know the outer world through the visual, auditory, and tactile senses. I was astounded at the complexity of something that we all take for granted—our sensing of the world around us.³ Seeing an object flying in the air and judging that what we see is a bird is an enormously complex process.

Some of my earlier studies in physics became relevant. We thought about how our sensory stimuli require human interaction to become the experiences we enjoy. When the marching band plays Sousa, it creates sound waves that seem to exist in the physical environment whether or not anyone hears them. If human beings are present, what we hear with our ears only exists for *us*. Our ear drums and brains translate the sound waves into the words, music, and harmonies we hear.

This helps us solve a common, puzzling question: "If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make any noise?" The answer depends on how you define "noise." Are sound waves noise, or does noise require ears and the activity of the brain?

Equally interesting was sight: "How is it that we can see an object and feel that we *know* immediately what it is?" Like sound waves, light waves exist "out there," so to speak, but

color can only exist in us or other sentient beings. When light is split by a prism into the colors of the spectrum, we catch a glimpse of how complicated it is for us to see only one color, such as yellow or blue. Color requires a seeing mechanism (the eye) connected to a brain that interprets light waves as color.

Now, once my brain becomes aware of sensory stimuli, it must categorize them and make an instantaneous judgment about their cause (usually, but not always): Was the sound an airplane, a tractor, a falling tree, an ambulance? Was that dark shape in the sky a bird? Is that yellow shape a banana?⁴

Epistemology Deals with Errors as Well as Knowledge

One major reason we are driven to question our knowledge claims is because we have learned that our perceptions may be inaccurate. We make mistakes about what we hear, see, and feel. Who has not had the experience of seeing bananas in a bowl on the kitchen table, only to discover that their shape and color are banana-like, but that they are not bananas? Plastic bananas do not smell or feel like organic ones.

A careful dissection of the sensory process reveals that we were mistaken because we inferred bananas from what we perceived with our eyes; we did not experience bananas, but banana look-alikes. Our direct visual experience was of a yellow, banana-like shape. To make a knowledge claim based on that experience alone is remarkably accurate most of the time, but, on occasion, it can be mistaken. That is because our conclusion that what we see are bananas requires making an inferential judgment. It is that judgment that is mistaken, not the experience.

Although we cannot be wrong about what we sense or experience (though people can "see" things that are not there, that they "saw" what wasn't there cannot be denied) or about our internal states (dreams, feelings, intuitions), we can be wrong about what we think

One major reason we are driven to question our knowledge claims is because we have learned that our perceptions may be inaccurate.

Have You Been Listening In??

Recent and upcoming events presented at

San Diego Adventist Forum

(Available on audiocassettes—usually two cassettes per session and, as of the July 14, 2007, presentation, on CDs, as well. Please indicate preference.)

- Bernard Taylor, PhD November/05
It Is Written...Where? New Testament and the Septuagint
- Jim Walters, PhD May/06
Physician Assisted Suicide — End of Life Challenges
- Alden Thompson, PhD February/07
**The Finances of James and Ellen White:
Entrepreneurial James Liberates Cautious Ellen**
- Dalton Baldwin, PhD March/07
Prophecy and Community
- Ivan Blazen, PhD June/07
Submission, Silence, and Baby-making: Tough Texts on Women
- Michael Scofield, MBA July/07
Market-Driven Theology: Retarding the Growth of Adventism*
- Clive Holland, PhD August/07
Plant Genetics*

*CD or Audiocassette Format — Please specify!

Mark your choices and send with check for \$8.50 (US), \$9.50 (foreign), per selection, to:
San Diego Adventist Forum • P.O. Box 3148, La Mesa, CA 91944-3148
619-561-2360
ak-jk@cox.net

To be included on the newsletter announcement mailing roster without charge and/or to receive a listing of all audiocassettes available, please send a post card with your name and address to the address above or e-mail to address above or phone number shown above.

New York's Best-Kept Secret

The *Metro New York Adventist Forum* worships weekly, feeding mind as well as spirit, featuring fine music, and always having questions and discussion after a sermon or presentation. We are a loving community, accepting one another in our diversity. We invite you to join us, and to help spread the news about us.

We meet from 11:00 AM–1:00 PM each Saturday (except July and August, and the first week in September) at St. Mary's Church.

Our fall schedule will feature a variety of services—including local and guest speakers on challenging and inspiring topics, with ample time for discussion. All of our services feature music and Scripture readings, but we will have a special musical program at Thanksgiving time.

The second Sabbath of each month features a special guest speaker, and we add an afternoon meeting starting at 2:15 on those weeks.

Look for our schedule on our website www.MNYAForum.org or call (718) 885-9533.

See www.MNYAForum.org for our current program.
Contact us at (718) 885-9533 or chaplain@mnyforum.org
Worship with us Sabbath mornings at 11:00 at

St. Mary's Episcopal Church,
521 W. 126 St., Manhattan

(two short blocks from the 125 St. Subway station on the #1 line).

they are telling us. This is the problem of error. It is the flip side of the coin of knowledge.

Over time, we learn to trust our senses so completely that we don't think twice about using them to live our lives, even when engaged in potentially life-threatening activities such as driving a car or flying a plane. We feel certain that when we walk across the street and see a car coming at us, we should avoid it.

Our sensing of the physical world is immediate and powerful because it is "obdurate to our will"; that is, most of the time I cannot control what I hear, see, or touch—it happens, it is there. That is the primary reason why the physical world and our sensing of it are regarded as the paradigm of "true" knowledge. We want everything we claim to know to feel as certain as our knowledge of physical objects. Anything less than that seems not to deserve to be called "knowledge."

The history of epistemology chronicles our need for certainty in knowledge, the kind we feel we have much of the time with sense perception. French philosopher and mathematician René Descartes believed that rationalism could establish the knowledge of God on a foundation as certain as mathematics. If we cannot sense God, we can have knowledge of him in other ways.

Descartes's method was deceptively simple: He doubted everything he could possibly doubt, including sense experience and his own existence. But he could not doubt his own existence without falling into a contradiction: he was the doubter. *Cogito ergo sum* became the three Latin words any college sophomore learns without studying Latin. "I think, therefore I am" became an ironclad fact that Descartes believed would lead with logical rigor not only to the reality of others but also the reality of God. The irony was palpable: the certainty for which he sought emerged out of his doubting everything he possibly could.

Doubt, Faith, and Certainty in the Christian Journey

The Cartesian approach often frightens Christians who believe that we must begin not with doubt but with faith. Although there is some reason for concern, it should be noted that Descartes used doubt methodologically and theoretically to try and prove that God and the outer world exist. It was a method to think through

the problem of God's reality while not at all feeling any personal or existential doubt about it. In contrast, what we might call existential doubt (I emotionally and intellectually doubt God's reality in the depths of my being) spawns a crisis of faith and meaning, the kind we see in Albert Camus's *The Plague* or hinted at in Elie Wiesel's *Night*.

Methodological doubt is used by Christian professors in college and graduate religion classes when they review the historical arguments for and against the existence of God. By summarizing why some thinkers do not believe in God, teachers attempt to deal with their arguments in order to strengthen the faith of their students. They do not teach students to doubt God's existence at the personal level, but to help them understand how to address the doubts of those who lack faith, including more often than we realize, the struggles for faith in the students themselves. As a method, doubt is an essential element in the process of knowledge.

If we accepted all we experienced as self-evidently true, or the testimony of others *carte blanche*, we would receive the same advice given by the apostle to the early believers; the gifts of the Spirit were to prevent the believers from being "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14 RSV). Descartes's attempt to establish the reality of God beyond question is considered a failure in the modern world. Moderns are more likely to turn to experience for their knowledge of the divine.

Back to Thomas Hobbes's observation: "I dreamed God spoke to me" (like seeing the yellow, banana-like shape) is an experience that cannot be denied—I dreamed it. "God spoke to me in a dream" is an inference from that experience that is neither self-evident nor self-authenticating: it may or may not be true. This is why the first thing any believer should do if she dreams God is speaking to her is to ask: "Was that God's voice or my subconscious speaking to me?"

One of my former students once told me why he was giving up his belief in God. He said that he had prayed day and night for an undeniable experience of God (a vision, an apparition, a voice—anything) and nothing had happened. I asked him whether—if such an experience had occurred—he thought he could trust it.

"Why not?" he shot back.

"Because," said I, "an experience you wanted desperately to have might happen simply because you wanted it so badly." I continued: "One of the signs we have encountered a reality outside ourselves is that our will has little or nothing to do with creating what we experience. If God had appeared to you without warning, without being expected, that would be far more credible as a genuine revelation than starving yourself and losing sleep until you had the experience."

Since that conversation, I have thought to myself: the more we do to make a hallucination plausible, the less reason we should have to trust the authenticity of the experience if it comes. Such analysis and reflection takes time and not a little patience. The reason is that although we may directly experience ourselves, others, the outer world, and even God, there is no self-evident, incontrovertible knowledge derivable from those experiences.

Not all Christian thinkers agree with this assertion. Many argue that a direct experience of God provides immediate knowledge that cannot be challenged. I very much doubt that, since it suggests that such knowledge is error-free, a claim that makes discussion about the validity of different kinds of beliefs impossible.

Once the Enlightenment and modern science (particularly the evolutionary theory) upended the foundations of medieval faith, nineteenth- and twentieth-century Christian theology turned away from reason and revelation (to some extent) and toward a faith based on direct, immediate experiences that yielded knowledge of the divine. Whether it was Friedrich Schleiermacher's "feeling of absolute

One of the signs we have encountered a reality outside ourselves is that our will has little or nothing to do with creating what we experience.

dependence" or Paul Tillich's experience of "ultimate concern," the project was the same: a faith based on a direct experience of God seems impregnable to the assaults of modernity. If you directly experience God's reality, evidence for God and a defense of the historicity of the Bible become unnecessary.

My thesis, therefore, is this: All knowledge claims based on experience must be treated not as self-evident truths, but as judgments about the experiences that are usually accurate but nevertheless subject to error. To be sure, as noted earlier, direct experiences are error free as experiences. If I tell you I dreamed that God spoke to me, my claim is incontrovertible. But if I make the more audacious claim that God spoke to me in that dream, I am inferring something from that experience that may or may not be true.

The Bible and a Knowledge of God Based on Experiences Such as Dreams and Visions

What are the implications of this analysis for the knowledge of God that the Bible writers claimed based on their experiences? Furthermore, what are the implications for us who derive our knowledge of God based on reading the Bible?

I would suggest that the process for "knowing" God employed by the biblical writers was fundamentally no different than the process we follow to know the physical world. Their various experiences of God (or God as revealed in Jesus Christ) required a judgment that in one way or another God was the source of their experiences and some reflection on what those experiences meant.

It makes little (if any) difference whether they were visions, dreams, burning bushes, audible voices, strong impressions, or moments of inspiration, and revelation that might seem "ordinary" to an external observer (think of Saul's companions on the road to Damascus not experiencing what he was). Revelation is an incarnational process that involves both the divine (the source of the experience) and the human (judgments about the meaning of the experience).

Saul's case is a good example of a religious experience that has a *prima facie* claim to authenticity because it comes unexpectedly. He was not at all seeking an experience of Jesus Christ (he wanted to rid the world of people who claimed to have one that they

interpreted to mean the Messiah had come); the fact he had one forced him to reevaluate his entire life. In the years that followed his Damascus road encounter, according to the record, Christ apparently communed with him repeatedly, thus verifying that his original experience was authentic (compare accounts in Acts 9:1–31; and Gal. 1:13–24).

The biblical writer or character familiar with God's presence does not need Paul's level of verification. His was a unique case. This understanding of the epistemological process allows us to treat the biblical writings as authoritative for the church without insisting that they be error free in a way that may jeopardize their authority.

I have never been able to understand those who insist that acknowledging even one mistake jeopardizes all of God's revelatory activity. This is the weakness and dilemma of those who insist on an inerrant Bible, usually based on variations of what has been called the doctrine of "verbal" inspiration, though that designation is too simplistic and probably unfair in a number of cases.

Some biblical examples of individuals who experienced God but wanted assurance that God was the source of their experience might be helpful.

According to Scripture, Yahweh told Gideon (who was busy living his life and doing other things) to prepare Israel for battle against the Midianites (see Judg. 6–8). By all accounts, Gideon was so shocked by this encounter and the command it contained that he asked for a "sign" that Yahweh was with him. The voice was not enough. (I suspect his request was another way of saying: "Is that really you?") God then gave him the sign he stipulated. He requested another sign. God obliged, and then God added an additional sign Gideon had not requested.

The Gideon narrative is quite different from the earlier Abrahamic narrative. Gideon had not had the frequent contact with God's voice and presence that Abraham apparently enjoyed, which is why, I believe, Abraham could unflinchingly obey God's command to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice (Gen. 22). He knew (felt certain) Yahweh was speaking because he knew the divine voice. He "judged" correctly that this was not a hallucination or the onset of senility.

Some might ask: If you are correct that Abraham might have been mistaken (no judgment about an experience, even of God, can claim to be beyond error) about Yah-

weh's command to sacrifice Isaac, or Gideon mistaken about going into battle at Yahweh's command with all the evidence provided to them, how can we contemporary believers trust our experiences of God to help us make life-and-death decisions? If the knowledge of God we need for those decisions is based on inferences and judgments that may be erroneous, don't we need more than that? Don't we need to "know" absolutely?

Others might point out that Jesus' disciples did not leave their fishing nets to follow an obscure carpenter from Nazareth based on a probability or a good guess. People don't do that kind of thing unless they are sure.

These are important questions and they deserve a response.

As I see it, believers can feel certain that God is real and the gospel is true (*existential* certainty, the converse of existential doubt) while at the same time admitting that *theoretically* they could be wrong. Thoughtful believers are well aware that God might not exist, that the gospel story might be a fabrication, and that there might be no such thing as eternal life.

We cannot—with integrity—deny this possibility. We are like the man who plead with Jesus: "Lord I believe; please help my unbelief." Our convictions about our beliefs are not certain beyond all doubt. If they were, faith would have no role to play. Nevertheless, at the same time we admit we might be wrong, we can believe with all our beings that the gospel claims are worth dying for ("existential certainty").

The next step is to ask whether the knowledge of God we gain from the Bible and Ellen White's writings follows the same inferential process. When we study these writings, we must recognize that we are reading and interpreting their interpretations (believed to be trustworthy) and making judgments about their judgments under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the spirit-led community of believers.

In relation to the Abraham and Isaac narrative, we ultimately learn that God's purpose in

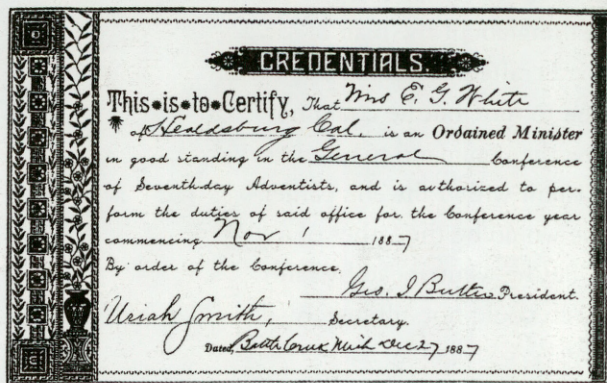
commanding the sacrifice was really to teach Abraham something about the plan of salvation Yahweh had crafted. Abraham knew Yahweh had spoken to him, but he could not understand how the command to sacrifice Isaac was consistent with Yahweh's earlier promise that he would be the father of a "great nation." But he went ahead by faith, believing Yahweh could not, ultimately, do anything wrong.

When the Corinthian believers doubted that Jesus had risen from the dead, Paul responded with a rational argument: "Hundreds are still alive who saw him! Ask them" (1 Cor. 15:5–8). They could have doubted the testimony of the people Paul identified, but at what point would their doubts become silly and absurd? Just as Jesus did not criticize Thomas for his doubts, Paul did not criticize the Corinthians for theirs, but he would have been deeply disappointed if the testimony of Christians willing to die for their proclamation of the risen Christ had been dismissed as unreliable.

To doubt the word of so many people who risked martyrdom is possible, but not very sensible. Faith is based on evidence, even if it is not absolutely coercive (if it were, would it be "faith"?). To refuse to take such evidence seriously results in the crippling, existential doubt that will not allow even the seed of faith to take root.

In contrast, as already suggested, methodological doubt does not imply a lack of faith. It can even be employed because the believer has a desire to buttress what she is inclined to believe by challenging it from every perspective that might indicate weakness. One achieves through this process not rational certainty (though evidence is very relevant)—but what we are calling existential certainty, the certainty we have that our spouses love us, that our friends can be relied on, or that the accused in the docket is guilty or innocent of the crime. It's the kind of certainty that can lead believers to sacrifice their lives for each other or for the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Our convictions
about our
beliefs are not
certain beyond
all doubt.
If they were,
faith would
have no role
to play.**



Back to the Future?

Too bad church policy prohibits such a credential today.

When we refuse to recognize God-given spiritual gifts, a terrible thing happens. We limit the potential of the body of Christ.

Isn't it time our church recognizes today's women pastors as church leadership recognized our greatest woman preacher in 1887?

Isn't it time to open the door?

Contact



TIME FOR EQUALITY IN ADVENTIST MINISTRY

P.O. Box 7816

Langley Park, MD 20787

or by e-mail BHAB8@aol.com or telephone 301-445-3340

Put me on your mailing list

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

Such believers might indeed dream that God was speaking to them and question whether it was so, but that would not necessarily mean they were spiritually weak, only careful. If after testing their dreams they decide that it was God speaking to them, they should then take the knowledge they believe God shared with them to the Church for further testing through prayer and spirit-filled discussion.

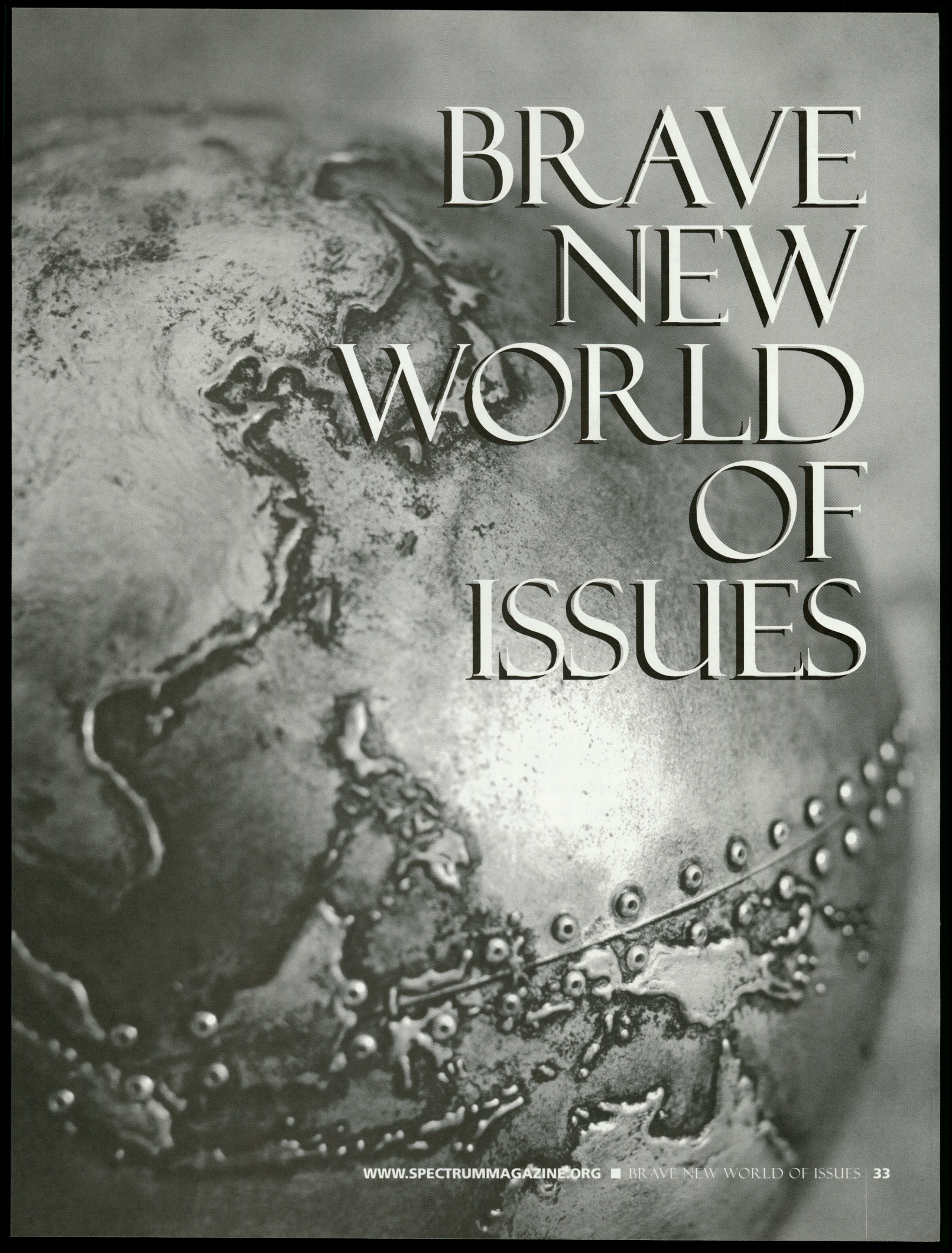
It is irresponsible to jump to the conclusion that God is speaking to an individual, especially in our modern period, without a rigorous process of verification. This process may not eliminate error, but it can certainly minimize it significantly.

In conclusion: Joel prophesied that at the time of the end, men and women, old and young, would dream dreams, and see visions (Joel 2:28ff). What a glorious experience that will be, but the Bible also warns that at the time of the end there will be false prophets and, presumably, false dreamers and visionaries. For that reason alone, we must not forget the power of Thomas Hobbes's statement: If we "dream God spoke to us," let us be as sure as we can be that "God has indeed spoken to us in a dream" before we suggest that we are speaking for God. ■

Notes and References

1. I regret using the male pronoun for the divine since I have no wish to perpetuate the patriarchal/hierarchical baggage that accompanies it. But felicitous language leaves few choices if one wishes to keep the "personal" dimension in discussions about God.
2. When people study philosophy at the graduate level, they study many of these other disciplines, as well. Courses can be taken in aesthetics, ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of history, social philosophy, philosophy of religion, and so on.
3. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *The Primacy of Perception* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1964).
4. If the reader wishes to pursue this subject more fully, two helpful books are C. I. Lewis's *Mind and the World Order* (New York: Dover, 1929), esp. Chap. 5, and Ernest Nagel and Richard B. Brandt's collection of essays titled *Meaning and Knowledge: Systematic Readings in Epistemology* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965).

James J. Londis is professor of religion and ethics at Kettering College of Medical Arts, Kettering, Ohio.



BRAVE NEW WORLD OF ISSUES

BRAVE NEW WORLD OF ISSUES

What Is a Christian to Make of Our Flat New World?

BY JAMES WALTERS AND DAVID KIM

In this essay, we will assess the current state of our world economy, examine the role of democratic capitalism, and argue that a realistic Christian goal is eradication of world poverty.

A Simultaneously Flattening and Bulging World

Just seven years ago, at the turn of the twenty-first century, a new epoch began that will go down in history as a pivotal transition for humankind, says Pulitzer prize-winning author Thomas Friedman. Around the year 2000, a triple convergence occurred. It consisted of new players from the developing world, on a new digital platform, developing new processes for horizontal collaboration in our increasingly computerized world. This triple convergence now allows individuals unprecedented opportunity to effect world culture. There is no better example than the early October 2006 headlines about two Menlo Park, California, twentysomethings who created YouTube in their garage two years earlier and sold it to Google for 1.65 billion dollars.

In his latest book, *The World Is Flat*, Friedman argues that the recent advances in multimedia and digitized communication so empower individuals that failure to join the horizontal revolution is an invitation to be tromped by connected millions of people worldwide. Globalization 1.0 began in 1492 and extended until 1800, as increasingly strong countries dominated the world through their military might. Globalization's second phase gave precedence to the cor-

poration, whose business savvy and communication skills further shrunk and flattened the world. However, we have just entered Globalization 3.0, and sole individuals have unprecedented power to download knowledge, and now upload content that's instantly available to millions of people worldwide.

Maybe it's two youth from the San Francisco Bay Area today, but it could be a youth from India next year. America is falling behind in science education with the retirement of baby boomers who took up President John F. Kennedy's challenge to America to put a man on the moon. In our tiny, flattened world, Asia in particular is taking the lead. India has seven institutes of technology whose entrance requirements rival those of MIT and Cal Tech. Given the one billion-plus citizen pool, and the resulting meritocracy, it logically follows that Silicon Valley would prize India's technology graduates, and that one in four could end up in the United States. In our shrinking world of uploading, outsourcing, offshoring, and supply chaining, it's no wonder that 245,000 highly competent Indian telephonists serve Western needs, and that 89,000 MBA graduates per year are seeking to advance themselves.

The United States cannot assume that because it prides itself on creativity in its educational systems (compared to reputed "rote" repetition in Asia) it produces better scientists. Asked about this issue, Microsoft founder Bill Gates said: "I have never met the guy who doesn't know how to multiply who created software... Who has the most creative video games

The United States cannot assume that because it prides itself on creativity in its educational systems... it produces better scientists.



Books Discussed in this Article

Thomas Friedman.

**The World Is Flat : A Brief History
of the Twenty-First Century.**

New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux,
2006.

Hans Küng and Karl-Joseph Kuschel, eds.

**A Global Ethic for Politics
and Economics.**

London: SCM, 1998.

Reinhold Niebuhr.

"The Christian Faith and the Economic
Life of Liberal Society." In Alfred Dudley
Ward, ed.

Goals of Economic Life.

New York: Harper, 1953.

Reinhold Niebuhr.

**The Nature and Destiny of Man:
A Christian Interpretation.**

New York: Scribner's, 1941-43.

Michael Novak.

**The Spirit of Democratic Capital-
ism.** New York: Simon and Schuster,
1982.

Rebecca Todd Peters.

**In Search of the Good Life:
The Ethics of Globalization.**

New York: Continuum, 2004.

Ronald J. Sider.

**Rich Christians in an Age of
Hunger: A Biblical Study.**

Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press,
1978.

Adam Smith.

**An Inquiry into the Nature and
Causes of the Wealth of Nations.**

1776.

Joseph Stiglitz.

Making Globalization Work.

New York: W.W. Norton, 2006.

in the world? Japan! I never met these 'rote people.'... You need to understand things in order to invent beyond them." Young Indians, Chinese, and Poles are not racing us to the bottom. "They are racing us to the top," comments Friedman (351).

Bangalore is the hub of the modern India, with 1.5 billion-dollar Infosys Technology leading the way; new homes, restaurants, and clubs dot the city. Yet only a few miles outside the city, a woman labors on the roads, breaking rocks by hand. Men plow dusty fields with oxen. This paradox underscores the moral and practical challenge of our mostly unflat world. One-fifth of that world is flattening, but the rest is as big and round as ever. The rift between flat and round is found not only *between* countries, but also *within* countries. Despite the 250 million Indians whose lives are dramatically improved, 800 million are left behind, much of the population is still illiterate, and the median income is only \$2.70 a day, reports Nobel prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz, in his *Making Globalization Work*.

The World Bank defines poverty as individuals who live on less than two dollars per day, and extreme poverty as those living on less than one dollar per day. Poverty has significantly increased in the developing world (excluding China), whereas during the last two decades some of the world has been getting dramatically flatter. The number of Africans in extreme poverty has almost doubled, from 164 million to 316 million. "Some 40 percent of the world's 6.5 billion people live in poverty (a number that is up 36 percent from 1981)," says Stiglitz (11, 42).

Why Are the Poor Getting Poorer?

Why do sections of the globe deal with poverty and lack of development as differently as they do? Stiglitz, who formerly served as chief economist at the World

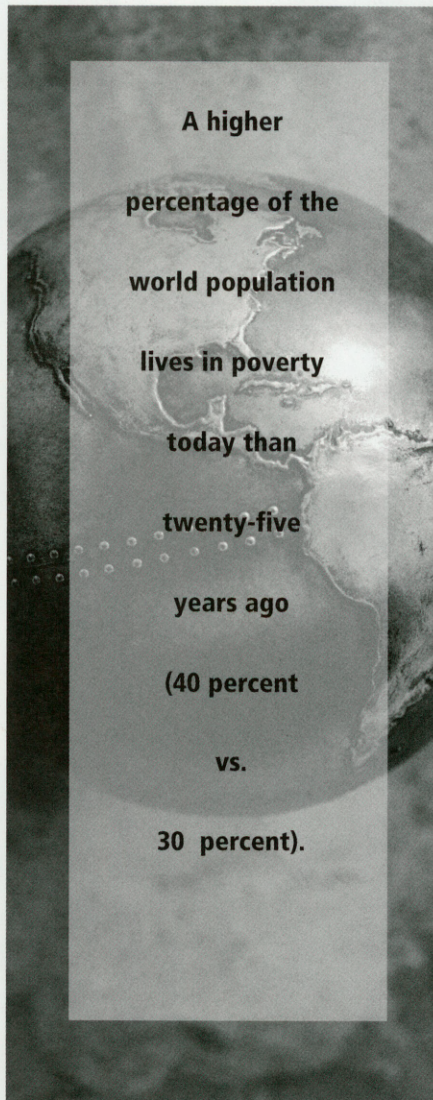
Bank and chairman of President Bill Clinton's Council of Economic Advisors, cites systemic inequities in world trade as being particularly influential. There is now a consensus among developed countries that the developing countries should be given a break in tariffs placed on their exports to the developed world. Yet despite this "preferential treatment," writes Stiglitz, "developed

country tariffs against imports from developing countries are...four times higher than tariffs against goods produced by other developed countries" (82).

Stiglitz cites the issue of farm subsidies as a glaring instance of how farmers in developed countries are artificially sustained, while farmers in the developing countries famish. Often subsidy programs are touted as helping family farms survive, but often in the United States the program is a form of corporate welfare. "Some 30,000 farms (1 percent of the total) receive almost 25 percent of the total amount spent, with an average of more than \$1 million per farm. Eighty-seven percent of the money goes to the top 20 percent of farmers, each of whom receives on average almost \$200,000.00," according to Stiglitz (86). The 2,440,184 farmers who are smallest, get only 13 percent of the total, less than 7,000 dollars each.

Stiglitz contrasts the American cotton farmer with one from Burkina Faso (one of Africa's poorest countries), whose income is twelve hundred dollars a year. "Some 25,000 very rich American cotton farmers get to divide \$3 billion to \$4 billion in subsidies among themselves, which encourages them to produce even more," writes Stiglitz. "The increased supply naturally depresses global prices, hurting some 10 million farmers in impoverished Burkina Faso and elsewhere in Africa" (85, 86).

Many on the political left blame large international corporations for much of the poverty in Burkina Faso and



worldwide (see, for instance, the documentaries, *The Corporation*, and *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Prices*). There surely are notorious instances of corporate greed (for example, Nestlé's advocacy of infant formula over breast feeding in developing countries, and long-term lying by tobacco companies about their product).

These companies are very powerful, and current policies allow considerable latitude for executives to exercise almost unilateral decision making on major issues. Their political power is directly correlated to their wealth, and this is immense. In fact, a number of multinationals have larger budgets than most countries of the developing world. In 2004, General Motors had revenues of 191 billion dollars, which exceeded the GDP of some 150 countries. In 2005, Wal-Mart's revenues were more than 285 billion dollars, more than the GDP of sub-Saharan Africa.

With so much wealth, these companies are especially powerful in developing countries, where they employ thousands of citizens—directly or indirectly. If governments desire tighter regulations for their citizen employees, a multinational can often simply imply its plan to move operations elsewhere and the host country backs down.

In the early 1990s, globalization was met with euphoria; there was hope that it would bring unprecedented prosperity to all. From 1990 to 1996, capital flow into developing countries increased six-fold. The World Trade Organization was created in 1995, but by the time of the 1999 Seattle Round of trade negotiations, the media's coverage of riots showed the world the deep resentment that many common people had toward globalization. The World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalization, chaired by the presidents of Tanzania and Finland, in 2004 issued its report, which expressed concern that globalization might be creating rich countries with poor people. Stiglitz quotes from the report:

The current process of globalization is generating unbalanced outcomes, both between and within countries. Wealth is being created, but too many countries and people are not sharing in its benefits. They also have little or no voice in shaping the process. Seen through the eyes of the vast majority of women and men, globalization has not met their simple and legitimate aspirations for decent jobs and a better future for their children. Many of

them live in the limbo of the informal economy without formal rights and in a swathe of poor countries that subsist precariously on the margins of the global economy. Even in economically successful countries some workers and communities have been adversely affected by globalization. Meanwhile the revolution in global communications heightens awareness of these disparities... [T]hese global imbalances are morally unacceptable and politically unsustainable. (8)

Social consequences of globalization include its effects on world ecology. The drive of multinational corporations to be profitable has fostered contempt for natural and human resources. In her book, *In Search of the Good Life*, Rebecca Peters tells of studies showing that impoverished people groups, underprivileged classes, and less-developed countries have greater exposure risks to toxic wastes, deadly toxins, and other corporate pollution (115–16). In the era of multinational corporations, environmental and ecological damages are particularly significant in communities that are powerless to resist.

But there is at least mixed good news, and many would argue that the benefit of multinational corporations exceeds their sins, though we can do a much better job of minimizing their damaging impact. Consider multinationals' significant contributions to developing countries. According to Stiglitz, they (1) channel almost two hundred billion dollars each year in foreign direct investment; (2) transfer technology from advanced industrial countries; (3) help raise standards of living; (4) enable goods to reach markets in developed nations; and (5) bring jobs and economic growth (188).

Despite his alluring title, *The World Is Flat, A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century*, Friedman acknowledges that only patches of the world are flattening—North America, Europe, Japan, Australia, and hot spots in Asia. The rest of the world, mostly in the southern hemisphere, is more round than ever. A higher percentage of the world population lives in poverty today than twenty-five years ago (40 percent vs. 30 percent). Similarly, the percentage of those in extreme poverty (income of less than one dollar per day) increased 3 percent during that time.

This deeper impoverishment of the "round" world took place while selected portions of the planet became flatter—due at least in part to globalization. Of course,

correlation doesn't prove causation. However, globalization's promise for world betterment has not been realized. In the rising tide of global trade, the largest ships are riding higher while the smallest crafts are increasing-ly further below.

The Tide of Globalization Can Raise All Ships

Globalization is a fact in our contemporary world, and it would be simplistic and unhelpful to pronounce it morally good or bad. The moral imperative is this: How can we transform globalization, with the skills and technologies that make it possible, to realize its potential for betterment of the whole world?

Such a vision is no mere pipe dream, at least if we take seriously Adam Smith's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*—and most capitalists surely do, often as their bible. Adam Smith is often misunderstood. For example, Ronald J. Sider, in his *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: A Biblical Study*, asserts that "Smith argued that an invisible hand would guarantee the good of all if each person would pursue his or her own economic self-interest in the context of a competitive society" (114). Well, in Smith's monumental 903-page volume there is only one reference to an "invisible hand" that guides the market economy, and his work is much more nuanced than critics such as Sider or believers often understand.

Regarding his famous "invisible hand" reference in *The Wealth of Nations*, in a chapter titled "Restraints on Particular Imports," Smith discusses a businessman who prefers domestic rather than foreign trade.

[H]e intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was no part of it. By pursuing his own interest

he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. I have never known much good done by those who affect to trade for the public good. (423)

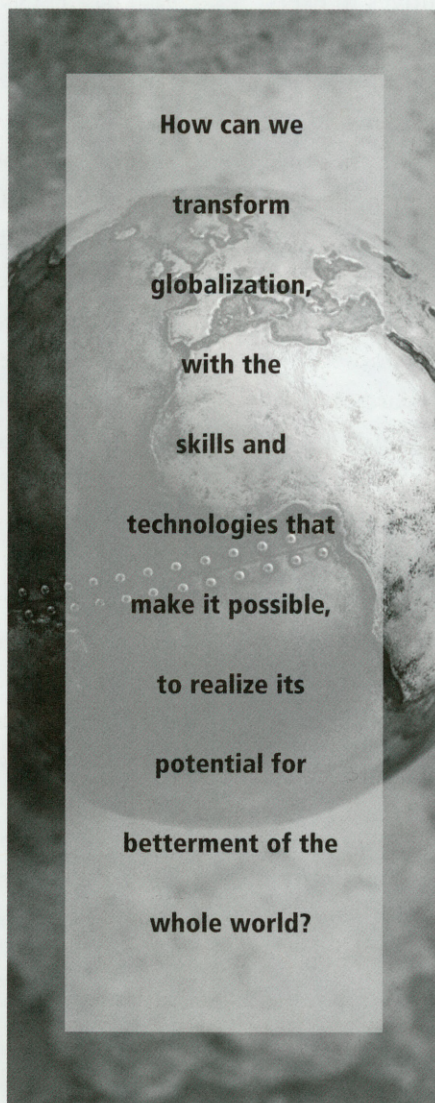
Smith saw himself laying out a system, an economic order, that was realistic about human nature in his recognition of the primacy of self-interest, and thus

designed to unleash personal creativity. By design, the self-interested throbbing heartbeat of capitalism would usually result in good social consequences—regardless of the trader's motive. Michael Novak, in his *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, argues that Adam Smith, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Montesquieu were leading founders of democratic capitalism and that they consciously devised a pluralistic, tripartite structure for the good of all citizens. The economic system was capitalistic, but this system was to be harnessed by a democratic political system, and by an emerging, vital moral-cultural system of universities, a free press, the church, and various independent associations.

Novak emphasizes that Smith envisioned a political capitalism that would benefit all nations. "He conceived of the abolition of famine, the raising up of the poor, and the banishment of material suffering from all humankind as an outcome morally to be approved of," comments Novak

(77). At a time when the developed world had an essentially mercantilist economy, it was Smith who most carefully articulated a system of sustained economic development over time based on the freedom of individuals to create and market their inventions with minimal intervention. In elaborating his economic views, Smith gave many illustrations of useful, commendable governmental regulation of free enterprise.

Novak's interpretation of Smith is reflected by Peters, who asserts that Smith saw the economic system as only



one element of human society steeped in moral sentiments; the capitalistic economy should be located within a moral framework. Problematically, modern capitalism has divorced economics from morality, seeing it as value free, thus allowing unchecked, self-interested wealth building. In turn, the drive to profit has fostered contempt for ecology and the environment.

Is Christianity Only about a Blessing for and Giving to the Poor?

Reinhold Niebuhr, the father of Christian Realism and perhaps the most influential social theologian in the twentieth century, cut his theological teeth while serving parishioners who worked in Detroit factories. He was a socialist-leaning, left-wing Democrat who late in life addressed issues of self-interest and capitalism, and came to conclusions surprisingly similar to those of Adam Smith. In an essay titled "The Christian Faith and the Economic Life of Liberal Society," Niebuhr wrote the following words:

It was the real achievement of classical economic liberalism to gain recognition of the doctrine that the system of mutual services that constitute the life of economic society could best be maintained by relying on "self-interest" of men rather than on their "benevolence" or on moral suasion, and by freeing economic activities from irrelevant and often unduly restrictive political controls. It released the "initiative" of men to exploit every possible opportunity for gain and thus to increase the resources of the whole of society, at first through the exploitation of commercial opportunities and subsequently through the endless development of technical and industrial power. (433)

Niebuhr didn't flinch when dealing with the hardest sayings of Scripture that castigate the rich and powerful who exploit the poor. For example, a book of his titled *The Nature and Destiny of Man* cites the Old Testament prophet Amos (4:12; 6:4; and 8:4), who judges those "which oppress the poor, which crush the needy," and those who "lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock," who "swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail" (1:223). Niebuhr comments that the guilt of pride and injustice in the financially privileged is greater than that of the less privileged.

How might one reconcile these two seemingly contradictory aspects of Niebuhr's writings? We think that

Niebuhr, a realist and astute student of the Bible, history, and human experience, appreciated the cultural/scientific gulf between Bible times and our own.

Most ancient cultures were relatively content with the status quo. It made sense to view the poor as always with us because there was no practical way that life could be otherwise. The way to deal with the poor was simple: give them alms. A person belonged to one's family, community, tribe, and nation by mere fact of birth; Novak speaks of "primordial belonging."

Although individual initiative is the focus of market capitalism, the productive individual must be a part of various functional, value-embedded communities. "In this scheme," says Novak, "the individual is not atomic. Although the individual is an originating source of insight and choice, the fulfillment of the individual lies in a beloved community," he asserts. "Any community worthy of such love values the singularity and inviolability of each person. Without true individualism, there is no true community" (356).

Friedman extols the role that trust plays in our market economy. Wall Street couldn't operate without basic human trust; there is a happy coincidence between trust and honesty serving self-interest and the good of all.

If you wanted to summarize the net effect of all these institutions, cultural norms, business practices, and legal systems, it can be reduced to one word: trust. They create and inspire a high level of trust—and a high level of trust is the most important feature any open society can possess. Trust in many ways, is the product of all the ingredients in America's secret sauce. (320)

In human development from the Renaissance through the Enlightenment, careful thought was given to many aspects of life that had remained largely unchanged for millennia—means of book production, knowledge of the human body, views of the universe, and Adam Smith's careful examination of how material well-being can be systematically increased by nation states for the good of all.

We suggest that the realistic Christian, following Niebuhr's lead, can see our democratic capitalism for what it is: a system that is pragmatic about human self-interest and how it can be molded for world betterment.

Continued on page 63...

My Share:

Living on One Six-Billionth | BY MARGARET CHRISTIAN; PHOTOGRAPHY BY SURAYUTH SINGHNAK

Regardless of how much is harvested, manufactured, bought, and used—regardless of the monetary value we assign to the goods and services available on Earth—we only have one Earth, powered by the energy of one sun.

Growing up, my five siblings and I were very interested in resource allocation. Gifts, school clothes, slices of dessert, time with grandparents—no resource was too mundane or nebulous to be compared. I was the only one of six who didn't need braces, for instance, and I'm still unconvinced that my share of the orthodontics budget was legitimately assigned to having my wisdom teeth taken out. To our "It's not fair!" our father had an all-purpose, invariably good-humored response: "Of course it's not. I'm not trying to be fair; I just want to be equally unfair to everybody."

I've since realized that, as an educated middle-class American, I have more than my fair share. But the old passion for equitable distribution bubbled to the surface again on September 11, 2005.

My husband, Ed, and I had just put our daughter, a sophomore in college, on a flight for Geneva. The French Language Institute at Collonges had designated September 12 "Arrival Day," dictating that American students start their trans-Atlantic flight on the fourth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. So during the two-hour drive from Newark, New Jersey, to our home in Pennsylvania, I floated various conversational distractions.

"I'm thinking of a new book idea," I said to my husband, who was driving. "How about going around the world, seeing how people live in each country, and compare how families live in various countries on their exact share?"

"What do you mean, 'their exact share'? Share of what?" he countered.

"Well, food, water, wealth, resources—whatever there is on Earth, right now. Given that there are six or so billion people on Earth, you could calculate equal portions to come up with your share—everyone's exact share."

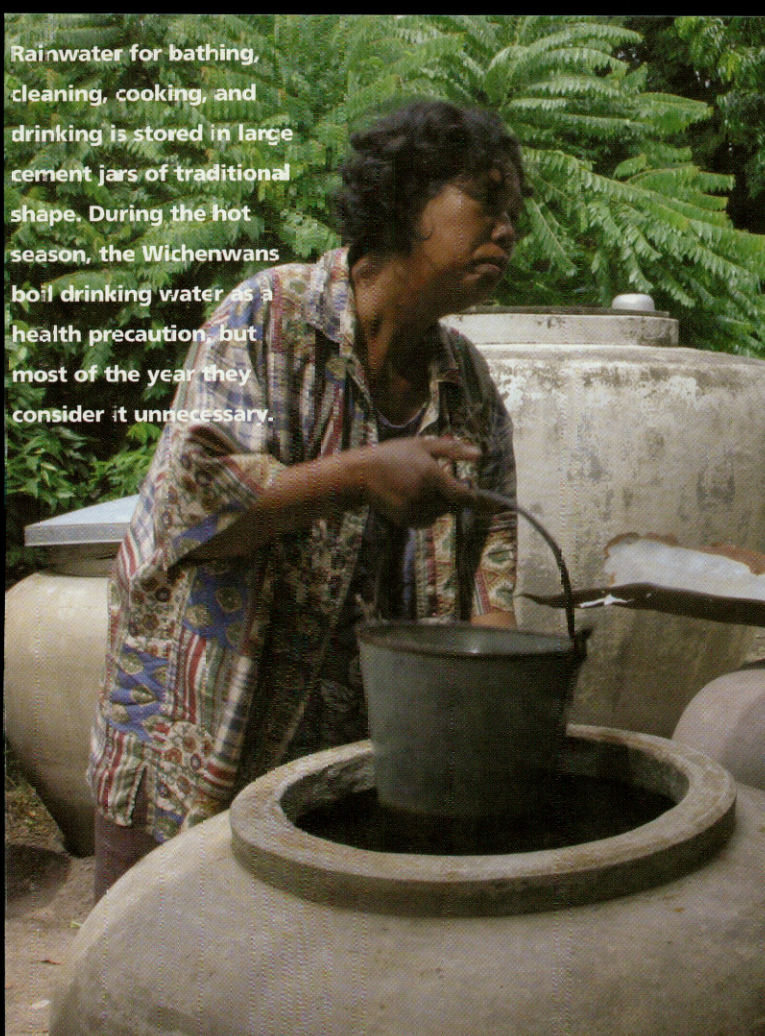
Between Ed's challenges and my brainstorming, the drive passed without much anxiety. Mary landed safely and had a wonderful year in France, while I discussed the question "What's my share?" with reference librarians, economists, engineers, geographers, and environmental scientists at Penn State and elsewhere. I read outside my field of English literature, sometimes making my freshman composition students read along with me. I've learned two ways to calculate my share: international dollars and biologically productive acres. Economically, one share is 9,489 dollars per year. Ecologically, it is 4.5 acres.¹

International Dollars and Purchasing Power Parity

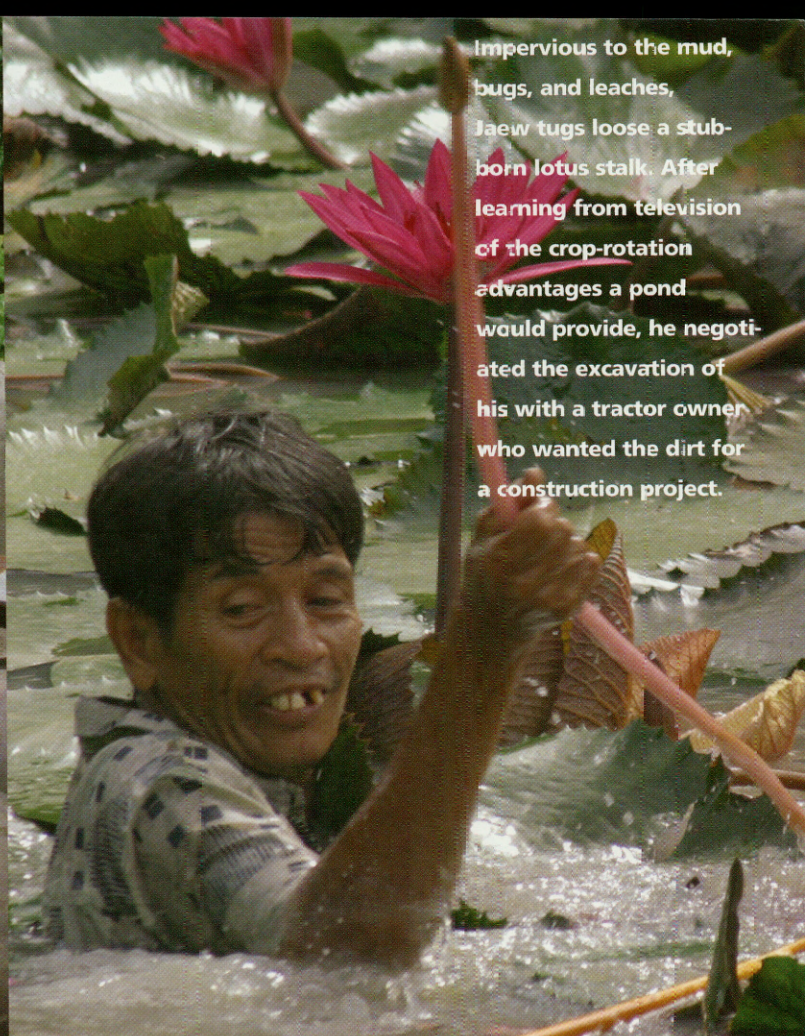
Governments around the world survey their populations and compile reports of economic activity. The questions asked differ from country to country, and the information gathered varies in accuracy. But anyone with access to the Internet can easily get an idea of how much money there is—or at least how much purchasing power.

The World Bank compiles GNI, or Gross National Income, from countries around the world. (GNI, rather than GDP, or Gross Domestic Product, is now the standard measurement because it includes the net flow of income from abroad.) These figures are available in two

Rainwater for bathing, cleaning, cooking, and drinking is stored in large cement jars of traditional shape. During the hot season, the Wichenwans boil drinking water as a health precaution, but most of the year they consider it unnecessary.



Impervious to the mud, bugs, and leaches, Jaew tugs loose a stubborn lotus stalk. After learning from television of the crop-rotation advantages a pond would provide, he negotiated the excavation of his with a tractor owner who wanted the dirt for a construction project.



Pisit, a voice-dubber for the largest independent Thai television network, marks a script to highlight the portions he will read.



Suri chats animatedly in her home. Neighbors drop by to share some neighborhood gossip, or just to pass the time of day.



different versions: Atlas calculations and PPP. The Atlas method relies on the currency exchange rates, with an adjustment to even out currency fluctuations. The letters PPP stand for "purchasing power parity," an international dollar that has the same purchasing power over GDP as a U.S. dollar has in the United States.²

For example, consider Thailand. In August 2006, I drew on Thai ATMs for 10,000 Baht at a time. The transactions showed up on my bank statements as 269 dollars and change, the number of cents varying from day to day. Thus, at that time, the exchange rate was about thirty-seven Baht to the dollar—the rate used (in an average with historical exchange rates) in the Atlas method of calculating Gross National Income. But that thirty-seven Baht bought more in Thailand than a dollar buys in the United States—about three times as much, in fact.

If an American wants to know, not "What's the exchange rate?" but "How does a Thai person live on a particular income?" the dollar amount can be adjusted (by a factor of about three) to reflect the local cost of goods and services. The PPP calculation makes that adjustment and is thus more helpful in giving a meaningful comparison of lifestyles around the world. (More helpful than an exchange-rate comparison, that is, but still not perfect, since it takes no account of the different buying power of a Baht in Bangkok compared with its buying power in a rural area—just as a dollar anywhere in the United States is still a dollar, though it goes farther in the Midwest than in Alaska.)

The difference between purchasing power and the exchange rate is one reason why economic comparisons between countries must be made with caution. There are other reasons. The information underlying the comparison comes from household surveys—that is, comes from individuals answering questions like "What is your household income?" and "What does your household spend each month?" Some of these individuals may not understand the question or may not know the answer—indeed, they may not tell the truth. At the next level, too, the information gleaned from such surveys is only reliable when all survey workers and analysts handle it accurately and in good faith. Finally, survey workers in different countries ask different questions, and data analysts make different assumptions to perform different calculations.

An important difference in method is that some governments collect information about income, whereas others

collect information about consumption. Consumption (how much money is spent on goods and services) reveals more about a family's actual standard of living than income (how much money comes into the household). Home mortgages, vehicle loans, and credit cards enable people to consume more, at least in the short term, than their incomes would allow them to purchase outright. Furthermore, the wealthy are likely to put part of their income into savings and investments once their consumption has reached a satisfactory level. Because the wealthy are likely to spend less than their income, and the less wealthy may borrow to consume beyond theirs, income is more unequal than consumption. Thus comparing, say, the distribution of income in the United States with the distribution of consumption in Thailand gives a somewhat false impression.

Notwithstanding its shortcomings, this flawed comparison still yields valuable information about wealth and poverty in the two countries. And although the data available is far from perfect, it continues to improve in accuracy and comparability. (A byproduct of this improvement is the exasperating likelihood that the 2005 GNI figures quoted last week have disappeared from the World Bank database, superseded by an updated 2005 chart giving slightly different figures.)

One way, then, to answer the question "What's my share?" is with a dollar amount. If each person on Earth had received an equal share of the total wealth generated in 2005, your share would have been 9,489 dollars (if you happened to be living in the United States)—or the equivalent purchasing power elsewhere.

Biologically Productive Acres, Global Carrying Capacity, and Ecological Footprint

But regardless of how much is harvested, manufactured, bought, and used—regardless of the monetary value we assign to the goods and services available on Earth—we only have one Earth, powered by the energy of one sun. That Earth and sun provide the raw materials for all that we eat, drink, build, wear, drive, burn, and otherwise consume. If we are not to be poisoned or otherwise inconvenienced (by species extinctions, a changed climate, or depleted soil fertility), Earth must fully recycle all the wastes we discard, including gasses and chemicals.

Of course, not all corners of the Earth are useful to us in terms of providing raw materials or recycling wastes. Some of the planet is biologically productive for human purposes,

whereas some (desert, for instance) is not. But scientists have measured Earth's forests, cropland, pasture, fishing grounds, and built-up land—the total expanse of the humanly usable Earth. They have evaluated all these terrestrial surfaces in terms of their human “carrying capacity,” as if the planet was a self-contained, self-resupplying spaceship.

So what is one person's share of the biologically productive part of our planet? If the parts of Earth that humans can use had been rationed out in equal shares in 2003, your allotment would have been 4.5 biologically productive acres.³ That is to say, all your food—along with all the lumber for your home, office, and their furniture, and all the wood pulp for the books in your library—would have been grown, and all your carbon emissions would have been absorbed by, the expanse of cropland, grazing land, and forest that would fit into 4.5 acres. (The cropland, forests, and grazing land would have to leave enough room within those 4.5 acres to accommodate your share of the built-up areas and fisheries as well.)

Carbon dioxide emissions, food, and transport account for the bulk of human demands on the environment. But some discrepancies arise when we compare the planet's calculated human carrying capacity with measured and estimated human impact (known as Ecological Footprint, or EF). First, humans are not the only life on Earth, but the calculation of 4.5 acres per person assumes that all bioproductive land serves humans. Some types of land can serve more than one biological purpose, but many uses are mutually exclusive. Ranchers who shoot wild predators and farmers who use herbicides recognize this: the same calf cannot provide a meal for both humans and wolves; the same soil and water cannot support both weeds and a crop. Conservationists likewise remind suburban real estate developers that built-up land replaces habitat for coyotes. People who like wilderness need to make room for their share of a game reserve by using less of their 4.5-acre share for crops and CO₂ sequestration.

Four and one-half acres doesn't leave much room for a dump, either. Many substances humans use and produce in their various activities rob fisheries, cropland, forests, or grazing land of their biological productivity. Even when we leave aside sensational accidents that directly poison people, leaks from mines, factories, and underground pipelines poison forests, cropland, and other bio-

logically productive acreage. Nonrecyclable wastes reduce Earth's carrying capacity.

Third, current stocks of coal and petroleum are left out of the calculation. This is because, unlike livestock, cropland, and forests, mines and oil fields have no “regenerative capacity”—they do not reproduce the commodity we value or accommodate another crop after harvest. In this model, current stocks of fossil fuel are not counted, but once they're gone, that's it. Your hypothetical 4.5-acre share of Earth does not include an oil well.

Fossil fuels figure into the Ecological Footprint calculation in terms of the carbon dioxide they produce when burned, however. Oceans and forests absorb CO₂ and other gasses, but the extent of forest acreage required to absorb the carbon emissions of a typical American already exceeds 4.5 acres. This gives rise to the most serious discrepancy: not just the typical American, but also the average human lives on more than 4.5 acres. The combined human EF exceeds Earth's carrying capacity, and carbon emissions from energy use are largely responsible for this “overshoot.”

More than 6.4 billion people currently live on Earth, in defiance of a calculation that decreed that, at the average human rate of eating, drinking, driving, and so on, the planet could only “carry” 5.1 billion in 2003.⁴ What are the additional 1.3 billion people living on? Are we to think of them as spaceship passengers without seats or rations?

Let's look at the problem another way. The “carrying capacity” model tells us our world needs to be bigger by almost a biologically productive acre per person to accommodate the humans already present and the human activity demonstrably underway. That is to say, the average per capita human footprint in 2003 was more than 5.4 acres. How do Earth's inhabitants live on more than the cropland, wetlands, and grazing land, on more than the forests and oceans we actually have?

Environmental scientists think we are accommodating those additional passengers (creating the illusion of more seats and rations, if you will) by cannibalizing our spaceship. They point to agricultural practices like irrigation, which makes cropland more productive in the short term but can cause erosion, reducing the amount of cropland available in the future. In many regions, irrigation is responsible for falling water



Mealtime at the Wichenwan's.



Loading the flatbed-equipped tricycle for market.



The Wichenwan's home.

tables. Irrigation as currently practiced can also dissolve and distribute salts that would otherwise have remained below root level, an effect called salinization that reduces cropland's fertility. (Salinization is largely responsible for transforming the cropland of Mesopotamia's Fertile Crescent into less biologically productive grazing land and unproductive salt flats.) Pesticide use (which increases crop yields but degrades wetlands) also boosts food supplies in the short term while shrinking the spaceship.

The discrepancy between human carrying capacity, or what the model says is available, and what humans actually use is even more understandable when we consider that Earth's forests and oceans no longer absorb all the CO₂ emitted by cars and other machinery. Increasing amounts stay in the atmosphere, trapping heat from the sun, raising Earth's temperature, and contributing to the changes underway in Earth's climate.

Imperfect Models

Admittedly, "carrying capacity" and EF are concepts that need to be applied with caution, just as "purchasing power parity" is an imperfect statistical tool. Purchasing

power parity offers an approximate term of monetary comparison, a way to adjust for the differences in purchasing power in various economies. It is based on actual prices of actual commodities as a proportion of actual GNI, but it is generalized and extrapolated beyond those prices, commodities, and locations for the sake of giving a general idea of how far money goes and how people live in unfamiliar places. The PPP figure will not give a proportionate conversion for every purchase; for instance, a bicycle may cost more relative to GNI in Thailand than it does in the United States. But PPP is still useful. You understand more with it than without it.

Similarly, "carrying capacity" and Ecological Footprint are dimensions of a model based on measurements of crop yields, fossil fuel consumption, and other observable categories on the national level. As these values are translated to the individual level or applied to specific activities, there will be inaccuracies and imprecisions, just as there are in working out what Thai lifestyle is comparable to how an American could live in the United States on 9,489 dollars. But even given the impreci-



The Klinsuwan home.



Mealtime at the Klinsuwan's.



The Klinsuwan's living room.

sions and inaccuracies, the answer EF offers to the question "What's my share?" is still worth considering.

Living on One Six-Billionth

Beyond economics and environmental sustainability, "What's my share?" is a human question. I wanted to create a book with photographs and interviews that featured actual families from around the world and gave a sense of how they lived on their share. I fixed on some artificial parameters: thirty-six families from eighteen or nineteen countries across six continents, one family to represent a typical or traditional way of life for each country, perhaps with an income or consumption level close to the national household median, whereas another family would represent the lifestyle available in that country on something close to the per capita global income of 9,489 dollars (or its equivalent buying power). Each family's Ecological Footprint would be analyzed as well.

I developed a scratch list of countries to be profiled, aiming for a variety of income levels from each region or continent, as listed in Table 1.

Table 1

2005 GNI, PPP and 2003 Per Capita EF in Selected Countries

Continent and Country	2005 GNI, PPP (dollars)	2003 Per Capita EF (acres)
NORTH AMERICA	U.S.A.	41,950
	Haiti	1,840
SOUTH AMERICA	Chile	11,470
	Colombia	7,420
	Bolivia	2,740
EUROPE	Finland	31,170
	Spain	25,820
	Russia	10,640
AFRICA	Botswana	10,250
	Egypt	4,440
	Kenya	1,170
	Burundi	640
ASIA	Japan	31,410
	Iran	8,050
	Thailand	8,440
	India	3,460
OCEANIA	Australia	30,610
	Indonesia	3,720
	P.N.G.	2,370

Sources: 2005 GNI, PPP: World Bank, "GNI Per Capita 2005, Atlas Method and PPP," World Development Indicators Database, May 1, 2007. Available at <<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/GNIPC.pdf>>, accessed May 8, 2007. 2003 Per Capita EF: World Wildlife Federation, Zoological Society of London, and Global Footprint Network, *Living Planet Report 2006* (Cambridge, Eng.: Banson, 2006).

Though the project was taking shape, two problems remained. How would I pay for my trips around the world, and how would I find the families to profile?

After several grant applications to large nonprofits met with discouraging responses, I decided to waive the financial question for now. I could get enough money from Penn State (by teaching summer school and by competing for a small grant from the International Programs office) for a first trip to one exotic locale, and then write a "sample chapter" that might appeal to either major grantors or deep-pocketed publishers.

To find world families of the income niches I had in mind, my husband suggested I seek help from ADRA, which has projects in most of the countries on my draft list. Accordingly, I approached Tereza Byrne, ADRA International's bureau chief for marketing and development. Byrne shared my excitement about the project and suggested Thailand as a picturesque and friendly setting for a "starter" trip. She connected me with Greg Young, director of ADRA-Thailand.

Getting to Thailand

Young, an energetic and practical Australian now at ADRA world headquarters in Maryland, asked a number of concrete questions that helped me move the project from lofty meditation to gritty reality. He scouted families of the income levels I needed, detailed his office staff to facilitate my lodging and in-country transportation, and recommended a guide and translator.

My obligations as a Penn State faculty member were on a collision course with ADRA's mission, however. As a faculty member in the Department of English, most of my prior publications had advanced arguments about dead white males. I was unfamiliar with "human subjects" research—Shakespeare and his age-mates being entitled to no special ethical considerations. With a ticket for travel to Bangkok on August 16, I finally contacted Penn State's Office of Research Protections in late July.

The initial phone meeting was a rude awakening to social science research protocols. Though no risks are associated with talking to an English teacher about one's daily life, I had to develop safeguards against any perceived coercion to participate in the study and plan for how I would "report to the appropriate [Thai] agencies any concerns for a child's well-being."

These two concerns precluded ADRA's involvement. If

ADRA assisted with recruitment, it would be easy for individuals to construe participation in my project as a condition of ADRA's help. Also, important ADRA-Thailand programs seek to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of children. "Concerns for a child's well-being" are, to say the least, realistic in communities needing such programs, but alerting the authorities to a specific family's situation might harm people ADRA could have helped. The agency withdrew from the project and requested that I not contact the families they had found for me.

Fortunately, the guide/translator Young had recommended was not an ADRA employee and could still work with me. Warunsiri Manaviboon, known as Pink (most Thais use nicknames for all but the most formal occasions), was game to publicize my project and put interested possible participants in touch with me. Since almost 70 percent of Thais live in rural areas and almost half the labor force works in agriculture, I hoped to find a farming family to represent a "traditional" or "typical" Thai way of life.⁵ Moreover, the gap between Bangkok residents' incomes and those of the rural population is wide, so I was open to observing a rural family with an income well below the national per capita average.⁶ To prospect for "representative" rural families, Pink returned to a rural area where she had negotiated lodging for Peace Corps trainees a year before.

Thai Share: A Traditional Way of Life

Boonsang Wichenwan (52 years) and her husband, Jaew (51), live in a village of about 100 families in a rural district of Uthai Thani province, 219 kilometers from Bangkok.⁷ Their property comprises a rice field, a pond, and a garden, where they grow almost all their own food. Selling produce in the provincial capital, four kilometers away, nets them about 3,000 Baht each month, with the buying power of about 240 international dollars.⁸

Boonsang's parents raised their own rice and vegetables on the family land and sold palm sugar as street vendors in town. Introduced via family contacts at around age thirty, Jaew and Boonsang made a traditional arranged marriage. Boonsang, responsible as the younger daughter for caring for her aging parents, brought her husband into her family home, where they have lived, first with Boonsang's parents and their own daughters, and now, with the parents gone and their older daughter studying agriculture at a provincial university, with fifteen-year-old Kwanjit.

Though the Wichenwan family has a significantly lower-than-average income for Thailand and lives on only 11 percent of the 2005 global average, their lifestyle is representative of rural tradition in many ways. The lower economic status of the family coincides with an Ecological Footprint of 2.5 acres each, an acre less than the Thai average and a sustainable level of consumption that, if emulated worldwide, would allow humans to coexist with other species.

A "World Average" Thai Family

It proved very difficult to develop a relationship with a "world average" family in Bangkok. Several individuals found the compensation offered participants to be no incentive for allowing "some group of people to come watch them like a reality TV show," as Pink reported to me. When a family agreed to assist me because Pink had done a brief internship with the husband a few years before, I was relieved enough to be less than persnickety about their matching a specific economic profile. They reported a monthly household income of 86,000 Baht, which ranks the seven members of the household at about the eighty-eighth percentile of the Thai income spectrum, a per capita income about 134 percent of the 2005 global average—a little high, but still quite close.⁹

Pisit Klinsuwan (57 years) and his wife, Suri Chanthanat (61), live in a home they built thirty years ago in a Bangkok neighborhood dotted with temples and crisscrossed by canals. Thanks to remittances from a daughter who moved to San Francisco four years ago, Suri owns ten rental homes in the neighborhood. Even more important to their prosperity is Pisit's career as a voice-over artist with Thailand's largest independent television station. The household now includes Pisit and Suri, one of their four grown children, three grandchildren, and an unrelated five-year-old boy Suri was babysitting when his parents abandoned him.

The Klinsuwans, with seven people at home, have a household income almost thirty times that of the three Wichenwans, or about twelve times as much money per person. It's obvious to a visitor what some of that extra money buys: the car, city real estate, home appliances, and electronics; Pisit's business wardrobe and restaurant lunches; Suri's presence at home throughout the day to oversee the household; and twice-yearly vacations for the extended family at the beach. But the Wichenwans' motorbikes,

electric fans, refrigerator, and color television seem comparable to the Klinsuwans', and the families share medical and educational systems that reflect a choice by the state to equalize opportunity across the economic spectrum.¹⁰

Perhaps the most important quality the two families share is their social outlook: they embrace the conveniences and technologies of modern life, but describe themselves as contented with their current economic and material status. The Wichenwans and Klinsuwans both identified other family members as their most important source of pleasure and their highest priority in terms of investing for the future.

On to Pennsylvania

As the journal goes to press, I'm querying publishers and agents, seeking funding, and recruiting American participants for a second sample chapter (I hope to find them here in southeastern Pennsylvania). Assuming all goes well, I will spend the 2008–9 academic year traveling and writing. But even if the project has reached its zenith in this issue of *Spectrum*, I feel satisfied and challenged now that I have a better idea of the size of my share—and those of my 6.4 billion siblings. ■



Margaret R. Christian is associate professor of English at Penn State, Lehigh Valley, Fogelsville, Penn.

Notes and References

1. I'd like to thank Mahmoud Kaboudan, professor of economics at the University of Redlands; Stam Zervanos, professor of biology at Penn State Berks; and Rachel Controneo, communications officer at the Global Footprint Network for discussing the concepts with me and for making valuable suggestions in their review of this article.
2. World Bank, "PPP GDP 2005," World Development Indicators Database, April 23, 2007. Available online at <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/RESources/GDP_PPP.pdf>, accessed May 7, 2007.
3. Note that these theoretical acres are dispersed across the globe: a few square feet of Africa or South America for your share of a coffee plantation, for instance. This information and the specifics in the two graphs come from Global Footprint Network, *National Footprint Accounts: 2006 Academic Edition EXTRA*, (Oakland, Calif.: Global Footprint Network, 2006), an electronic file.
4. World Wildlife Federation, Zoological Society of London, and Global Foot-



Boonsang Wichenwan.

Members of the extended Klinsuwan family.



print Network, *Living Planet Report 2006* (Cambridge, Eng.: Banson, 2006).

5. From Thailand's "Population and Housing Census 2000" and National Statistical Office. Available online at <http://www.unescap.org/esid/psis/population/database/thailanddata/thailandfacts1.htm#Population>, <http://globaledege.msu.edu/ibrd/CountryStats.asp?CountryID=175&RegionID=3>, and http://web.nso.go.th/eng/en/indicators/labor_e.htm.

6. United Nations, "Thailand," in *National Economies Encyclopedia, Encyclopedia of the Nations*, 2007. Available online at <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/economies/Asia-and-the-Pacific/Thailand-POVERTY-AND-WEALTH.html>. Accessed June 20, 2007.

7. The province as a whole has 304,100 people; the district has about 55,000 people (the center of the town of Uthai Thani, with 17,510 people, is five kilometers away). United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, "North Thailand: Uthai Thani," in *Population and Social Integration Section: Population and Reproductive Health Compendium*. Available online at <http://www.unescap.org/esid/psis/population/database/thailanddata/north/uthaithani.htm#Key>.

8. According to the United Nations, 23 percent of Thai spending is for food, so the Wichenwans' income, less of which goes to pay for food, goes farther than that of a nonfarming family. United Nations, "Thailand."

9. World Bank, "Distribution of Income or Consumption," *2006 World Development Indicators* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2006), 76-79.

10. Slightly more than one-quarter (27.5 percent) of total Thai government expenditures in 2004 went to support education, according to UNESCO Institute for Statistics, "Table 19: Finance Indicators by ISCED level." Available online at <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=219>. Generalizing from a U.S. Department of Education report that a "total taxpayer investment" of 909 billion dollars was spent on all levels of education in 2004 (available online at <http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/fed/10facts/index.html>), a Forbes.com comparison of 2004 government spending as 36.4 percent of GDP, or 4.25 billion dollars, and a World Bank figure of 11,667,515,000,000 (11.7 trillion) dollars for U.S. GDP in 2004 (available online at <http://www.bea.gov/bea/dn/gdplev.xls>), about 21 percent of U.S. government expenditures went for education that year.

In terms of the health system, 61.6 percent of all the money spent on medical care and treatment in Thailand in 2003 was "public," with only 0.3 percent from international organizations or foreign NGOs. By comparison, in the United States, 44.6 percent of total health expenditure is listed as "public" during the same year. Statistics from the World Health Organization, *World Health Report 2006*, "Annex Table 2: Selected Indicators of Health Expenditure Ratios, 1999-2003." Available online at http://www.who.int/whr/2006/annex/06_annex2_en.pdf.

Calculate your own ecological footprint online at

<http://www.earthday.net/footprint/index.asp>.

A Commentary on Wealth and Poverty in the Bible from the *Africa Bible Commentary*

BY STEPHEN ADEI

Our attitude to money, wealth and poverty reveals our eternal values, as well as our character and relationship to both God and others. It can be a root cause of all kinds of evil (1 Tim 6:10), leading us to break the first and last commandments (Exod 20:3–17). Examples of those who have been consumed by love of money and wealth include Achan (Josh 7), Gehazi (2 Kgs 5:20–27), Ananias and his wife Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11), Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:18–23), the rich fool (Luke 12:13–21) and the rich ruler (Luke 18:18–30). Yet money can be a source of blessing, and the Scriptures also include examples of rich and holy men (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job and King Solomon).

Poverty is a recurring theme in the Bible. It is also the experience of many Africans, for half of those in sub-Saharan Africa live on less than US \$1.00 a day. Many are poor because we live in a world where injustice and a skewed economic order mean they lack access to education, land and other means of improving their material conditions (Jas 5:1–6). Nowhere do the Scriptures equate material poverty and piety, and Christians must work to remove the barriers that prevent people from escaping from poverty (Lev 25:38–55; Luke 3:10–14; 18:22; Col 4:1).

The Bible does, however, speak harshly to those who are poor because they have not used their God-given mind, strength and resources. Laziness or slothfulness are condemned (Prov 6:6–11; 10:4–5; 14:23; 20:4,13; 2 Thess 3:10). Those who work hard, learn a trade, improve their knowledge and skills, are entrepreneurial, learn to save and invest small amounts, and who are faithful to God are often able to improve their material conditions (Prov 21:5).

The Bible's guidance on wealth may be summarized as follows:

- Our life is to be God-centred not thing-centred (Matt 6:25–34).
- The basis of all wealth is God's bounty. Everything belongs to him (Ps 24:1) and he gives the ability to produce wealth (Deut 8:10–18). We are stewards (or managers) of the talents and possessions God gives us and are accountable to him for how we use them (Luke 16:1–15; 19:11–27).
- We should keep an eternal perspective. We are to build treasures in heaven "for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt 6:19–21).
- There are biblically approved ways to earn money and create wealth. Gambling, stealing, exploiting our workers and the poor, as well as all dishonest business deals are condemned by God (Lev 19:11–13, 35;

Prov 1:11–19; 10:2; 11:18; 13:11; 15:27; 21:5; 22:22–23; 28:8). Money is to be acquired through diligent work (Prov 14:23) inheritance (Prov 13:22), wise, non-speculative savings (Prov 6:6–11; 20:21) and investment (Luke 19:11–27).

- The way we spend our money is important. We are not to be like the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32) and spend our wealth on wild living and drunkenness. Instead we are to use it to meet the needs of our family and to leave a reasonable inheritance to our children (1 Tim 5:8; Prov 13:22). We are also to use it to honour and worship God (Lev 22:18–23; Lev 27:30; Prov 3:9), and to do so consistently, generously and joyfully (2 Cor 8, 9). Those who are rich are commanded "to be generous and willing to share" (1 Tim 6:17–19). We are also to pay legitimate taxes to the state (Rom 13:6–7).

In sum, wealth in the hands of the righteous is a powerful tool to serve God and others. Money as a purpose for living is not worth it even if one gains the whole world, for this is done at the cost of one's eternal soul (Matt 16:26). ■

Source: Reprinted with permission from Tokunboh Adeyemo, ed., *Africa Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2006), 762.

Innovation is about being increasingly alive to God in the church and in the world. Innovation is about the creation of new knowledge, and the use of that knowledge to successfully bring ideas into value creating outcomes in renewing church, school, and healthcare organizations for the 21st century. Join us September 30-October 2 for the third annual National Conference on Innovation --- a multidisciplinary conference with keynote speakers, general sessions, in-depth interactions, and the showcasing of best the practices in innovations. For updates, agenda, speakers and registration information, visit: www.sdapartnersininnovation.org.

INNOVATION

Main Sessions:

- *Global Trends in Christianity and How They Impact the West
- *Opportunities and challenges for Western Christianity
- *Recovering Christianity's Missionary DNA
- *Jewish Renewal Movements: Lessons and Applications
- *21st Century Adventism: A Case for Renewal
- *Innovation: Going Beyond Structures and Programs

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INNOVATION
September 30 - October 2
Hilton at Easton
Columbus, Ohio

Philip Jenkins
Distinguished Professor
of History & Religious Studies
Pennsylvania State University

Doug Pagitt
Pastor, Solomon's Porch
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Jon Paulien
Renowned Adventist Theologian
Incoming Dean of the
Faculty of Religion
Loma Linda University

Rabbi Marcia Prager
Dean of ALEPH: Alliance
for Jewish Renewal Rabbinic
Program, Philadelphia, PA



The Sweet Problem of Inclusiveness:

Finding Our God in the Other | BY SAMIR SELMANOVIC

ILLUSTRATION BY MAX SEABAUGH



Chomina, chief of the Algonquin tribe, lost all his men protecting an expedition of the French colonizers of Quebec as they traveled fifteen hundred miles to the Huron Mission. A cruel winter, a brutal attack, capture, and torture by another Native American tribe resulted in a mortal wound for the chief. 🖐 Sensing the end, **Father Laforgue**, Jesuit priest and leader of the expedition, said to the chief, "When I die, Chomina, I will go to paradise. Let me baptize you now so you will go there too." 🖐 "Why would I want to go to your paradise?" Chomina responded. "My people, my woman, and my boy would not be there." 🖐 The next day, as the chief lay dying in the snow, Father Laforgue made one more attempt: "Chomina! My God loves you. If you accept his love, he will admit you to paradise!" 🖐 "Leave, my friend, leave," Chomina murmured as he died.¹

For many of us, the problem was not immediately apparent. Discovering the God of the Bible felt like puzzle pieces of all that is truthful and beautiful coming together. A flat world turned 3D, the grayscale turned to color, as if someone had turned on the light. We were bathed in light. In time our eyes adjusted and we became aware of shadows.

It has always been that way. Every generation of those who decide to follow Christ learns that there are Bible texts to be reinterpreted, theologies to be reconstructed, faith communities to be reimagined. Those of us who are a part of the conversation about the emerging church believe such transformations are God's doing. And for our generation, the shadow is not to be seen in the flaws of Christian people or the dysfunction of Christian institutions, as flawed and imperfect as they may be. Our shadow is the idea of Christianity itself.

Our religion has become a Christ management system.

We have experienced great joy in God's embrace of humanity through Jesus Christ. It has filled our lives with light. But Christianity's idea that other religions cannot be God's carriers of grace and truth casts a large shadow over our Christian experience. Does grace, the central teaching of Christianity, permeate all of reality, or is it something that is alive only for those who possess the New Testament and the Christian tradition? Is the revelation that we have received through Jesus Christ an expression of what is everywhere at all times, or has the Christ Event emptied most of the world and time of saving grace and deposited it in one religion,

Republished with the permission of Baker Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, from Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones, eds., *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2007), 190–99.

namely ours? And more practically, how can we have a genuine two-way conversation with non-Christians about our experience of God if we believe that God withholds his revelation from everyone but Christians?

Because we believe that there are no shadows in Christ, we want nothing less than to reinterpret the Bible, reconstruct the theology, and reimagine the church to match the character of God that we as followers of Christ have come to know.

When I put myself in the moccasins of chief Chomi-

scendent sweep over our existence and it seems to me that humanity has been squandering this gift. One just needs to look at what we are doing to each other. But in the midst of the mess, I see grace of a new beginning all around me. And within me, I often fail to respond to it. I participate in the madness instead. Whenever in my inner life I do turn to this grace to look for a second chance, I am always granted one. I think I want to spend the rest of my life being a channel of that same goodness to others." This view embodies the doctrine of creation, sin, salva-



Because we believe there are no shadows in Christ, we want nothing less than to reinterpret the Bible, reconstruct the theology, and reimagine the church to match the character of God that we as followers of Christ have come to know.

na, I feel God's Spirit asking me, "What would you choose, eternal life without your loved ones or eternal death with them?" Chomina knew his answer. He would rather die than live without his beloved. Moved by the Holy Spirit, people like Chomina reject the idea of allegiance to the name of Christ and, instead, want to be like him and thus accept him at a deeper level. This choice between accepting the name of Christ and being Christlike has been placed before millions of people in human history and today.

One does not need to believe in God before living in God's presence. God is present whether we believe in him or not.² And people do respond to him. Mark, a non-Christian friend of mine from New York, says that for him "to become a part of Christianity would be a moral step backwards." Yet, he would say things like this to me: "To live is to be given a gift. I believe that there is a tran-

sition, and new life. That's Christ, embedded in the life of Mark, present in substance rather than in name.

The Chominas and the Marks around us leave us wondering whether Christ can be more than Christianity. Or even other than Christianity. Can it be that the teachings of the gospel are embedded and can be found in reality itself rather than being exclusively isolated in sacred texts and our interpretations of these texts? If the answer is yes, can it be that they are embedded in other stories, other peoples' histories, and even other religions?

Idolatry of Christianity

Questions that seek to differentiate Christ and Christianity seem less and less absurd than they once did. Commonly defined, Christianity is "a monotheistic religion centered on Jesus of Nazareth, and on his life and

teachings as presented in the New Testament.³ It is worth being reminded that Christ never proclaimed, "Christianity is here. Join it." But Christ did insist, "The kingdom of God is here. Enter it."

The emerging church movement has come to believe that the ultimate context of the spiritual aspirations of a follower of Jesus Christ is not Christianity but rather the kingdom of God. This realization has many implications, and the one standing above all is the fact that, like every other religion, Christianity is a non-god, and every non-god can be an idol.

Acts of greed, hatred, and neglect of people aligned with Christianity that have littered the world throughout history are a result of their loving something else more than God. Sin is always a result of this displacement of one's heart. Someone or something else, a non-god, becomes the focus of one's love. An idol is generated when something grabs the functional trust of an individual or a social group. It happens when, in a relationship with God, something other than God becomes a non-negotiable value.

Has the supremacy of Christianity become our non-negotiable value? Every sin is a result of some faith commitment to things, people, or forces other than God, which are ultimately commitments to self. Religion, any religion, is not exempt from these dynamics of human experience.⁴

Scripture frequently describes other religions as idolatrous. Although worshiping idols would often result in violence, suffering, and degradation, these were only the symptoms of the larger issue God had with idol worshipers—their attempt to manage God. It was the sovereignty of God that was in question.

In the Old Testament, God repeatedly rebuked his followers for treating him as a manageable idol, someone they could actually avoid through the means of religion. Christians can conceive of things like money, sex, and power being idols. But the Christian religion itself being an idol? Certainly, if we proclaim that Christianity is immune from

idolatry, then we have come to believe that, finally, God has become "contained" by Christianity.⁵ We do believe that God is best defined by the historical revelation in Jesus Christ, but to believe that God is limited to it would be an attempt to manage God. If one holds that Christ is confined to Christianity, one has chosen a god that is not sovereign. Søren Kierkegaard argued that the moment one decides to become a Christian, one is liable to idolatry.⁶

Religion, whether in its traditional or personal forms, is the way we approach the power and mystery behind life, and since all humans have to approach the power and mystery behind life, we are all religious. This includes skeptics who say, "I don't believe in God. I don't have religion." That's a religious statement, a statement of dogma. Religion is a way we justify our existence, an explanation of why we matter. It is our "immortality system."⁷ So for us to survive, for our meanings to stay intact, we have to dismantle or discredit the meanings that are contradictory to ours. No wonder that for many of us considering the possibility that Christianity could itself be an idol in the biblical sense of the word is a thought too traumatic to entertain.

Is our religion the only one that understands the true meaning of life? Or does God place his truth in others too? Well, God decides, and not us. The gospel is not *our* gospel, but the gospel of the kingdom of God, and what belongs to the kingdom of God cannot be hijacked by Christianity. God is sovereign, like the wind. He blows wherever he chooses.

Taking a Backseat

Christianity cannot regain credibility or recapture human imagination until it learns to exist for the sake of something greater than itself. People are rightfully afraid of any religion that will not accept its place at the feet of the Holy Mystery. If the Christian God is not larger than Christianity, then Christianity is simply not to be trusted.

Our religion has become a Christ management system

In the eyes of an increasing number of people seeking God, Christian or not, Christianity has developed an inordinate sense of self-importance. In contrast, there is potency and beauty to a religion that is able to place the good of the world above its own survival.

Paradoxically, Christianity professes to trust the most peculiar deity of all religions, the God who has incarnated, become a servant, and died for the sake of something more important to him than his own life.

The future of Christianity depends on its willingness to

possibility of a relationship with the God of the Bible, along with the Hebrews of the Old Testament who were without a knowledge of Jesus Christ—the person. The question begs to be asked: would God who gives enough revelation for people to be judged but not enough revelation to be saved be a God worth worshipping? Never!

God enlightens every human ever born and opens a way for a relationship with him. The Bible says that if a person talks like an angel, but acts like a devil, his actions mean more than his words. His deeds trump his



The future of Christianity depends on its willingness to serve something larger than itself. If Christianity is to be resurrected into a new life, it must aspire to be like the God it professes and take a backseat to something more dear than its own life.

serve something larger than itself. If Christianity is to be resurrected into a new life, it must aspire to be like the God it professes and take a backseat to something more dear than its own life. And what can be better than Christianity? The kingdom of God, of course. This kingdom supersedes Christianity in scope, depth, and expression. This is true regardless of whether we talk about “Christless” or “Christfull” Christianity. Even in its best form, Christian religion is still an entity in the human realm.

When we say that only Christ saves, Christ represents something larger than the person we Christians have come to know. He is all and in all. And Christ being “the only way” is not a statement of exclusion but inclusion, an expression of what is universal.⁸ If a relationship with a specific person, namely Christ, is the whole substance of a relationship with the God of the Bible, then the vast majority of people in world history are excluded from the

faith. In the same way, one can deny a faith that is evident in one’s life.⁹ My friend Mark from New York serves Jesus in substance rather than in words, living out a wordless faith in God.¹⁰ This is only to say that there are no indications in the Bible that this dynamic applies only to individuals and not to groups. Religions live under the spiritual laws of the kingdom of God. Talking about other religions, theologian Miroslav Volf says, “God may employ their religious convictions and practices, or God may work apart from those convictions and practices.... That’s partly how the giving and forgiving God works in Christians too, often using but sometimes circumventing their convictions and practices.”¹¹ To put it in different terms, there is no salvation outside of Christ, but there is salvation outside of Christianity.

For the last two thousand years, Christianity has granted itself a special status among religions. An emerg-

ing generation of Christians is simply saying, "No more special treatment. In the Scripture God has established a criteria of truth, and it has to do with the fruits of a gracious life" (see Matt. 7:15–23; John 15:5–8; 17:6–26). This is unnerving for many of us who have based our identity on a notion of possessing the truth in an abstract form. But God's table is welcoming to all who seek, and if any religion is to win, may it be the one that produces people who are the most loving, the most humble, the most Christlike. Whatever the meaning of "salvation" and "judgment," we Christians are going to be saved by grace, like everyone else, and judged by our works, like everyone else.¹²

Becoming Master Learners

Wisdom is so kind and wise
that wherever you may look
you can learn something about God.

Why would not the omnipresent teach that way?

St. Catherine of Siena

For most critics of such open Christianity, the problem with inclusiveness is that it allows for truth to be found in other religions. To emerging Christians, that problem is sweet. In fact, instead of being a problem, it is a reason to celebrate. We don't want to just tolerate the godliness of "the other" as if we regret the possibility. The godliness of non-Christians is not an anomaly in our theology. Instead of adding it as an appendix to our statement of beliefs, we want to move it closer to the center and celebrate it as the heavens certainly celebrate it. The gospel has taught us to rejoice in goodness we can find in others.

Moreover, if non-Christians can know our God, then we want to benefit from their contribution to our faith. Because God is sovereign, present anywhere he wants to be, our attitude of merely accepting the possibility of the salvation and godliness of others without an attitude of learning from them is simply lazy, a sin born of pride. Besides rejoicing, to celebrate means to

learn about our God from others.

In fact we have been doing it every week in our churches. We use sermon illustrations from all aspects of life under the sun to illuminate the gospel of the kingdom of God, but we stop short of using and crediting such illustrations when they are part of someone else's religion, such as a life of Muhammad or a Zen story. Why? Is it because we are afraid we might find our God there like we find him everywhere else? Christ, the apostle John, and the apostle Paul were not afraid. They used the terms, concepts, and sources of the religions of the time to convey the meaning of the gospel. They could do it, and we cannot, simply because Jesus, John, and Paul were not about Christianity but about the kingdom of God.

This explains another phenomenon. If we believe that the ultimate method of spreading the Good News is through loving people, why do non-Christians so rarely feel loved by Christians? My thesis is that love accepts what others have to offer and we think non-Christians don't have much of anything to add to what is most valuable to us, namely the gospel. Although we accept their virtues with admiration and their brokenness with compassion, we do not seriously expect them to add to what matters most to us—our knowledge of and our relationship with God. We withhold from them the possibility of being our teachers. Without an attitude of learning, we have not entered a sacred "I/Thou" relationship. And that's why they hold back. The world is withholding from us what we are withholding from the world.

We want to provide for them what they lack, care for their needs, and teach them what they need to know. The position of giver affords us a sense of control. But true love means knowing how to take. You love your grandma when you take her recipe; you love strangers when you need their company; you love your parents when you need their advice; you love your children when you need their forgiveness; you love your friends when you hear their stories. We don't truly love someone until we take what they need to give

**There is no
salvation
outside
of Christ,
but there is
salvation
outside of
Christianity.**

us. Although we often think of God as self-satisfied, needing nothing, God does honor us by needing us. This need of God for us is symbolized in the Sabbath commandment that has no other purpose than creating a space in time when God can enjoy our full attention, when a lover can simply be with his beloved. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel explained once how the greatest human need is to become a need. God needs us to participate with him in healing the world.¹³

We too love others not only by giving but by taking. I

allow for a real possibility that we have something to learn from them and be changed by what we learn. It is fear and not the strength of our convictions that stops us from learning about our God from other religions.

Identity Worries

If we accept the possibility that other religions have redeeming stories or truths in them, then what is going to become of our identity? Would this kind of reckless humility drive us into one big stew pot of religions



Humility is the ultimate expression of courage. In the context of the kingdom of God....Humility is to be our identity. When we open ourselves to be taught by "the other," we don't become less the followers of Christ but more so.

was a Muslim, then an atheist, then a Christian. I became a follower of Christ because another Christian found the footsteps of God in my story and my religion of the time. He loved me by learning about God from my story. Before teaching me, my friend took what I had to offer.

The followers of God are not called to be the master teachers of God, but to be master learners. Pursued correctly, this attitude does not relativize what we believe. In fact it radicalizes what we believe because it establishes God as Sovereign one, one who "shines in all that's fair."¹⁴ Humble learning and strong convictions are not mutually exclusive because humility is not a sign of weakness but of strength. Genuine regard for what others can add to our faith does not compromise our Christian commitment but rather expresses it. That's why evangelism is to be a two-way street. If we expect others to learn from us and be changed, we must first

where the meat of the gospel can get lost among the potatoes and carrots of other religions?

Humility is the most powerful force in the kingdom of God. One needs only picture God kneeling before his creation in the person of Jesus washing our feet (see John 13). Through the humility that is at the heart of the incarnation and atonement, God evangelizes us (see Phil. 2:4–11). That's why humility holds such promise for the future of Christianity. It does not exclude evangelism but vastly improves its prospects.¹⁵

Humility is the ultimate expression of courage. In the context of the kingdom of God, a sheer display of power is simply too weak to be effective. We have created a false tension between keeping our Christian identity intact and approaching the world in humility. Humility is to be our identity. When we open ourselves to be taught by "the other," we don't become less the

followers of Christ but more so.

We have come to the place where we have accepted the depravity of individual human beings and the necessity of repentance for every person, but the moment we group ourselves into Christian denominations, or the Christian religion at large, the doctrine of depravity suddenly vanishes from our consciousness. In fact, behaving like we hold all the truth about God and doing away with healthy self-doubt is the ultimate form of conformity—because every religion has a superiority complex—and thus a loss of a true identity. In the world as a whole, no group or religion is repenting of anything much today. That's why being "chief repenters" would not be a loss of identity; it would be a first step in becoming "chief learners" and the renewal of our identity as a Christian community. We are to be those who convert first, those who lay down their arms and submit to Sovereign God, those who put nothing before the kingdom of God, even if it is our beloved religion.

My friend Mark from New York asked me more than once, "Why do you Christians want Christianity to win all the time? You don't seem to know how to live in a world where you aren't in charge." This made me think about the history of Christianity and its aspirations to be in charge. Looking back nostalgically to the times when Christianity was an empire, we tirelessly monitor our power, our growth, our numbers, our financial success, our political strength. Maybe the time has come for Christianity to lose.

To lose one's life is to gain it. It would not be the first time that God has broken out of religion, which carries his message, and made something new. If God found it good for his followers to break out of the confines of a religion two millennia ago, why should we expect God not to do such a thing in our time? Maybe Christianity should be thinned out and broken up, spent like Christ who gave himself for this world.

If we seek first the kingdom of God, then maybe even our beloved religion, saved from ourselves, will be added to us. ■

Notes and References

1. This scene is from the 1991 movie *Black Robe*. Father Laforgue (Lothair Bluteau) and chief Chomina (August Schellenberg) are characters from the novel by Brian Moore that was adapted for the movie. The story is historical.
2. See the chapter "Postlude: A Conversation with a Skeptic" in Miroslav Volf, *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).
3. See www.wikipedia.org, s.v. "Christianity."
4. Pastor Timothy Keller from Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City has developed this idea of religion as "self-salvation" and conversion as a "trust transfer" better than anyone I know.
5. The notion that Christianity cannot possibly be a candidate for idolatry has been recently expressed by D. A. Carson, whose argument hangs on an assumption that sins of Christianity are always a departure from true Christianity (*Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, 201–202). However, evil done under the banner of Christianity cannot be dismissed by declaring, "That was not true Christianity." Christianity is what it is. To dismiss Christianity's sins by appealing to a Platonic idea of some "true Christianity" is both dishonest to other religions and unhelpful to Christians. We simply never had and will never have pure, true Christianity.
6. I paraphrase Kierkegaard here. His books brought me into Christian faith and I recommend *Either/Or* (New York: Penguin/Putnam, 1992) and *Fear and Trembling/Repetition: Kierkegaard's Writings*, vol. 6 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1983). He manages to criticize Christianity in a way that compels the reader to become a Christian.
7. Ernest Becker, a Pulitzer Prize-winning author for his book *Denial of Death*, writes about this in his last book *Escape from Evil* (New York: Free Press, 1975). He says: "Each person nourishes his immortality in the ideology of the self-perpetuation to which he gives his allegiance; this gives his life the only abiding significance it can have. No wonder men go into rage over fine points of belief: if your adversary wins the argument about truth, you die. Your immortality system has been shown to be fallible, your life becomes fallible" (64).
8. Inclusivism, a view about the destiny of the unevangelized, holds that all people have an opportunity to be saved by responding in faith to God based on the revelation they have. In contrast to restrictivism on one side and universalism on the other, inclusivism affirms the particularity and finality of salvation only in Christ but denies that knowledge of his work is necessary for salvation. Inclusivists believe that the work of

In the world as a whole, no group or religion is repenting of anything much today.

www.spectrummagazine.org

- Subscribe to SPECTRUM
- Buy AF books
- Read commentary on the weekly Sabbath School lesson
- Read back issues of SPECTRUM
- Read SPECTRUM Blog
- Read the weekly featured column
- Register for the free AF email newsletter
- Request a complimentary copy of SPECTRUM
- Participate in the SPECTRUM/AF message board

SPECTRUM

Order CD recordings

of the 2006 Adventist Forum Conference in Coeur d'Alene, ID.

Neuroscience, Human Nature, and Redemption — T. Joe Willey

Science and the Human Soul — Nancy Murphy

With All Your Adventist Body, Soul, and Mind — Alden Thompson

Please send \$20 to:

ADVENTIST FORUM

P. O. Box 619047

Roseville, CA 95661

Or fax your Visa and MasterCard information to:

(916) 791-4938

Jesus is ontologically (in substance) necessary for salvation but not epistemologically (in name) necessary. Among adherents to the inclusivist view are Justin Martyr, Zwingli, John Wesley, C. S. Lewis, Wolfhart Pannenberg, and Clark Pinnock. In the twentieth century, of all traditions, Roman Catholic theology had most decisively embraced inclusivism, with Karl Rahner's "anonymous Christianity" as the most celebrated presentation of it. Presently, among evangelicals, inclusivism is beginning to challenge restrictivism for supremacy. For key biblical texts and a solid treatment of all three views see John Sanders, *No Other Name* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992).

9. Examples of this include Jesus's parable of judgment in Matthew 25:31–46 and the report about Peter's encounter with Cornelius in Acts 10:23–48.

10. For numerous examples of these dynamics from the Bible, history, and the writings of authors like C. S. Lewis, see Sanders, *No Other Name*, chapter 7.

11. Volf, *Free of Charge*, 223.

12. I discovered this obvious teaching of the New Testament while reading Brian McLaren's *The Last Word and the Word after That* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005). One needs only to look at any discussion of judgment or works in the New Testament to see this truth.

13. For a condensed discussion of this concept, see chapter 23 in Abraham Heschel's *Between God and Man* (New York: Free Press, 1997).

14. This phrase from the Christian hymn "This Is My Father's World" is often used to express the teaching of "common grace," grace that God gives to sustain all the world, differentiated from grace that saves. In contrast, inclusivism (see n. 8) argues that all revelation is saving revelation and that any grace God extends to us is not just to sustain the world, but to save it.

15. Buddhism and Alcoholics Anonymous have already proved the point.

Samir Selmanovic grew up in a European Muslim family and served as a Seventh-day Adventist pastor and community organizer in Manhattan during 9/11 and its aftermath. A pastor, writer, teacher, advocate, and international speaker, Samir serves on the Coordinating Group for Emergent Village, on the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches, and on the leadership team of Re-church Network. He holds graduate degrees in religion, psychology, and education from Andrews University. Samir, his wife, Vesna, and their daughters, Ena and Leta, practice hospitality, advocate for Africa, admire Ena's writing, laugh at Leta's jokes, and cheer for Samir at marathon races. Contact Samir at www.samirselmanovic.com.

BOOK REVIEW

Essays on New Ideas about What It Means to Be Christian | A BOOK REVIEW BY RYAN BELL

Emergent Village has always been about friendship, and if the recent book, *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope*, is any indication, this friendship is growing and bearing fruit in remarkable ways.

Although this book is the first volume of a publishing partnership between Emergent Village (also known as, simply, Emergent) and Baker Books, Emergent is far from new. This friendship has been evolving since the mid-1990s and is only now hitting its stride. Emergent describes itself as “a growing, generative friendship among missional Christians seeking to love our world in the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”

Through the years, this loose and amorphous network of Christians has defied categorization, but it seems fair to say that the glue that holds this broad friendship together is a shared vision for a theology and practice of Christian life that both blesses the world and gives witness to God’s kingdom, now present and yet to come. I have also observed with others that Emergent is a kind of “third place” for post-Evangelicals and post-Liberals to fellowship and engage in serious conversation about how Christian faith is “emerging” in our increasingly post-Christian world.¹

This book is comprised of twenty-five essays, each by a different author, and edited by Doug Pagitt, pastor of Solomon’s Porch in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Tony Jones, national coordinator for Emergent Village. Both men have authored numerous other books and have been instrumental in leading this conversation since its inception.

Although the book is organized around the theme of hope, the reader quickly realizes that its diverse topics and perspectives defy categorization. At times, I struggled to understand how individual essays related to section themes. Part 5: Hopeful Activism is the most thematically consistent section, whereas Part 1: People of Hope is the most general.

Each essay reflects deep theological thought, feet-on-

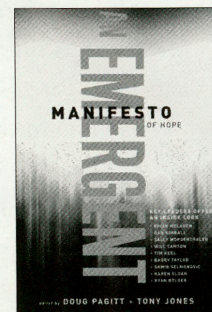
the-ground experience of living in God’s kingdom, and unwavering commitment to the gospel of the kingdom and the way this good news takes shape in diverse places.

One pleasant surprise for readers of *Spectrum* is Chapter 16, “The Sweet Problem of Inclusiveness: Finding Our God in the Other.” The author of this chapter, Samir Selmanovic, is both a Seventh-day Adventist pastor and a long-time participant and contributor to the Emergent conversation. I first met him when we were both pastors on the East Coast and the content of his essay is true of my experience of him as a person and as a leader.²

With his characteristic insight, Samir wonders “whether Christ can be more than Christianity,” and whether Christianity has become an idol—something greater than God.³ He reminds us that “Christ never proclaimed, ‘Christianity is here. Join it.’ But Christ did insist, ‘The kingdom of God is here. Enter it.’”⁴ In short, Samir, like all the authors in this volume, calls the church to its better self rather than railing against a faith and a church that has somehow let them down.

Although the topics range from postmodern parenting to sexual ethics, and from leadership to ecclesiology, each essay, in its own way, faithfully reappropriates our various traditions for a vastly different world.

Another thing to say about this book, which is based on my own personal experience with Emergent Village and personal acquaintance with a number of its authors from years of meeting together at conferences and other gatherings, is that it is, above all, honest and



Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones, eds., **An Emergent Manifesto of Hope** (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2007).

real. There are no airs, no pretense, in these essays. These authors have no burden to make claims for things that are, as yet, unknown.

But if you listen carefully to this choir of authors there is a melody that emerges amidst the harmony—a deep conviction that God is at work, here and now, in our world in surprising ways. In the words of Mark Scandrette, “We are recovering from a legacy in which religious experience and devotion have been significantly separated from the domain of everyday life...Embracing the reality of the kingdom means that everything matters and that all of life is spiritual.”⁵

If there is one organizing principle to this book, it is the word *hope*. Some people have been critical of the word *manifesto* in the title. I like the evocative nature of these two words colliding: “Manifesto of Hope.” It rings in my ears and enlivens my imagination, like “Waging Peace” or “Loving Babylon.”

It is hard to speak into the “noise” of contemporary culture. Hope is a value that has difficulty getting traction in a world full of pain, suffering, and injustice. It sounds like little more than wishful thinking. This book

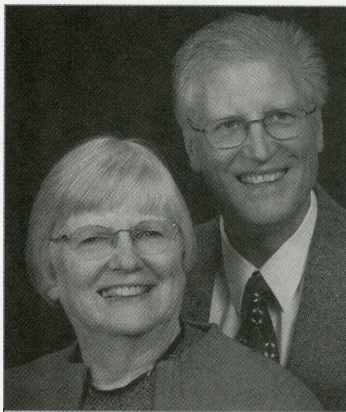
launches a volley into this fray—but it doesn’t incite violence. To the contrary, it is a manifest of hope, inciting goodness, mercy, and justice in communities all over the United States and around the world..

This is vintage Emergent Village—creative, forward looking, messy, exploratory, intelligent, passionate, and missional. ■

Notes and References

1. For more information about Emergent Village, visit its Web site at <www.emergentvillage.com>.
2. Samir blogs at <www.faithhousemanhattan.org>. At his site, you can find both audio and video of him speaking on the same topic, “Finding Our God in the Other.”
3. Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones, eds., *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2007), 192.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, 27.

Ryan Bell makes his home with his wife and two daughters in Hollywood, California, and is senior pastor of the Hollywood Seventh-day Adventist Church. He writes a blog called *Intersections*, at <www.ryanjbell.net>.



Pastor Roy &
Bennie Gee

AU '66

Auburn Gospel
Fellowship

“A SAFE PLACE
FOR GOD’S GRACE”
10:45 A.M. Sabbath

TWO CONGREGATIONS ONE HOLY CHURCH



Pastor Rick &
Nancy Kuykendall

AU '80

First Congregational
Church of Auburn

“STRIVING TO BE
AN ENLIGHTENED
CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY”
10:00 A.M. Sunday

710 AUBURN RAVINE ROAD, AUBURN, CA 95603 • 530.885.9087

“How good and how pleasant it is to live together in unity!”

Watching the Mundane, Teaching the Profound

Bell produces compelling postmodern video | BY RAEWYN HANKINS

In the *Nooma* series, Rob Bell invites us to stop, look at life differently, experience God's presence, and be transformed. The *Nooma* DVDs are particularly compelling for postmodern, young adult professionals, and this one is no exception. In *Breathe*, Bell positions himself underground in a train station, watching the mundane rushing back and forth, to teach a profound truth about the reality of God's presence, demonstrated by the ordinary action of breathing. The *Nooma* style, use of meta-stories, theology, and simple truths, as seen in *Breathe*, is revolutionizing our communication of the gospel, especially to young adults.

Bell's style utilizes this popular media and enters this generation's mind-set to speak in a way that attracts and engages. Today, we think in icons. We spend our days seeing the world through the lens of the camera. Much as Jesus used parables, Bell begins with stories—spoken or seen—and experiences we all hold in common. For a generation oriented toward sound bites, Bell is able to present a thought-provoking message in only ten minutes.

Instead of using a preacher's voice and speaking from behind an elevated pulpit, Bell is conversational, interacting one-on-one, friend-to-friend. His tone is relaxing, reflective. There is no distance between him and listeners. His authenticity comes through as he shares his frustrations, such as dialing telephone numbers that won't connect.

Before we look at the theology taught through Bell's words, let's explore what *Breathe* teaches behind the words. The meta-stories that happen all around him in the subway station accentuate his message. Beyond the busy-ness of the station, people look tired, depressed, and alone. One man sleeps, unaware of his breathing. Another couple put in their earpieces, separately disappearing into their own worlds. Another person hides

behind a newspaper. We see a couple's hands intertwined, yet they do not face each other. A tired girl brings her Starbucks up to her pale face as Bell comments, "We're fragile... Life is fragile."

As he sits underground in the subway station, Bell is talking about being *adamab*, "dirt-man," who will go back to the dirt. In this land, we watch the trains go back and forth, moving fast in opposite directions.

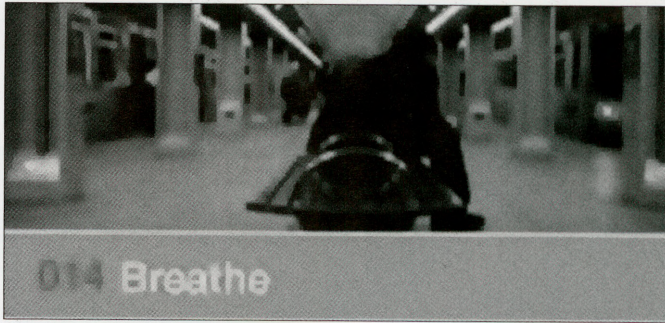
Some people know where they're going; some don't; some really don't care. We see the mundane existence of complete strangers—rushing, tired, and alone in their own worlds—yet each breathing God's breath of life.

Theologically, Bell speaks about God in a language that postmoderns understand. He doesn't use "in-house" talk. For example, instead of quoting texts, he says, "One Scripture says..." or "the ancient Hebrews thought..." Instead of presenting a complex, abstract explanation of "sanctification," Bell speaks about how the Spirit allows us to breathe out life's toxins.

Beyond the terms he chooses, he explains truth through connection, asking contemplative questions, rather than offering solutions: "Who actually thinks about their breathing?" "Are we standing on holy ground, passing burning bushes on the left and the right, and because we're moving too fast, we miss them?" "When a baby is born, what's the first thing they do?" "The last thing we do, is it taking our last breath?" "Or, is it that, when we can no longer say the name of God, we die?" Bell's questions ring in one's head a lot longer than the ten-minute *Nooma*.



Rob Bell, **Nooma: Breathe** (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2006).



Instead of cut-and-dried points, Bell teaches through a profound paradox. We come from the dust; we return to the dust; yet we breathe the Creator's divine breath. "There is paradox at the heart of what it means to be a human being." Referencing Psalms 8, Bell says, "We're these sacred, divine dirt-clods. Your life is but a breath, yet you were made by the Creator of everything." We are extremely fragile, yet we are temples of the living God.

In response to Bell's teaching, I have one theological caution: It's too easy to assume that we ourselves are divine and already have eternal life living within us without a chosen connection to the living God. I think this may stem from the common teaching that we are created with immortal souls (contrary to Hebrew thought). At the same time, whether or not we have chosen life, we have been given the gift of life, demonstrated by our breathing in and out in this moment. Too often, we miss the fact that we have already been given the gift of life (breath of life). Perhaps what we still need now is the sustenance of that life (breath of eternal life).

Bell teaches profound truth in very simple ways, in the midst of our mundane, everyday existence. His teaching corresponds with my own reality. Today as I breathe, I will think about being honest with what's going on inside of me, the toxins I need to breath out. I will also be aware that I'm breathing God's name, and praying for the Nooma to come in with each breath. I will be conscious that the same divine breath that flows through me also flows through the person next to me.

Now I share Bell's appeal: "May you come to see that God is here, right now with us all the time, may you come to see that the ground you are standing on is holy. As you slow down, may you become aware that it is in YHVH that we live, and we move, and we breathe." ■

Raewyn Hankins is a Master's of Divinity student in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University.

CONVERSATIONS

Continued from page 11

ment pastors from mainline and evangelical churches. It has been well-received by other churches.

Also, we have been building a friendly relationship with the Japan Evangelical Association. In a recent meeting with the president of JEA, he promised to help us break the barrier between evangelical churches and the SDA Church and wrote his recommendation for the second printed edition of our book on Adventism that I just mentioned. Of course, because of our past, it has been a gradual process, but we can see increasing acceptance of our church by other churches.

Our publishing house is also benefiting financially. Our colporteurs are aging, and sales through them have been dropping every year. Broadening the market has been timely for the future of our publishing work.

NAM: *Have there been any negative reactions, such as some members being concerned about associating with "Sunday churches"?*

MIYAMOTO: There are always people not in the majority who think what we are doing is just selling out our distinctiveness. However, we can keep our SDA identity clear, yet also be generous toward other Christians who have different convictions. After all, there is no perfect church or denomination and we have to see ourselves as well as others through the eyes of the radical grace of Jesus Christ. In fact, one of our distinctive beliefs—like the Sabbath—has to be a sign of both the radical inclusiveness and the grace of Christ. We want to present our church as characterized by these beautiful traits of Jesus.

NAM: *How can those outside Japan support you for what you're seeking to do?*

MIYAMOTO: I'd like to request your support through prayer so that a revival will take place in Japan in the near future. I would be happy to make contact with those who are trying to implement Willow Creek's principles and style in the Adventist setting and find out how they are doing in other countries. ■

Source: Reprinted with permission from Progressive Adventism <<http://progressiveadventism.org>>.

FLAT NEW WORLD

Continued from page 39

Most Americans are not in radical disagreement with the way that their country handles free enterprise so that almost all citizens can benefit from the national economy. But with true globalization, they need to think about forms of global democracy. The John Birch Society advocates that the United States abandon the United Nations. However, logic suggests the need to strengthen greatly the UN for the good of global capitalism.

Smith saw that for the good of free enterprise, there needed to be certain government regulations—and, of course, in his day the only corporations he envisioned were strictly national. But today we have truly multinational corporations. For example, one could originate in Europe, choose to put its headquarters in New York City, and carry out production in a developing country. Therefore, we need to devise international democratic frameworks—if globalization is to thrive morally. Even, no *especially*, dispossessed people of the world need to feel that they are treated fairly and given voice in the shaping of policies that might affect them.

"Eventually, we should be working toward the creation of international legal frameworks and international courts," writes Stiglitz, "as necessary for the smooth functioning of the global economy as federal courts and national laws are for national economies" (207).

A global ethic is necessary to hold a global economy accountable. A nascent effort took place in 1993 with the meeting of the Council of the Parliament of the World's Religions, according to Hans Küng and Karl-Joseph Kuschel in their book, *A Global Ethic*. More than six thousand people from various religions met in Chicago to work out a Declaration Toward a Global Ethic. The council approved statements affirming: (1) collective responsibility for a better world; (2) commit-

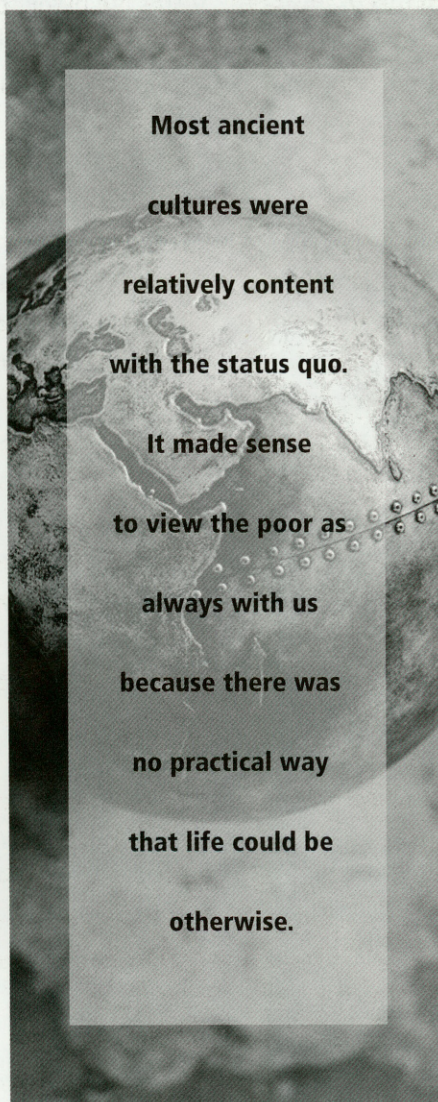
ment to nonviolence and respect for life; (3) dedication to furthering a just economic order; and (4) agreement on the equality of all human beings (18–34).

Aside from national regulations, some multinationals are proactively setting their own ethical standards for worldwide business practices. For example, in late 2004, Hewlett-Packard, Dell, and IBM formed an alliance to work with key members of their worldwide supply chains to enact a unified code of socially responsible manufacturing practices. The new Electronics Industry Code of Conduct includes rules on usage of wastewater, hazardous materials, pollutants; the reporting of industrial injuries; and bans on child labor, bribes, embezzlement, and extortion. Not surprisingly, Friedman claims that these corporations see value in their concern for values:

"Customers care," says Debra Dunn, HP's vice president for global citizenship, and European customers lead the way in caring. And human rights groups and NGOs, who are gaining increasing global influence as trust in corporations declines, are basically saying, "You guys have the power here. You are global companies, you can set expectations that will influence environmental practices and human rights practices in emerging countries." (383)

In calling for a realistic Christian approach to a fair globalization, we must not be naïve, and here we learn, again, from Tom Friedman. In his *The World Is Flat*, he distinguishes between top-down (wholesale) reforms and bottom-up (retail) reforms in the developing world. Reducing tariffs, making loans readily available, enhancing educational opportunities are examples of wholesale reform, and Friedman agrees with Stiglitz that worldwide poverty is as widespread as ever—despite wholesale reforms.

What is missing is widespread retail reform. Friedman contends that "persistent poverty is a practical problem as well as a moral one, and we do ourselves no good to



focus on our moral failings and not the practical shortcomings of the countries and governments involved" (402). He cites the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC), which studied 130 countries to prepare a document titled *Doing Business in 2004*. The researchers, drawing on work by Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto, asked five questions about how easy or difficult it is to (1) start a business in terms of local rules, regulations, and license fees; (2) hire and fire workers; (3) enforce a contract; (4) get credit; and (5) close a business that goes bankrupt or is failing.

Friedman sums up the results of the study: "those countries that make all these things relatively simple and friction-free have undertaken reform retail, and those that have not are stalled in reform wholesale and are not likely to thrive in a flat world" (403). He quotes from the report:

[I]t takes less than six months to go through bankruptcy proceedings in Ireland and Japan, but more than ten years in Brazil and India. It costs less than 1 percent of the value of the estate to resolve insolvency in Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Singapore—and nearly half the estate value in Chad, Panama, Macedonia, Venezuela, Serbia and Montenegro, and Sierra Leone. (405)

Biblical insights into the need for the rich to aid the poor are more relevant than ever, given contemporary knowledge. However, like so much of the Bible, its message must be taken seriously without the mistake of taking it literally. Simply giving to the poor is insufficient. An examination is necessary to discover any personal complicity or detrimental behavior that may be furthering local or global injustices. Just as today's Christian must take into account modern thought about human rights when thinking about the biblically condoned institution of slavery, we must also take into account modern economics when advocating the best way to address world poverty. Moreover, precisely because of the biblical pronouncements about rich and poor, Christians have a strong impetus to join humanists in instituting savvy global reforms to eradicate extreme poverty in our world. ■

Jim Walters is professor of Christian ethics at Loma Linda University, and co-principal investigator in a National Institute of Health Study on the psychosocial and biological manifestations of religion.

David Kim is a doctoral student in the Theology, Ethics, and Culture Program of the Religion Department at Claremont Graduate University.

I Love the Lord, but...

- Have you ever found yourself focusing more on the praise you received from others than on the praise that you should be giving to God?
- Do you find that you would rather trust the people in your world whom you can see than the holy and infinite God of the universe who is somewhere "up there" in heaven?
- Do terms such as "grace" and "mercy" confuse you every time you hear them?

In simple and easy-to-understand language, author **Sylvester Paulasir** (pictured) explores many issues that young Christians often face—including confronting temptation, dealing with issues of pride, establishing real relationships with God and comprehending God's will—and offers practical advice to help along the way.

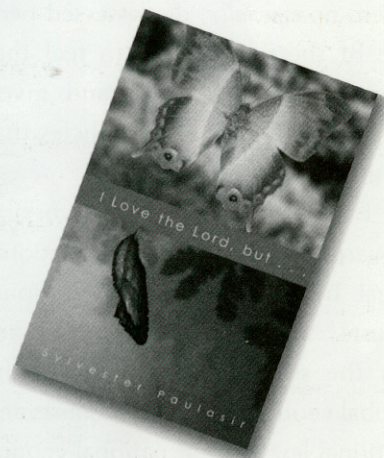


Will you become a super-saint by reading this book? Probably not. But there is a good chance that you'll find that one thing you have been missing in your spiritual journey: Hope.

"Sylvester tells us with refreshing vulnerability about things we sometimes do not dare share with our mirrors."

—Zack Plantak

PhD Professor of Theology, Columbia Union College



For more information, visit
IlovetheLordbut.com
 800-326-4674

SPECTRUM ■ advisory council

Adventst Forums

Board Members

Lee Blount

Woodbury, Minnesota
Lee.Blount@morganstan-
ley.com

Ellen Brodersen

Harrisonburg, Virginia
broderer@clark-bradshaw.com

Debbi Christensen

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE
Roseville, California
treasurer@spectrum-
magazine.org

Bonnie Dwyer

EX OFFICIO
Granite Bay, California
editor@spectrum-
magazine.org

Gail Rice

Riverside, California
grice@llu.edu

Charles Scriven

BOARD CHAIRMAN
Kettering, Ohio
charles.scriven@kcma.edu

Brent Stanyer

Spokane, Washington
bstanyer@earthlink.net

Chapter Presidents

Adelaide, Australia

Steve Parker

Angwin, California

Greg Schneider

Battle Creek, Michigan

Elaine Haddock
Eric Vetne
Margarita Covarrubias

Berrien Springs, Michigan

Art Robertson

Dayton, Ohio

Robert Smith

Honolulu, Hawaii

David A. Pendleton

Keene, Texas

Robert R. Mendenhall

Loma Linda, California

Bernard Brandstater

New York, New York

Ron Lawson

Orlando, Florida

Ernie Burse

Pacific Northwest

Paul Eun

Pleasant Hill, California

Brantley Johnson

Saint Paul, Minnesota

Gary Blount

San Diego, California

Jim Kaatz

South British Columbia

M. Haluschak

Spokane, Washington

Eric Magi

Sydney, Australia

Burns McLean

Takoma Park, Maryland

Bryan Zeros

Walla Walla, Washington

Helen Zolber

Chapters wishing to
be acknowledged in this
list, please contact:
ADVENTIST FORUMS
(916) 774-1080

July 2006 – July 2007

Bruce and Audrey Anderson

Terry and Jan Anderson*

Len and Nancy Bailey*

Leif K. Bakland

Alita S. Barnes*

Carla Lidner Baum

Ted W. Benedict**

Charles and Bonnie Bensonhaver**

Robert and Georgene Bond

Michael and Shelley Boyson*

Carey D. Bozovich

Joseph and Cynthia Bozovich*

Bernard Brandstater**

Floyd and Mary Brauer**

M. L. S. Brown*

Allan and Mildred Buller

Wilfried M. Busse*

Gerald and Barbara Chipeur*

Ruth Christensen

Glenn E. Coe*

Humberto and Margarita Covarrubias*

Arlyn Drew

Merlyn C. and Rosemary Duerksen

Beth and Elwin Dunn**

James and Mary Dunn**

Kathleen and Robert Dunn

Anders and Debra Engdahl

Linda and Dan Engeberg**

Paul H. Eun**

Michel and Janene Evard**

Donald Fillman

Jere and Shelley Fox

Fred and Cherie Galusha

Konnie and Wilfred Geschke

Daniel Giang

John and Sylvia Griffin

Fritz Guy

Rich and Sherri Hannon

Calvin and Shirley Hartnell

Robert and Dolores Hasse

Dolores and Dennis Herzo**

Edwin and Mariellyn Hill

Aloma and Doug Hughes*

Eve Lou and Richard Hughes**

John and Lee Hughes

Judy and John Jacobson**

Kenneth G. Jahng

Dannette Brandon Johnson

David L. and Minu Johnson

Jim and Averlie Kaatz

Gail Kendall*

Elton and Marga Kerr**

Dorane and William King**

Dolores and Dean Kinsey

Albert and Elizabeth Koppel**

Ed and Bev Krick*

Doreen M. and Irvin N. Kuhn**

Tonya C. Lane

Anita Hilde Lang

Yung and Carmen A. Lau**

Elsa Lind

Rae C. Lindsay**

Felix and Lucille Lorenz**

Leroy and Donna Lowrie*

Ted and Linda Mackett

Eino and Mary Magi**

Eric and Cynthia Magi**

Robert and Marguerite Marsh*

Bruce Martinson

Jim and Becky Matiko*

Donald McAdams*

Juli Miller*

Leonie and Lloyd Miller

Robert and Jacqueline Moncrieff**

Gloria Myers

James and Adele Nelson

Nona and George Nordby

Howard and Judith Pires

Maxine and Thomas Pittman*

Russell L. Potter, II

R. Marina and E. Gary Raines*

Reuben A. Ramkissoon*

R. Craig and Tracy L. Reynolds*

Linden and Lianne Reeves

Gail and Richard Rice

E. Arthur and Debi J. Robertson**

Joan and Carmen Sabaté

Thais and James Sadoyama**

Elmar and Darilee Sakala**

David and Nancy Small

Jaclin Smith

James D. Smith

Brent Stanyer and Helaina Boulieris

Paul and Shelley Stokstad*

Yvonne E. Stratton

Darryl and Debbie Tan

Carlene and Len Taylor**

Betty Thacker

Elaine and Gordon Thompson

Rob and Floris Thomson

Blair and Jan Tikker

Eric and Amabel M. Tsao

Mitchell and Patsy Tyner

John and Nancy Vogt**

Harry Wang*

Jere and Phyllis Webb

Winona Winkler Wendth

Rodney and Barbara Willard**

Joe and Barbara Willey*

John and Carolyn Wilt

Lifetime Recognition:

Contributions of \$20,000 or more.

**Diamond:

Contributions to date of \$10,000 to \$19,999.

*Gold:

Contributions to date of \$5,000 to \$9,999.

Lifetime recognition

Edward C. Allred • Gary and Lee Blount • Bruce and Betty Bran-
son • Ellen H. Brodersen • Debbi and Glenn Christensen •
Molleurus and Dos Couperus • Thomas and Bonnie Dwyer •
Alvin and Verla Kwiram • David and Bronwen Larson • Claudia
and Kenneth Peterson • Robert O. Rausch • Judy and Gordon
M. Rick • Charles Scriven and Rebekah Wang Scriven • Gordon
and Lovina Short • Donald and Mildred Stilson • Gerhard Svrcek-
Seiler • Robin Vandermolten

Corporate gifts and grants

Adventist Health • Coffey Communications, Inc. • Eye Care
Associates • The Orion Charitable Foundation, Inc. • Versacare, Inc.
• Walla Walla General Hospital

Membership dues cover half the annual expenses of AF's activities and publi-
cations. Donations each year from generous contributors fund the other
half. The SPECTRUM ADVISORY COUNCIL is a group of committed SPECTRUM
supporters who contribute at least \$500 per year, as well as business and
professional advice, to ensure the continuation of the journal's open discussion
of significant issues. For more information, contact:

DEBBI CHRISTENSEN ■ ADVENTIST FORUMS

P.O. Box 619047 • Roseville, CA 95661-9047

tel: (916) 774-1080 fax: (916) 791-4938

Honoring Our Literary Forebears

Ada L. Turner (1911–2007), *Executive Editor*, 1970–74



Ada's Life and Work and Influence Live On

as an example of commitment to doing things right, by Fritz Guy

In the nearly forty years that I knew Ada, I do not recall ever hearing her recite the line from Ellen White, "Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for His children."¹ She didn't need to quote it, because her work ethic embodied it, and the rest of us knew it. Some might call it arrogant, and others might call it compulsive, but we intuitively appreciate this commitment. When we need professional care, whether for our cars or for our bodies, we want someone who can *do the job right*.

As editor of academic publications for Loma Linda University for more than two decades, Ada's job was to ensure the quality of printed materials. This meant attending to details of writing style and typographic design. She was, if you please, paid to pick nits, and she did it with diligence. Among her papers was a 1988 essay in *Time* magazine titled "In Praise of the Humble Comma."² This diligence was not always appreciated by harried deans and other university officials, who did not always appreciate her priorities or her expertise.

Ada designed the handsome initial format of *Spectrum, the Journal of the Association of Adventist Forums*. She was present at *Spectrum's* birth in 1969 as an editorial midwife, and she was formally recognized as executive editor for the five years from 1970 through 1974. As her *Spectrum* colleague in those days, I am happy to testify how valuable she was, and how comfortable the editor, Molleurus Couperus, and I were in knowing we would never be embarrassed by anything that passed her expert eye.

Ada insisted that words and type be employed with care and discretion for two purposes—communication and art. Or is art also a kind of communication? The way a paragraph reads, or the way a journal or a printed program appears says something about the organization and people they represent, they re-present. And if the organization and people think of themselves as doing the work of God, the clarity of sentences and the design of pages are all the more important. A religious motivation is not a substitute, but rather a motivation, for literary and visual excellence. ■

Ottilie Stafford (1921–2006),
Consulting Editor



Insomnia Literata

By Tom Webtje in memory of Ottilie Stafford

Impatient if your students sounded dull,
You'd sigh and try another line of thought
Or flash upon a muddle-minded mull
A look of indignation woe-begot.
The theater of life was your stage too,
Not just the Shakespeare class, the actor's part:
The word well chosen, thought's fine-tailored suit,
Made conversation a dramatic art.
Insomniac, your restless, roving mind
Would not slow down to sleep, but racing fed
On mystery or poem, unconfined,
Or mute unthinking torpor of the dead—
Unsentimental truth in plain garb dressed.
Close up the book; it's time to take your rest.

1. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1903), 18.

2. Pico Iyer, "In Praise of the Humble Comma," *Time*, June 13, 1988, 80.