

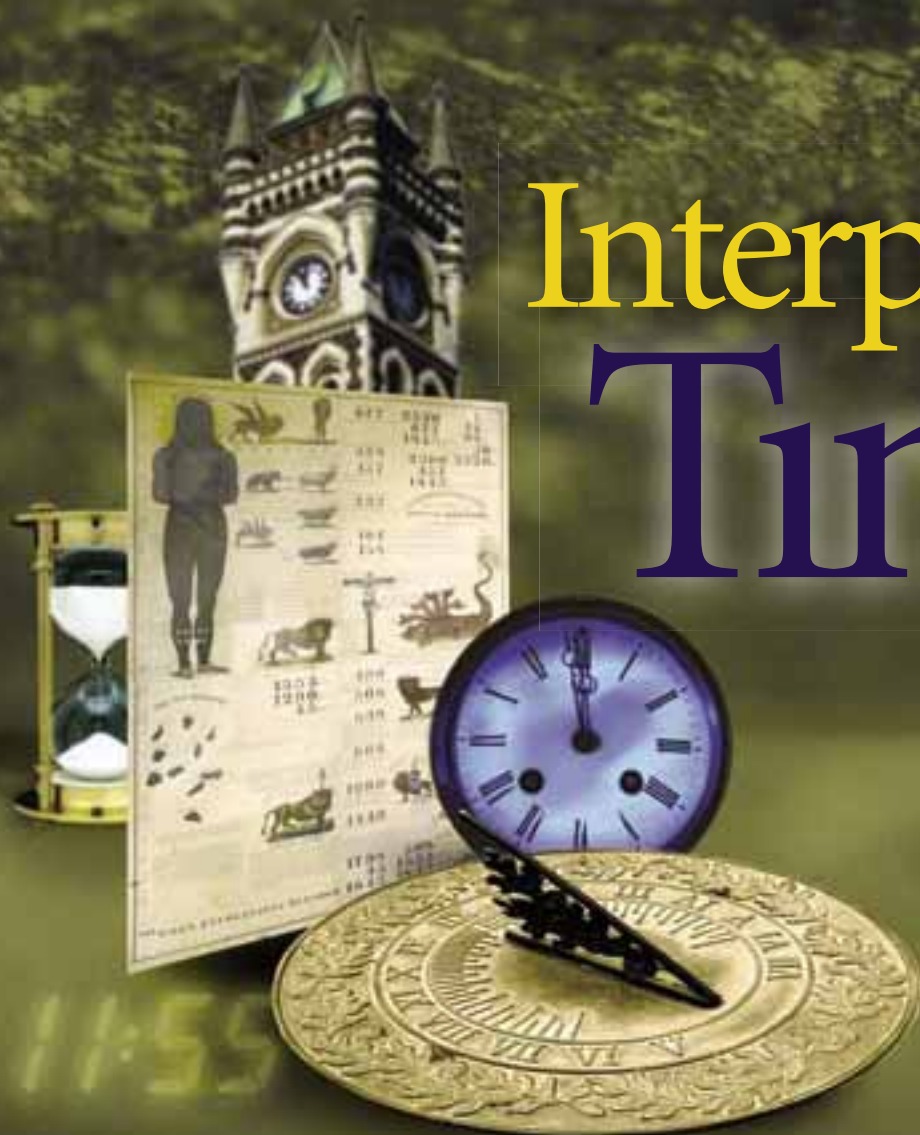
The International Paper for Seventh-day Adventists

April 2009

ADVENTIST WORLD



Interpreting *the* Times



SPECIAL FEATURE

A PLASTIC-POLLUTED PLANET

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ADVENTIST WORLD

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WORLD VIEW

Limited Knowledge, Unlimited Love

Woven into Paul's great hymn to love in 1 Corinthians 13 is a strand of truth we often hurry by in our eagerness to enjoy the apostle's promise that we shall soon see the Lord "face to face." Four times in four verses Paul asserts that what we now know is only "in part"—limited, incomplete, not fully comprehending the great reality of either God's plan or His love.

This isn't merely a humble affirmation of our creatureliness. No sane Christian really doubts that the mortal can scarcely grasp the notion of immortality, nor the finite understand the infinite. Paul's reminders of the incompleteness and the partialness of what we know—about the world, about the church, even about one another—underscore how crucial the habit of "charity," or "love," is for the church in these "in between times."

Because I don't know what it feels like to be a persecuted believer in a totalitarian state, I must ask the Spirit for a love that drives me to my knees to intercede for those whose burdens are truly great and terrible.

Because I don't know what it is like to wonder, as thousands of believers do each day, from where my next meal will come or if I will find shelter before night, I must pray for a willingness to help fellow Adventists displaced by war, by famine, by natural disasters.

Because I don't know what it feels like to be a woman in a male-dominated culture, frequently denied a voice in the life of both home and church, I must pray that my church will listen well when godly women plead for the opportunity to use the gifts given them by the Spirit for the spreading of the gospel.

Because I don't know the bigotry and prejudice still wounding thousands of my fellow believers who sometimes feel excluded by their race, ethnicity, or language, I must pray for a heart to include and empower all who wait for Christ's appearing.

There is so much we do not know—and cannot know—until what is perfect comes. The gospel's answer for our ignorance is a love that humbles us before one another and a watching world.

— BILL KNOTT

WORLD REPORT

In Cuba, First Generation of Adventist Pastors to Earn Master's Degrees

■ The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cuba celebrated yet another milestone with the graduation of 15 of its ministers who were awarded master's degrees in pastoral theology during a special ceremony in January. The degree, granted by the Inter-American Division's Inter-American Adventist Theological Seminary (IATS) through its Cuba site, marks a significant pinnacle for the church on the island, church leaders said.

"This is a victory for the church, a victory for our division," said Jaime



FIRST GRADUATES: Group of 15 pastors who completed a master's degree in pastoral theology through the Inter-American Adventist Theological Seminary site in Cuba. The graduates become the first generation of pastors to obtain a master's degree in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cuba.

JAIME CASTREJON/IAD

WORLD REPORT

Castrejon, president of IATS. “Never before had we graduated at the graduate level in pastoral theology in Cuba, and we are just so delighted that the Lord saw it through for our pastors there.”

It took committed efforts from IATS and IAD administration to support the type of curriculum for graduate level for pastors in the case of Cuba, said Castrejon. “There were some difficult times to get teachers who could travel to the island and not be affected by the situation, but we praise God for having succeeded in securing the necessary teachers to fill the requirements of the curriculum.”

The Adventist theological seminary in Cuba, which received full accreditation from the Adventist Accrediting Association to grant bachelor’s degrees last year, becomes the ninth IATS site to have specially trained pastors with master’s degrees to cater to the growing membership on the island.

“This victory for the church in Cuba means that our Cuban brothers and sisters have up-to-date pastors just like the rest of our territory,” added Castrejon.

“The aim of the board and the division is to provide super pastors for special challenges in the ministry in serving a sophisticated membership as well as ministering in institutions like universities and college churches where there are high numbers of professionals,” Castrejon said.

That aim and commitment is allowing pastors throughout Cuba the opportunity to further their studies and benefit the thousands of church members who worship in 273 churches and congregations on the island.

Already there are 35 pastors enrolled in the master’s degree program at the seminary in Cuba, which began the four-summer-semester program toward the degree. For more information on Inter-America’s theological seminary, visit www.interamerica.org.

—Reported by Libna Stevens, *Inter-American Division*.

ROMANIA: Traveling Bible Inspires Events in 20 Cities

■ The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Romania organized 10 days of Bible-related events recently, hosted in 20 cities and featuring displays of rare Bibles and presentations on the role of the Bible throughout history and in everyday life. The events were part of the Adventist Church’s “Follow the Bible” initiative, which will run through August 2010.

“The main message of the event[s] is that the daily reading of the Bible brings moral healing, gives spiritual power, and improve[s] the quality of life,” said Viorel Dima, Follow the Bible coordinator for Romania.

The initiative, sponsored by the world headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its world divisions, features an oversized Bible written in 66 different languages traveling around the globe to promote Bible study. The Adventist Church in Romania has been actively working since 2007 to foster Bible study in the country through a national ad campaign and reading clubs called *Sola Scriptura*. The clubs have hundreds of attendees and focus on conversation rather than seminar formats.

The Adventist Church in Romania partnered with the Conscience and



COURTESY RUC



the press. The Bible will be touring Europe and northern Africa through March. **Right:** EXAMINE THE WORD: Visitors look at the traveling Bible’s 66 books, each in a different language.

Liberty Association and the Romanian Interconfessional Biblical Society to borrow the hundreds of rare Bibles on display from personal collections, church officials said. Some locations offered visitors free mobile phone downloads of the Bible, including a yearly reading plan.

The Romanian events ran from January 21 to 31 and concluded with the presentation of the traveling Bible and a dedication ceremony for those who committed to daily Bible study, church leaders said.

The traveling Bible toured Europe and northern Africa through March 2009.

—Reported by Aurelian Horja and Adventist News Network Staff.

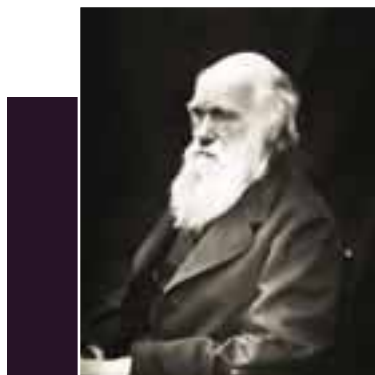
World Church: Darwin Bicentennial Offers Faith-Sharing Opportunity

■ For some Christians, this year's bicentennial celebration of the birth of Charles Darwin honors his contributions to science and education. For others, the anniversary seems a reminder that his theories challenge the biblical account of creation.

The famous British scientist and author of *The Origin of Species*, Darwin is credited with pioneering the theory of evolution through natural selection.

Born February 12, 1809, in Shrewsbury, England, Darwin initially studied theology before taking his famous voyage on the H.M.S. *Beagle*. During the five-year journey, Darwin's observations and data started the train of thought that eventually resulted in *The Origin of Species*.

The concepts of the origin of life that grew out of Darwin's writings suggested that science is at odds



BICENTENNIAL MAN: British scientist Charles Darwin was born in Shrewsbury, England, February 12, 1809. The bicentennial celebration of his birth offers the opportunity for Adventists to witness to their faith in the Bible's creation account.

with religion, said Kwabena Donkor, associate director for the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Biblical Research Institute.

"Sometimes people think evolutionism is all science and creationism is all faith, but there is no such thing," Donkor said. "Evolutionism is not a physical science where you ... observe data and you come up with a hypothesis to explain what you have observed."

In fact, says Donkor, evolutionism is no more a physical science than it is a theological science.

"What you're really involved with is a historical science," Donkor said. "You are conjecturing and making assumptions, hoping that your explanation of the artifact you are looking at might be the right one."

Earl Aagaard, biology professor at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee, United States, also feels the source of contention lies in historical speculation.

"Christians generally, and Adventists in particular, have very little difficulty with the empirical findings of science," Aagaard said. "The disputes between theists and nontheists, as well as among the nontheists, break out in the historical side of things—in archaeology, paleontology, geology, etc.—where the procedure is to collect data and then tell a story to explain it."

The Adventist Church in Britain is airing "Darwin Revisited," a program featuring four scientists discussing their Christian faith and how it relates to science, reason, and the theory of evolution. For show times, visit the Hope Channel UK Web site. The British church Web site also features more information about Christian perspectives on origins.

Ultimately, in the creation versus evolution debate, a Christian must accept that it's not possible to have all the answers, Donkor said.

"I have come to the conclusion that I do not have to be able to explain everything to be a Christian. I feel I'm in a better camp with inspiration than just following human conjectures."

Leonard Brand, a biology professor at Loma Linda University, added that it's not logical to think science can explain every facet of creation.

"God didn't promise us proof, but only adequate evidence to support our faith," Brand said. "That faith can keep us strong until we get to heaven and have the time and opportunity to find the answers that were not available here on earth."

—Reported by Megan Brauner, Adventist News Network

WORLD REPORT

Bushfires Strike Victoria, Adventists Among Victims

No lives lost, but property damage high; church moves to aid all.

By ADVENTIST WORLD STAFF

Seventh-day Adventists in the Australian state of Victoria are among those affected by a series of wild bushfires that may have killed as many as 300 people and destroyed up to 1,800 homes, according to media reports of the damage. At least some of the fires are believed to have been deliberately set.

"The [Victorian Conference of Seventh-day Adventists] unites with all church members from around [Victoria] and Australia, to express their deep sympathy for the many families who have lost loved ones, friends, property, livestock, pets, and much more in the recent bush fires," said Wayne Stanley, general secretary and communication director for the conference, in a statement on its Web site.

"We pray for strength and comfort for those who grieve such terrible loss and pray for rapid recovery for those who have been injured. We reflect on Christ who

demonstrated unending compassion and sympathy for those who were hurting and pray that His followers will demonstrate the same compassion as they support their friends and neighbours," Stanley added.

"As fires continue to rage, our thoughts are with those who are fighting to save life and property and those who face the grim task of assessing the level of loss to the community," he said.

In response to the tragic and devastating bushfires in Victoria, ADRA/Australia has committed AU\$150,000 (approximately US\$101,000) to fund a response in partnership with the government-nominated lead agency, the Australian Red Cross. This continues ADRA/Australia's long-standing formal partnership with Australian Red Cross federally, and in four Australian states and territories.

In order to further assist Adventists affected by the tragedy, the Victorian Conference took up a special offering in all its churches on Sabbath,

February 14. The money collected will go directly, and as quickly as possible, to Adventist families and friends affected by the fires.

Among initial reports of damage to Adventist-related families, Stanley noted, are these: A church member and his family from Healesville lost their house, as has a church member from Greensborough. A family who are friends of the church in Kinglake lost their home, while another family attending church at Moe has lost everything. Some members of Seymour church, living at Broadford, have not been contactable, and an Adventist businessman lost a substantial amount of heavy equipment. Also, several Adventist families lost their homes in Kinglake/Toolangi, and two former students of Ironbark Adventist primary school lost their lives.

"Most of our Edinburgh school families know of someone who has lost their home or a loved one in the fires," said Edinburgh Adventist



Top: HOME NO MORE: Ruins of a cottage in Victoria, Australia, typify devastation caused by bush (forest) fires in the area in February 2009. Seventh-day Adventists joined with their neighbors to comfort those whose homes were destroyed.



Right: MONEY RAISERS: Students at Edinburgh Adventist Primary School in Victoria, Australia, hold up money raised for fire victims. Students joined with adult church members and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency/Australia in reaching out to those in need.

Primary School principal Nathan Hill. "Some students have been evacuated from their own homes due to the continuing threat of fires in the area."

On one Monday staff and students spent time praying together for those who have suffered loss, and a request was passed on to students for donations of warm clothing and toys. The next day a truck, organized by a school parent, was filled to capacity with the donations.

"I am very proud of the true compassion and love shown by our school families. Our prayers are daily with the victims of the fires, for God to comfort and strengthen them as they come to terms with their tragic losses," Hill said. A further fund-raiser

has been organized for the students to continue their efforts to support friends, relatives, and neighbors who are affected.

"We at Edinburgh are deeply saddened by the horrific effects of the bushfires, and as a school we felt compelled to try and help. We have been blessed with a direct opportunity to do so, through parent's links within the affected communities. I am so proud of the way our students and parents got involved—it showed true compassion and Christian love for those in need."

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a long history in Australia and deep connections in Victoria State; the church's Signs Publishing Company arm is located in Warburton. ●

—With reporting from Victorian Conference.

VICTORIAN CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

WORLD VISTA

In late 2008 British Prime Minister Gordon Brown spoke to leaders of British industry about the worldwide financial crisis. He told them: "It's a mistake to consider the current financial trauma as something we must 'fix' so we can return to the way things were before. The door we are going through offers no return to the past. No longer can we live in isolation—protected and parochial in our outlook, looking out primarily for our own national interest. We must now look at the total global picture. Our national interests are inseparable from the larger world community. The barriers are gone. What we do for ourselves, we do for others; and what others do also affects us."

Listening to this I thought: How perceptive! This is precisely what Jesus said 2,000 years ago, either directly or through one of His apostles: "I have set before you an open door"; "In Christ there are no barriers"; "We view people differently than we used to"; "Go into all the world"; "Love one another." He is saying: we are bound together. What affects one of us, affects all. The church's most valuable assets are not dogmas or statements, but people. And so we must be spontaneously reaching out, taking hold of whomever we can reach, affirming their value to God and to our community, and bringing them in. And when we have brought them in, we must give them a home and make them feel loved and accepted. A church that is not willing or able to do this has failed.

I want to share with you some thoughts on the "climate" that Christ intends us to maintain within our churches—a climate that provides individuals a safe, welcoming place in which to grow. My comments rest

A Climate for Growth

By JAN PAULSEN

against the background of a story told by Jesus, recorded in Matthew 13:24-30. The story is very familiar to you. It's about getting a field ready for harvest, but the inevitable weeds come along and complicate matters. Who is responsible for these tares, and what should be done about them? The Owner of the field (and the field in this story is the church or the community of believers) is not responsible for the tares. The tares are just there; that's the way it is in life—that's how people are—and this also we find in the church.

So, what should we do about this mixture of wheat and tares? Should we investigate and determine what is what, and then deal with the tares? Jesus says: "No, that is not a good idea." And He is actually quite final about it! "Leave it alone for now," He says. "I will take care of it Myself in my own time."

The story is unusual; our natural impulse is to deal with the weeds, to get rid of them somehow. But the Lord of the harvest says: "No, not now."

This parable says much about how the Lord views humanity, and about the realities of life in the church. He is saying that the church consists of a very mixed lot; this is simply the reality we live with.

I believe that through the Spirit's presence and working the church can become a better community; we can grow in our commitment and devotion, we can become more useful to Him, we can learn from our past mistakes. But I have no sympathy with those who are bent on a pre-Advent purging of the church, driven by a "let's-toss-out-anything-that-looks-like-a-weed" mentality.

When the Landowner says "Leave the weeds for now," He is not questioning that there are people within the church who are strangers to the Lord. They may at one time have known Him, but for one reason or other they have become weary of the walk. And yet they find it convenient or more secure to stay; possibly a job is at stake, or major family issues are involved. These are sad realities. To these realities the Lord says: "Leave



them be. To ostracize these people, or for you, as the keepers of the garden, to conduct a general cleanup, is not a good idea. I will do it Myself in my own time. For you to do it is fraught with too many risks.”

And we may ask: “Surely cleaning up is a good thing—it makes sense, doesn’t it? What’s so risky about that?”

■ The risk is too high *because of my own humanity*. Is it not possible that I might make a terrible mistake in assessing another person? Do I really think that I know fully and accurately what goes on inside another person? Surely only God knows. And when an individual becomes difficult in the church, and particularly if that individual is a teenager, is it not possible that this behavior is precisely so because God, somehow, is getting through to them, prodding them and touching their lives? God only knows how much latitude He will put up with in our personal growing; I don’t.

■ The risk is too high because *today is still the day of salvation*. We may have been able to accurately identify and label the “tare,” but we must not forget that God has not yet finished His work. I’m not talking about those in our churches who are openly abusing or flagrantly defying the standards of the Word of God. These are people who must, for their own salvation’s sake, be placed under church discipline. The Bible gives the church the authority and responsibility to respond to such situations. But I’m talking instead about the much larger number of people who may be spending their time on the brink of the kingdom of God. We have many young people who disappear from the church because they feel unworthy and unwelcome. We make them feel

spiritually unsuccessful. We presume to know the mind of God too readily! Is it not possible that God may be more generous than I am?

Listen to these words from the inspired pen of Ellen White:

“Although in our churches, that claim to believe advanced truth, there are those who are faulty and erring, as tares among the wheat, God is long-suffering and patient.... He does not destroy those who are long in learning the lesson He would teach them.... There is to be no spasmodic, zealous, hasty action taken by church members in cutting off those they may think defective in character.”*

■ The risk is too high because *the church herself is harmed by people probing, even delicately, into the lives and opinions of other people*. And the damage can spread quickly; the climate can become such that even good people are made to feel insecure in their own spiritual home. The climate of the church becomes unpleasant and unwelcoming, instead of a place where people feel warm and wanted, safe and secure, accepted and free.

■ Weeding in the garden is too risky because *I, the investigator, am myself harmed by these activities*. My misguided mission alters my own character and my personality becomes unattractive. I’m reminded of the words of one of my former teachers, speaking to someone who was somewhat self-congratulatory of his own accomplishments and critical of others: “So you are perfect, but do you have to be hostile about it?”

Our congregations are meant to be places of healing and renewal. They must be attractive places for *unbelievers* to be drawn to. And they must be places where the *believer* feels

at home: valued and accepted. They aren’t meant to be battlefields, but cities of refuge. Can that be said of the church in which you and I worship? What kind of a spiritual climate are we creating? If your church is not the most appealing and attractive spiritual fellowship in your community, what are you going to do to change that?

Our churches are not exclusive clubs for those who are good enough or worthy. God is constantly justifying sinners; they are meant to be received warmly in our churches, for that is their rightful home. I will be frank with you: I would hate to spend my time surrounded only by people who think they had everything worked out just right. They become arrogant, clinical, and judgmental of those who still have growing to do. Christ accepted us all “while we were yet sinners” (Rom. 5:8, KJV). Acceptance is the breath of humanity. Where acceptance is denied our breathing falters. The air becomes thin and life itself becomes unbearable!

It is within our reach to create and shape the spiritual environment of our communities for the future. My appeal is that we create a good home, a warm family in which people can communicate, understand each other, respect each other’s space, and acknowledge that the Lord is ever at work making something better of that which, in our opinion, may be flawed. ●

* Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 45, 46.



Jan Paulsen is president of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church.

WINDOW

Into New Zealand

By HANS OLSON

Named Nova Zeelandia by Dutch explorer Abel Tasman in 1642 after the Dutch province of Zeeland, New Zealand is an island nation some 2,100 km (1,300 miles) off the southeast coast of Australia. Tasman was the first European to see the islands. Thinking it was an extension of a southern continent as yet undiscovered, Tasman didn't sail around New Zealand and never discovered that it is a totally different set of islands.

New Zealand consists of two main islands—North Island and South Island—and numerous smaller ones. Polynesian Maori were the first to discover and inhabit it around A.D. 800. In 1769 British explorer and cartographer James Cook sailed to New Zealand and claimed it for the United Kingdom. He was the first to map the entire coastline and anglicized the name to New Zealand.

In 1840 the Maori signed a treaty giving sovereignty of New Zealand to the British Empire, which allowed

them to retain some territorial rights. Later that year the first British colonial settlement was organized. However, the British and Maori had trouble coexisting and a series of land wars on North Island started in 1843. The Maori eventually conceded defeat in 1872. Territorial rights remain a key issue in New Zealand as the government tries to ease longstanding Maori resentments. Even though New Zealand gained its independence from Great Britain in 1907, the British monarch—Queen Elizabeth II—is recognized as the country's head of state.

New Zealand's isolation from the rest of the world gives it a unique flora and fauna that draw tourists from around the world. Spectacular glacier-

carved mountains and lakes as well as beaches and thermal springs attract visitors. Its economy is considered one of the 10 freest in the world. This island nation has immense renewable resources and uses hydropower for much of its electricity.

Adventists in New Zealand

The first Adventist arrived in New Zealand in 1885 when American missionary Steven N. Haskell spent a few months on North Island. He started a small group of Sabbathkeepers in Auckland and Kaero before heading back to Australia. A year later Haskell visited Kaero on his way to the United States and baptized 15 people. That same year evangelist and future General Conference president A. G. Daniells held a series of meetings under a tent in Kaero and baptized another 15 people.

Edward Halsey, a baker trained at the Battle Creek Sanitarium, arrived in 1900 from the United States to make health foods for a health home in Christchurch on South Island. What started out in a woodshed attached to the house as a small operation turned into Sanitarium Health Food Company, a major health food company that operates today in both New Zealand and Australia. The company is wholly owned by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and is the major producer of breakfast products in Australia. It has three manufacturing plants, 150 products, and 1,700 employees.

Most New Zealanders consider themselves Christian but most seldom attend church; more than a quarter of the population practices no religion. The Adventist Church has 11,213 members, or one Adventist for every 373 people. There is still much to be done to reach this country.

To learn more about the Seventh-day Adventist Church's ongoing mission work, visit www.AdventistMission.org.



NEW ZEALAND

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Capital: | Wellington |
| Official languages: | English, Maori, Sign Language |
| Religion: | Religion: Christian 53% (Anglican 15%, Roman Catholic 12%, Presbyterian 11%, Methodist 3%, Pentecostal 2%, Baptist 1%, other Christian 9%), other 4%, none or unspecified 43% |
| Population: | 4.2 million* |
| Adventist membership: | 11,213* |
| Adventist to population ratio: | 1:373* |

* General Conference Office of Archives and Statistics, 145th Annual Statistical Report



LEE KRETSCHMAR



A Plastic-Polluted Planet

Is it too late to change?

By
ALLAN R. HANDYSIDES

In the course of my work-related travels, I have at times witnessed scenes of human desperation. Few plights have upset me more than the sight of human scavengers. When these scavengers are children, the scene is even more painful to view.

Just two weeks before I penned these words, I watched in anguish as youth foraged through the dirt and debris of a dumpster in Madagascar. Previously, during a different trip, I saw people combing a massive garbage dump in India. More horrifying was the information that these people *live* on the dump. They sleep there, raise babies there, and die there. Scrambling amid the refuse, their lives seem reduced to the mere imperative of existence. How does the gospel penetrate such dire need?

These thoughts were heightened recently when I read a book by Alan Weisman titled *The World Without Us*. The author is obviously an evolutionist, but he describes his vision of what would happen to the earth if humanity were to be mysteriously removed. His scientific background equips him well for his imaginary scenarios, but also permits him to paint a gruesome future should men and women *not* disappear from the earth.

A Giant Garbage Dump

It is the potential Weisman describes of the whole earth becoming a giant garbage dump that is compelling. It reinforces my belief that Jesus has to come soon, and convinces me that all humans are part of the pollution

problem and therefore must also be part of any amelioration in the condition of the earth.

In the chapter titled “Polymers Are Forever,” Weisman describes the work of several marine biologists. One of them, Richard Thompson, while an undergraduate student, helped to clean up one of Britain’s shorelines. Removing some of the tons of garbage washed ashore each day, he noted that the larger floating pieces seemed to be directed by the wind. This meant he was cleaning up trash from Ireland, and England’s floating trash was befouling the shores of Scandinavia. Unlike the large floating materials, however, Thompson found a massive amount of small particulate trash, generally unnoticed among the bottles, plastic bags, automobile tires, pieces of rope, and plastic caps.

Now a professor at the University of Plymouth in England, Thompson points out a special subspecies of particle called “nurdles,” found in the waters around Plymouth. Shaped like little uniform rods some two millimeters in length, these nurdles are the raw materials used to create plastic products of any conceivable shape.



Allan R. Handysides is director of the General Conference Health Ministries Department.



Thompson says they must have been carried by currents for hundreds of miles, because no plastic factories exist near Plymouth.

Wave action pounds plastic particles smaller and smaller. When the particulate debris is analyzed in Thompson's lab, he finds that one third is biologic debris, one third is clearly particulate plastic, and another third is composed of particles defying exact definition but are plastic polymers of some kind.

Early in the twentieth century, Alistair Hardy, another marine biologist, began the collection of samples of the sea by means of collecting krill in a special apparatus he designed to be dragged behind oceangoing vessels. The sampling program he started has continued, with stored specimens providing a chronological history of the oceans throughout the past century. The apparatus drags about 10 meters (some 33 feet) below the surface collecting krill, tiny shrimplike creatures. Krill are part of the bedrock layer of the earth's food chain. These creatures ingest tiny particles and function like microsieves of the ocean.

Plastics have been around only about 70 years, and in the first half of the century plastic did not feature in the samples. By the 1960s, however, it was noted that the krill were ingesting plastic particles. By the 1990s the plastic content in the oceans had tripled.

Plastic does not degrade; it becomes only increasingly particulated—obviously small enough for tiny krill to eat.

We are familiar with pictures of turtles eating plastic bags, of birds strangled in plastic or nylon fishing lines, but the tiniest of animals are eating microparticulate plastic, often with lethal consequences.

It's not news to plastic producers that their product is not biodegradable. Aware of the growing mountains of plastic trash, manufacturers came up with "biodegradable" plastic bags, which are made from a mixture of cellulose and plastic. The cellulose breaks down just fine, because it is basically a sugar, but the plastic parts remain—only now they are in micro-particulate form and more readily washed into the ocean.

It's Everywhere!

Plastic is everywhere. I recently counted the plastic bottles in my own bathroom. Sitting around the perimeter of the tub were two bottles of shampoo, two bottles of conditioner, one of body wash, and one tube of facial cleanser. On the shelf across the room were plastic containers of moisturizer and bottles of prescription pills. The garbage container was lined with a plastic bag. I noted my plastic toothbrush and hairbrush, as well as the plastic bag my travel kit is contained in. And I could go on. Yet, if time were to last, 1,000 years from now these plastic "necessities" would persist as detritus on some sickly seashore.

Millions of plastic bottles are used every day by a countless number of people whose water supply is safe but



As the world becomes more and more like a trash heap of pollution, God must look with horror at our ways.

who prefer the convenience of a disposable bottle of water, which they “drink and drop.” Instead, a simple filter can make any American city’s water taste as good as bottled water. Why not drink from a reusable metal flask refilled at home?

Plastic particles in the facial dermabrasive we use to beautify ourselves trickle down the drain into the sewers and eventually out to sea. Not large enough to be wind-driven, they will be carried into the ponderous currents of the deep. Weisman says they will be around “forever.”

Even when cleaning up after our pets, we encase their natural droppings in a time capsule of plastic. Our “throwaway,” “disposable” society is in such high gear that vast tracks of ocean have become slowly rotating cesspools.

The North Pacific Subtropical Gyre is a 10-million-square-mile ocean dump. This slowly gyrating siphon of the Pacific’s debris is one of six such systems in the world’s oceans. Samples of this floating quagmire show plastic particles outnumber plankton by a factor of more than six times.

Particulate marine plastic has the ability to act like a sponge for resilient poisons such as DDT and the toxic polychlorinated biphenols (PCBs). The latter formerly were used to make plastic more pliable, but because of their toxicity they were banned in 1970. Still, the pre-1970 flotsam will leak its PCBs for centuries, if given the chance.

Tony Andrady, a leading expert on plastic, says, “Every bit of plastic manufactured in the world for the last 50 years or so still remains.” That is more than 1 billion tons of the stuff!

It’s probable that we find it inconceivable to live without plastic, but we at least need to be involved in its recycling. Currently, it costs more to recycle than to make new, but that’s because we’re not counting the cost to the earth. Recycling needs to be made easier and more cost-effective, and taxes should favor recycled products.

Even small changes can make a big difference. “Will you take a paper or plastic bag?” the checkout clerk asks. “Oh, the plastic seems easier,” you say. “Let’s save the trees!” *Wrong answer!* Ask for a hemp, cloth, or paper bag.

When Will It End?

Is all this pollution going to end soon? Fortunately, as Adventists, we believe it has to. Meanwhile, however, while we are commissioned to be stewards of the earth and occupy it until Jesus comes, even countries considered small are producing thousands of tons of plastic bags every month. As for those “nurdles,” 250 *billion* pounds of them are produced each year. Quite a lot for an almost-indestructible product! Is this the way people fill their role as stewards of the earth? Is this how we care for God’s creation?

Plastic is only one among the myriads of waste products our consumer world is producing. With spreading industrialization worldwide, the amount of waste products is accelerating. Just the debris from our “obsolete” computers is massive. Carbon dioxide is warming the planet as it befouls the atmosphere. Radioactive waste that has a half-life of thousands of years is still being produced.

Isn’t it time to think seriously about the part each of us plays in the trashing of the earth? Surely, as custodians of the planet, we need to learn to consume less, conserve more, and care better for the handiwork of God.

In Revelation 11:18, the Bible speaks of Jesus coming to destroy those who destroy the earth. As a boy, the earth appeared to me so vast, so enormous, that for a puny race of men and women to destroy it seemed incomprehensible. Now, with an ever-burgeoning population and industrial proliferation, the destruction of the earth seems all too possible—even probable. It is recognizably growing old like a garment, and it is we who are wearing it out!

As the planet becomes “shrink-wrapped” in plastic, all life is squeezed and distorted. As the world becomes more and more like a trash heap of pollution, God must look with horror at our ways. Once more we are frantically engaged in “cure,” having disdained prevention.

It might be easy to say, “Oh, Jesus will someday make it all right,” but I don’t want to be among those who make it all so wrong! Surely, we respect God enough to honor His handiwork. —

We ARE NOT Alone

Angels provide a link between heaven and earth.

By TONY PHILIP ORESO



ROMA FLOWERS

I can still recall how, as a child, I heard the church bell toll on Sabbath mornings at 8:45 sharp. It was a warning that Sabbath school would begin in exactly 15 minutes. By 9:00 church pews were full, hymnals were opened, and songs of vibrant praise filled the four walls of the church; the chorister always led the congregation in singing “Holy Sabbath, Day of Rest.”

However, my favorite part of the program was when the different age groups separated to study the Bible with materials appropriate for their ages. For us children that meant amazing Bible stories about God’s heroes and how they were visited and served by angels.

Now, more than two decades since I sat in those tiny chairs and learned how God sent His angels to serve and protect His people, I realize that not everything I learned is supported by the Bible.

In high school our principal shared stories about angels that had the effect of communicating that one of the angels’ primary responsibilities was to record our misdeeds and provide God with details every evening after we went to sleep. So I saw angels with some apprehension.

But what is the real story? What does the Bible say? How are our lives affected by the existence of angelic beings?

Scripture Revelation About Angels

The word translated “angel” in the Bible’s original languages means “messenger”; they are supernatural beings who represent God to human beings. In the Old Testament angels appeared to Hagar (Gen. 16), Lot (Gen. 19), Jacob (Gen. 28), Moses (Ex. 3, 14, 23), Gideon (Judges 6), Elijah (1 Kings 19), Daniel (Dan. 6), and others.

Angels were featured prominently in the life and ministry of Jesus. They also assisted in the formation of the early church. The book of Revelation mentions angels more than 70 times.

But that was then, this is now. What do angels do for *us*?

Angels guide seekers for truth. Though He did not receive a rabbinical type of education, Jesus’ wisdom and knowledge were derived from the great library of God’s creation. Plus, He spent countless hours learning from His parents about how God had directed His people in ages past.

Ellen White wrote about the role angels play in helping us mine truth from God’s Word: “Every child may gain knowledge as Jesus did. As we try to become acquainted with our heavenly Father through His Word, angels will draw near, our minds will be strengthened, our characters will be elevated and refined. We shall become more like our Saviour” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 70).

*We can count
on God's angel
messengers to
bring us messages
of hope and
encouragement.*

This example helps us picture a graphic reality: "Angels from the world of light are near to those who in humility seek for divine guidance" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 141).

Angels deliver from evil spirits. The strong opposition we often meet in accomplishing God's work can sometimes overcome us. Occasionally the daily struggles we face, not to mention the spiritual battles we fight, break down the defenses of our souls. The barriers established by habitual prayer, devotion, and ministry sometimes begin to crumble and doubt begins to obscure the leading of God's Spirit. We see our condition as helpless; but it's not hopeless!

Just as an angel appeared to Elijah, after his showdown with Baal's prophets on Mount Carmel, with both physical and spiritual nourishment (1 Kings 19:1-9), we can count on God's angel messengers to bring us messages of hope and encouragement

just when we need them. The encouragement may not come from a supernatural source (as we think of supernatural), but we can be assured that angels are at work—even through human agencies—to lighten our loads and help us be mindful of God's presence.

When we surrender again our all to God, He takes charge and His angels arrest the agencies that take us captive. We are reclaimed back to Him and heaven rejoices in our recovery.

Let us be clear: spirits of darkness battle for souls once under their dominion; but angels of God contend for those souls with prevailing power.

Angels protect Christ's followers. Lot and his family were protected by angels and led safely from the midst of Sodom before that wicked city was destroyed (Gen. 19:15-17). And when Jesus struggled in the Garden of Gethsemane with the enormity of His sacrifice for sinful beings He was about to make, an angel came to strengthen Him emotionally and spiritually (Luke 22:43).

These stories bear witness to the involvement of angels with Christ's followers today. Ellen White wrote: "So, in all ages, angels have been near to Christ's faithful followers.... From what dangers, seen and unseen, we have been preserved through the interposition of the angels, we shall never know, until in the light of eternity we see the providences of God. Then we shall know that the whole family of heaven was interested in the family here below, and that messengers from the throne of God attended our steps from day to day" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 240).

Yet the ministry of angels is no guarantee that God's people will be preserved from all harm. Citing the example of John the Baptist, Ellen White wrote: "Though no miraculous deliverance was granted John, he

was not forsaken. He had always the companionship of heavenly angels, who opened to him the prophecies concerning Christ, and the precious promises of Scripture. These were his stay, as they were to be the stay of God's people through the coming ages" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 224).

So even if we aren't saved from danger and harm, we can be established in God's promises and have faith in the ultimate, positive outcome.

Angels cooperate in proclaiming the gospel. Angels stand in complete reverence to the Lord. Hand in hand with human agents they lend their energies in spreading the gospel of Christ. With the Holy Spirit they convict us of sin and teach us the way to serve God. Their heavenly power, combined with our human ability, draws souls to Christ.

"We are to be laborers together with the heavenly angels in presenting Jesus to the world," wrote Ellen White. "With almost impatient eagerness the angels wait for our co-operation; ... And when we give ourselves to Christ in wholehearted devotion, angels rejoice that they may speak through our voices to reveal God's love" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 297).

"Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?" asked the writer of the letter to the Hebrews (Heb. 1:14, NIV). In these challenging times, in ways both visible and invisible, God's angel messengers are still at work to keep us close to Him and prepare us for Jesus' soon return. ●



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Interpreting *the* Times



*We must avoid
hysteria. We
must stay close
to Scripture.*

By
ROY ADAMS

The legend about the pope and an elderly Jewish man named Moishe comes in several versions. Here's one of them:

About a century ago the pope decided that all Jews should leave Rome. But seeing the uproar in the Jewish community, and wanting to appear conciliatory, he came up with a novel idea. He would have a debate with any member of the Jewish community they chose. If that person won the debate, then the Jews could stay. But if the pope won, the Jews would have to leave.

With all the educated, high-powered Jews shying away from confronting this Christian Goliath, the community eventually turned to an old janitor, named Moishe.

Very concerned about his speaking abilities, however, Moishe agreed to the debate on one condition: that the event would proceed in total silence. Incredibly, the pope agreed.

As the big day arrived, Moishe and the pope sat down opposite each other. For a full minute, they stared at each other in motionless silence.

At last, the pope raised his hand and showed three fingers. Moishe looked back at him and raised one finger.

The pope then waved his finger in a circle around his head. Moishe vigorously pointed to the ground where he sat.

The pope then pulled out a wafer (the communion bread) and a glass of wine, and set them on the table. Moishe pulled out an apple and placed it down in front of him.

At this development, the pope stood up and said, “I give up. This man is too good. The Jews can stay.”

After the meeting, the cardinals gathered around the pope, asking what happened. The pope said: “First I held up three fingers to represent the Trinity. He responded by holding up one finger to remind me that there is still one God, common to both our religions. Then I waved my finger around my head to show him that God was all around us. He responded by pointing to the ground, showing that God was also right here with us. I pulled out the wine and the wafer to show that God absolves us from our sins. He pulled out an apple to remind me of original sin. He had an answer for everything. What could I do?”

Meanwhile, the Jewish community had crowded around Moishe, amazed that this old, uneducated janitor could do what all their scholars had insisted was impossible. “What happened?” they asked him. “Well,” said Moishe, “First he raised three fingers to tell me that the Jews had three days to get out of Rome. I lifted one finger to tell him that *not one of us* was leaving. Then waving his hand around his head, he told me that this whole city would be cleared of Jews. I pointed my finger to the ground to let him know that we were *staying right here*.”

“And then?” asked a woman.

“I don’t know,” said Moishe. “He took out his lunch and I took out mine.”

The moral of the story: we might all be looking at the same events, the same signs, the same evidences. But these events, these signs, these evidences are all silent; they do not speak. And the interpretation we bring to them often arises from our own personal presuppositions.

That’s why it’s vital for us to go back every so often, take a seat at the feet of Jesus, and listen again—with more attentive, less prejudiced ears—to what He has to say, as He speaks directly to the issue of the end of the world. And one of His most sustained treatments of the theme comes in Matthew 24.* Because of space, I focus here on the first 12 verses only, believing as I do that they effectively summarize the entire discourse.

Calm and Unhysterical

In response to His disciples’ drooling admiration of the Temple, Jesus in verses 1 and 2 predicted the building’s destruction. Shocked to the core, three of them approached Jesus privately for clarification and elaboration. “When will this happen?” they asked, “and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

Their question focused on two things: *time* and *signs*. Jesus would address both; but it’s critical to notice what comes first in His response. As if hearing nothing about time or signs, He said: “*Watch out that no one deceives you*” (verse 4, NIV). The issue of deception, then, is critical in Jesus’ response, and I return to it below. But for now, look at verses 6-8:

“You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.”

What I notice as I make my way through the passage before us is *the calmness of Jesus*, the absence of any hysteria. In the wake of calamity and disaster, the disciples should not expect the end to come tomorrow or the day following. In fact, Jesus actually *outlines for them the scenario of an extended future*. “Such things,” He said, “must happen, *but the end is still to come*.” (“But the end is not yet”—KJV.) In other words, we should not try to make a *direct* connection between military conflict or natural disasters and the Second Coming.

As Adventists, we’ve traditionally tended to link the Second Coming with war and economic crisis. During the First and Second World Wars, our evangelistic preaching was rife with predictions that this is it! (And from a human standpoint—and given certain presuppositions—it looked so!) But the wars ended, and Jesus did not return.

The Great Depression of the late 1920s/early 1930s saw millions out of work, multitudes hungry—an *economic meltdown* of major proportions. But the Great Depression did not trigger the Second Coming.

As the Gulf War was about to commence in 1991, with Saddam Hussein issuing frightening warnings about “the mother of all battles,” our prophetic juices stirred up again, with some Adventists mounting pulpits and rushing into print with warnings about the Battle of Armageddon.

Today, the hysteria continues. One Adventist worker has been claiming to have secret intelligence, gleaned from some unnamed evangelical pastor, that the president of the United States (George W. Bush at the time) had given sealed orders to the entire armed forces of the country as to what to do when the next crisis comes. Once that crisis breaks—either through a terrorist attack or a financial collapse—the families of military personnel would



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have two hours to get out of the cities and head for the mountains or isolated towns. All major U.S. cities will be sealed off, no one allowed to enter or leave. Meanwhile, the military already has in storage millions of casket liners—500,000 in the Atlanta area alone—presumably to dump the bodies of the millions who'd be killed. And the idea seems to be that Adventists should have a stash of food at the ready and be prepared themselves to flee to the mountains.

Why Adventists would get sucked in by such hysteria baffles me. But when we do, we degrade the value of prophecy and make religion a curiosity in the eyes of people who might otherwise be sympathetic listeners—even potential believers. One of our chief concerns should be for the long-term credibility of the church. Whether we're speaking or writing, we should seek to put things in such a way that the detractors of the church cannot easily tear them apart or poke fun at them.

Let's remember that our pious predictions of the nearness of the coming, based on the latest calamity, do not influence the time of the event. If they did, then Jesus would have been here since the mid-nineteenth century, a time of unprecedented advent expectation and fervor.

We're talking here about the Sovereign God of the universe. His plans are not affected by Roy Adams' misinterpretation of the prophecy. As Ellen G. White put it: "Like the stars in the vast circuit of their appointed path, God's purposes know no haste and no delay" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 32).

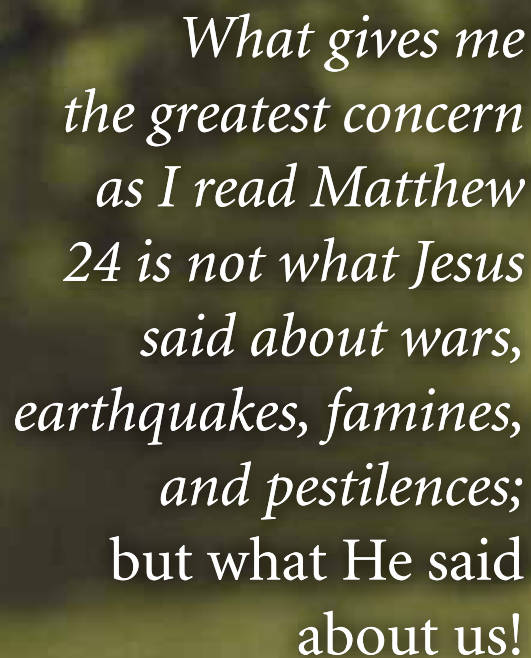
What Concerns Me Most

What gives me the greatest concern as I read Matthew 24 is not what Jesus said about wars, earthquakes, famines, and pestilences; *but what He said about us!* After speaking about His followers being persecuted, put to death, and "hated by all nations" (heavy stuff!), He says that "many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other" (verses 9, 10).

Against that background, hear this from Ellen G. White:

"As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition.... Men of talent and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls. They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 608).

Then look at verse 11: "and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people." We sometimes think we're the smartest generation. But among us are some of the most gullible souls who ever walked the planet. The spring of 2005 saw thousands of people making pilgrimages to the underside of a Chicago railway bridge,



*What gives me
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where seeping sewage water had created a stain thought to resemble the Virgin Mary!

If a sewage water stain could produce such a response, imagine what will happen if what Ellen G. White says here comes to pass exactly as she wrote it:

"As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ.... In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness.... The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld. The shout of triumph rings out upon the air, 'Christ has come! Christ has come!' The people prostrate themselves in adoration before him, while he lifts up his hands, and pronounces a blessing upon them.... He heals the diseases of the people, and then, in his assumed character of Christ, he claims to have changed the Sabbath to Sunday.... This is the strong, almost overmastering delusion" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 624).

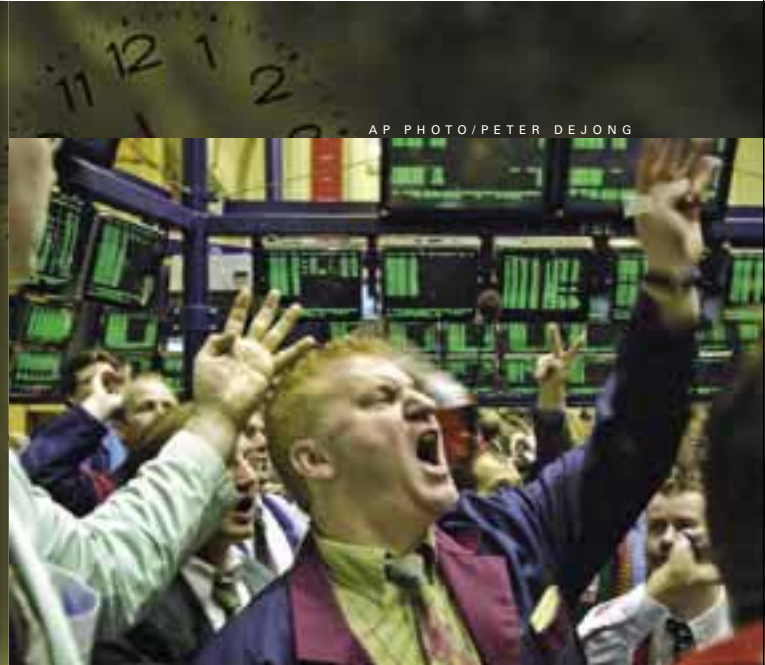
These are the things that should concern us more. Will we stand faithful?

The Pinnacle of the Passage

If we're looking for a sign that would signal the actual imminence of the coming of Jesus—a sign that when fulfilled, we can say: "This is it!" then the place to find it is Matthew 24:14: "*And this gospel of the kingdom will be*



AP PHOTO/MARK RICHARDS, POOL



AP PHOTO/PETER DEJONG

preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."

This is not a flashy sign. It does not attract hysterical attention. It does not touch off panic buttons. But it's utterly important. It's the only sign Jesus tied directly to the Advent.

Some may take perverse comfort in the apparently slow advance of the gospel, assuming they could have their fling out in the world, keep an eye out for the fulfillment of the gospel commission, then jump back into the church at the eleventh hour.

But that would be foolhardy. In the first place, the fulfillment of the preaching of the gospel in all the world is *not something we can humanly measure*. As humans we cannot know when this task will have been completed to the satisfaction of God's inscrutable wisdom. Nor can we have any idea of the multitude of agencies our omnipotent God has deployed to accomplish His work among the nations. Only eternity will reveal that. (And I think we'll be surprised.)

A second consideration on this point is *the uncertainty of life*. On the morning of September 11, 2001, 14,000 souls made their way to their offices and appointments in the massive twin towers across from the Hudson River in New York City. No one even vaguely suspected anything but a normal day. But 40 seconds past 8:46, *boom!* And a

thousand people are blown to shreds without a moment's warning!

Our only security is to anchor ourselves in God today—and every day—allowing the Great Commission to be fulfilled *in* us and *through* us.

Time of Expectation and Joy

The phrasing of Luke 21:25-28 leads to the conclusion that immediately preceding the advent there'd be a reprise, a repeat, of certain advent omens, perhaps on a more intensive scale. The passage speaks of certain portents in the sun, moon, and stars; of "anguish and perplexity" at developments on earth; and of the shaking of the heavenly bodies. "At that time," Jesus says, "they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (verse 27).

But through all this calamitous time, we're not to be afraid. When you see these things come to pass, Jesus said, then look up, lift up your heads, straighten up your shoulders, put a spring in your steps, a smile on your face, a song in your heart; and let the sheer joy of that fantastic hope reverberate through every fiber of your being, "because your redemption is drawing near." —

★ Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references are from the NIV.

One of the memories from my upbringing happened in the mission field. One day my parents suggested that to measure our growth rate we mark our height on one of the doorposts of our home. Being the oldest, I was the tallest of the four children. My siblings became a bit jealous of that fact, and determined to increase their food intake so they might grow faster and reach and surpass their older brother in stature. An interesting contest started.

I would like to suggest that we all set up the goal of growing in Christ, becoming like Him. I am not saying to grow *in the commandments*. Or grow *in the doctrines*. Or grow *in the church*. Without reducing the importance of those areas, *our biggest need is to grow in our oldest Brother, Jesus Christ.*

NUMBER 11

By
VICTOR A.
SCHULZ

Like All Things Living

*Growth happens
when we abide in Christ.*

We Can't Be Static

If Christ reigns within (Rom. 8:9), then we live in a process of change. "Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day" (2 Cor. 4:16, RSV).^{*} "We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). Christ, our supreme example, sets the tone for us. The Bible says that He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52).

Almost everything in nature changes. Everything that is alive grows. If there is no growth, certain death is the outcome. Physically, when we are born we are supposed to grow. If there is no growth, we die. The same happens in the Christian experience. When we are born again, we are supposed to grow. It involves constant change. There is no neutral ground. If there is no growth, spiritual death is certain.

To be without Christ cuts us off from the source of life and change, and makes our ultimate destruction inevitable. Salvation is not a one-time experience, something that happens only by accepting Christ. It is not something that occurs once and is done. It involves, rather, a process, a growing in Christ (Heb. 5:11-14). It is a process that includes justification and also sanctification, a purification that ends in redemption.

Rachel's Story

Rachel was an attractive young member of one of my churches, the daughter of one of the church elders. She was a real problem in the church, among other things, dressing in an extremely provocative way—short skirts, low neck lines. Her parents, members, pastors—all talked with her to no avail. Her situation was brought before the church board.

I approached her, using all my persuasion skills as a young pastor fresh from theological training. Nothing happened.

Suddenly we all noticed that her way of dressing and other external details changed. Surprised as everyone else I talked with her one day expecting to hear that it was one of my "powerful" sermons that did it. But her answer was very simple. She had fallen in love with a young member of a very strict religious group. She loved him so much, and knowing that he could not approve of the way she looked, she started to

dress and arrange herself differently. He had never brought up the matter with her. Her love for him produced the transformation that all the talks and sermons could not do.

Miracles of transformation occur when we really fall in love with Jesus. We start growing in Him. The sanctification process begins in full—a dynamic, progressive experience. Eventually we become fully developed, full-grown Christians.

"Two thousand years ago an aged preacher penned in three words one of the most sublime truths of the ages. Those three words sum up ... [what Christian life is all about]. The preacher was the apostle Paul; his message—as truly for us today as for the church at Colosse—declares, '*Christ is all*' (Col. 3:11).... If you and I ever walk the streets of gold ... , it will be because we have found the one way in this life—the *Jesus way*—and followed it.... 'Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved' (Acts 4:12, KJV)" (Robert Pierson, *We Still Believe*, pp. 49, 50). This is the touchstone of the great Christ-centered Advent message, salvation in Christ.

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Another Case

As a theology student in 1967, and as part of my practicum, I was assisting one of our church's great preachers in an evangelistic series. Aside from the visiting and giving Bible studies, I was assigned in the evenings to be at the main entrance of the huge theater to welcome the visitors.

One evening a young woman entered and handed me a piece of paper, saying that she needed to talk with the person whose name was on it. When I told her I was the person whose name was on the paper, she started to cry and cry. After a while, embarrassed because people were coming in and wondering what was going on, I took her to the nearby palm-lined boulevard with seats in the center. Her crying continued, her eyes like waterfalls, her tears flowing like a torrent. I watched that beautiful young face distorted by anguish.

After what seemed like an eternity, she composed herself and started to share her story. Alice (not her real name) had grown up in an abusive home. As a teenager she fell deeply in love. Soon the young man started to ask her for what he called "proof of love," and they had sexual relations. But he was just using her to satisfy his passions, and soon discarded her.

After that she met another boy. Vulnerable as she was, again things ended up in sex, and after a while that boy also left her. A third person then entered into her life. She felt that this love was pure and sincere. But the story repeated itself and this time, to make matters worse, she discovered she was pregnant.

The third boyfriend, hearing about it, disappeared, leaving her on her own. Fearing her dad and following bad counsel she had an abortion.

So at the tender age of 17, here she was with me that May evening, seated on that boulevard, feeling rejected by everyone; guilty—because she believed she had killed an incipient life, her own baby. She felt abandoned by her parents and boyfriends, alone, desperate, not knowing what to do.


How God Works

It was a neighbor of hers, to whom I'd been giving Bible studies, who, after noticing she'd become suicidal, wrote my name on that piece of paper that evening, hoping we could help her. As she cried, I was asking the Lord how to help her.

Suddenly she stood up and started to shout, "I am lost! I am lost! There is no hope for me! I will throw myself in the way of the first bus that comes. I am lost!"

When, finally, she calmed down, I read to her the story of the adulterous woman and how Jesus forgave her and said: "Go and sin no more" (John 8:1-11). Slowly peace came to that heart. We prayed together, and I gave her a copy of *Steps to Christ* by Ellen G. White, recommending especially the chapter on forgiveness.

Years later I returned to that same big city and went to visit the modern building purchased as an evangelistic center after the successful evangelistic effort had ended. And who was there as the receptionist of the center? Alice! An intensely spiritual, clearly happy woman, totally at peace with herself.

She surely had grown in Christ! And that growth experience should be yours and mine, as well. 

*Bible texts credited to RSV are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright 1946, 1952, 1971, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.

Growing in CHRIST

By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. Now the Holy

Spirit dwells within us and empowers us. Continually committed to Jesus as our Savior and Lord, we are set free from the burden of our past deeds. No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with

Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the church. As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience. (Ps. 1:1, 2; 23:4; 77:11, 12; Col. 1:13, 14; 2:6, 14, 15; Luke 10:17-20; Eph. 5:19, 20; 6:12-18; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Phil. 3:7-14; 1 Thess. 5:16-18; Matt. 20:25-28; John 20:21; Gal. 5:22-25; Rom. 8:38, 39; 1 John 4:4; Heb. 10:25.)

Between the first and the second advent of Christ a wonderful contrast will be seen. No human language can portray the scenes of the second coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven. He is to come with his own glory, and with the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. He will come clad in the robe of light, which he has worn from the days of eternity. Angels will accompany him. Ten thousand times ten thousand will escort him on his way. The sound of the trumpet will be heard, calling the sleeping dead from the grave. The voice of Christ will penetrate the tomb, and pierce the ears of the dead, "and all that are in the graves ... shall come forth."

"And before him shall be gathered all nations." The very One who died for man is to judge him in the last day; for the Father "hath committed all judgment unto the Son: ... and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." What a day that will be, when those who rejected Christ will look upon him whom their sins have pierced. They will then know that he proffered them all heaven if they would but stand by his side as obedient children; that he paid an infinite price for their redemption; but that they would not accept freedom from the galling slavery of sin....

Scenes From the Master's Life

As they gaze upon his glory, there flashes before their minds the memory of the Son of Man clad in the garb of humanity. They remember how they treated him, how they refused him.... The scenes of Christ's life appear before them in all their clearness. All he did, all he said, the humiliation to which he descended to save them from the taint of sin, rises before them in condemnation.

They behold him riding into

Jerusalem, and see him break into an agony of tears over the impenitent city that would not receive his message. His voice, which was heard in invitation, in entreaty, in tones of tender solicitude, seems again to fall upon their ears. The scene in the garden of Gethsemane rises before them, and they hear Christ's amazing prayer, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me."

Again they hear the voice of Pilate, saying, "I find in him no fault at all."

They see the shameful scene in the judgment-hall, when Barabbas stood by the side of Christ, and they had the privilege of choosing the guiltless One. They hear again the words of Pilate, "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus, which is called Christ?" They hear the response, "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas." To the question of Pilate, "What shall I do then with Jesus?" the answer comes, "Let him be crucified."

His Glorious Appearance

By
ELLEN G.
WHITE

The Lord is ... not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

—2 PETER 3:9

Again they see their Sacrifice bearing the reproach of the cross. They hear the loud, triumphant tones tauntingly exclaim, "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." "He saved others; himself he can not save."

Now they behold him not in the garden of Gethsemane, not in the judgment-hall, not on the cross of Calvary. The signs of his humiliation have passed away, and they look upon the face of God,—the face they

look upon him who died to take away their guilt, they cry out to the rocks and mountains, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

My Life in Review

We are now amid the perils of the last days. The scenes of conflict are hastening on, and the day of days is just upon us. Are we prepared for the

what it did when it was performed. The secret sin that appears as nothing now, when placed before men in the light of God's countenance, will appear grievous....

How stands our account in the books of heaven? Have we chosen to be partakers with Christ in his sufferings? Have we been learning in the school of Christ his meekness and lowliness of heart? Have we stood by the side of Christ to bear his reproach? Have we taken his yoke upon us, and lifted the cross in self-denial and self-sacrifice? Have we helped to bear his burdens, and co-operated with him in his work?

Salvation's Plan Complete

Satan has come down with great power, ... but it is not necessary for any to be deceived; and we shall not be if we have fully taken our stand with Christ to follow him through evil as well as through good report.... The glorious memorial of God's wonderful power is soon to be restored to its rightful place. Then paradise lost will be paradise restored. God's plan for the redemption of man will be complete. The Son of Man will bestow upon the righteous the crown of everlasting life, and they shall "serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." ●

This article is excerpted from one that first appeared in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, now the *Adventist Review*, September 5, 1899. Seventh-day Adventists believe that Ellen G. White exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.



spit upon,—the face which priests and rulers struck with the palms of their hands. Now the truth in all its vividness is revealed to them. It is the wrath of the Lamb that they have to meet,—of him who came to take away the sin of the world,—of him who had ever acted toward them with infinite tenderness, long-suffering patience, and inexpressible love. They realize that they have forfeited all the riches of his great salvation. As they

issue? Every deed, small and great, is to be brought into recognition. That which has been considered trivial here will then appear as it is. The two mites of the widow will be recognized. The cup of cold water offered, the prison visited, the hungry fed,—each will bring its own reward. And that unfulfilled duty, that selfish act, will not be forgotten. In the open court around the throne of God it will appear a very different thing from



Adventists and Muslims in Conversation

Breaking down prejudice by building bridges

By
WILLIAM G.
JOHNSON

The world of Islam is changing before our eyes as Muslim leaders reach out in dialogue to Christians and Jews. Seventh-day Adventists increasingly are involved as invitees and themselves are initiating conversations with Muslims.

Why would Adventists wish to be involved in these developments? And why would Muslims, given the large number of Christian bodies, be interested in meeting with a comparatively smaller faith grove in the Christian scene? The answers to these questions give insights into the rapid changes taking place.

Our Long Shadows

From the Adventist side, the reasons for our engagement are simple. They boil down to one word: mission. We are a world faith with a distinct identity and mission—to declare God's character and to help prepare a people for the soon return of Jesus Christ. Islam likewise is a world faith, with

followers not only in countries stretching from Morocco to Indonesia, but increasingly in countries with traditional Christian bases. Today some 5 million Muslims live in France, representing 10 percent of the population. In the United States, Muslims number around 10 million.

Thus almost anywhere on the face of the globe, Adventists and Muslims occupy the same ground. Muslims are our neighbors, not just followers of a far-off religion. As servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is incumbent on us to interact with Muslims on all levels, from the neighbor next door to official contacts.

For many years the Adventist Church has engaged in conversations with representatives of other churches. These encounters have resulted in much good, as stereotypes have been broken down and misunderstandings on both sides have been removed. On the Adventist side, a great benefit has been the dropping of the false designation of our church as a "cult" or "sect."

I have been involved in these interchurch conversations for more than 20 years and am convinced that they are of significant value. I also have become persuaded that in all such meetings we should present our distinctive beliefs graciously, but clearly, winsomely, but honestly, holding back nothing that we stand for. To attempt to curry favor with the other party is to mislead and to invite both short- and long-term disaster.

Whether our conversations are with other Christians or with followers of other religions, our purpose is that there shall be a genuine, mutual recognition of who we are (and we ourselves can best state that), the values we seek and hold high, and why we seek the open scene and not obscurity.

Unique Challenges

These new conversations present us with new challenges. Muslims tend to paint all Christians with the same brush: in lifestyle, as pork eaters and alcohol drinkers; in geopolitical stance, as pro-Israel and anti-Arab. A major goal for Adventists is to show and explain that we are not just another Christian denomination; that our lifestyle is similar to Muslims' in key areas; and that we are an international, global community of faith whose agenda is not driven by the winds and directions of secular politics. We also want to convey that our convictions about religious freedom—a topic of keen interest to Muslims in some countries—lead us to encourage leaders of all nations to permit adherents of minority faiths to build places of worship and assemble together.

While the differences of belief between Adventists and Muslims—particularly over the person and work of Jesus Christ—are major and are not to be “dumbed down,” there are significant points of contact that invite dialogue. Among these are the high regard we each have for holy writings; belief in creation rather than evolution; the expectation of and preparation for the Day of Judgment; the Second Coming of Jesus Christ; and belief in prophetic messengers. Thus, Adventists have openings for fruitful conversations with Muslims that other Christian churches do not.

Recent Developments

For many years Adventists have been involved in cooperative endeavors with Muslims. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Loma Linda University heart team rendered much-appreciated service and Loma Linda still maintains contact through extension courses offered within the country. Likewise, in Afghanistan, Adventist medical work has a long history and through Loma Linda personnel today plays a major role.

In addition to such practical demonstrations of Adventism, the church set up an Institute for Adventist-Muslim Relations. Its representatives have quietly spread the knowledge of who we are and what we stand for in the Islamic world.

One of the first Muslim initiatives for dialogue in recent times originated in the state of Qatar on the Persian Gulf. For six years in succession the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Sharia Studies at the University of Qatar has sponsored an International Conference on Interfaith Dialogue. For the most recent meetings—in 2007 and 2008—Adventists have been invited to attend, with all expenses paid, and to present papers.

With the release of the open letter “A Common Word” on October 8, 2007, signed by 138 high-ranking Muslim clerics and leaders, the pace of interfaith engagement has accelerated. Now “dialogue” seems to have become the buzz word. The Vatican has set in motion ongoing conversations with leaders of Islam and the major Christian denominations, plus bodies like the World Council of Churches are meeting to decide their response to the invitation given in the open letter.

Ten days after the release of the open letter, the Adventist Church sent a reply to its framers, applauding their initiative and indicating our willingness to engage in dialogue with Muslims. When a joint Christian-Muslim meeting of scholars met at Yale University in July 2008, an Adventist was invited to join the group of 150 assembled for discussions. Likewise, when King Abdullah of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia called a meeting to plan the international interfaith dialogue that convened in Madrid, Spain, July 13–15, an Adventist was included among the invitees.

In the United States we have established a relationship with the Islamic Society of North America, the largest Muslim organization in America. The General Conference hosted a meeting with their representatives at the church's headquarters, and Adventists and Muslims cooperated in a joint Health Expo at the group's annual convention held in Columbus, Ohio, August 30–September 1. Some 40,000 people attended the gathering.

Larger initiatives lie just ahead. We have developed an excellent relation with the directors of the Royal Jordanian Institute of Interfaith Studies, based in Amman, Jordan. The first of a series of official conversations has been planned for the near future.

This is just the beginning. The world of Islam, changing fast, is vast and diverse. Impelled by mission, we need to engage Muslims in many different parts of the world. Whenever and wherever the Lord opens a door of opportunity, we must move ahead without delay. ●



William G. Johnsson is an assistant to the General Conference president for Interfaith Relations.

Christians have offered different answers to this question. I will offer some thoughts that have helped me reach my own conclusions, examine some biblical evidence, and make some remarks of a theological nature.

1. *Salvation Through Christ and Mission:* Some Christians deny that there can be salvation apart from a knowledge of Christ. This could be called the exclusivist answer. Some biblical passages appear to support this view. For instance, Jesus said: “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3, NIV). Peter reaffirmed this conviction: “Salvation is found in no one else” (Acts 4:12, NIV). In fact, the gospel commission requires that the knowledge of salvation through Christ be proclaimed to every person (Matt. 28:18-20; cf. Rev. 14:6-12). Salvation requires faith in Jesus (Rom. 1:16; 10:9; Acts 16:30-34). The saving death of Jesus and the exclusive claim that salvation is only through Him is the very foundation of the mission of the church. This is what the Lord commanded us to do, and we, in humble submission to Him, go and fulfill the mission.

2. *The Mission Remains God’s Mission:* Another aspect of this question is this: Mission did not originate with the church, but with God; and it remains His. He initiated it by sending His Son as our Savior (John 3:16). Every aspect of the earthly ministry of Jesus was a fulfillment of God’s saving mission for the human race. At the close of His ministry, Jesus said to the Father He had completed “the work you gave me to do” (John 17:4, NIV).

The Spirit is personally involved in the divine mission. Jesus was filled by the Spirit in the fulfillment of His mission (e.g., Isa. 11:1-5; Matt. 3:16, 17). The church itself was empowered by the Spirit to fulfill its mission (Acts 1:8). The deep connection between the church and the Spirit indicates that, although the church was brought into existence for mission, the mission is God’s mission. It is being fulfilled by the Spirit through the church. In the presence of believers the Spirit, in agreement with divine design, uses them to accomplish God’s mission.

3. *Mission and the Spirit:* But what would God do in the absence of Christian believers? I propose that the Spirit continues to be responsible for the realization of the mission. When the visible expression of the people of God is not accessible in a region of the world, be it for political, religious, or any other reason, God’s saving mission to the world is not deactivated. God “wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4, NIV). A good example of this is found in the experience

of Cornelius, a gentile who feared God but who did not have a Christian to teach him. In that situation the Lord directly spoke to him in a vision and guided him to Peter (Acts 10:1-10). God has not left Himself without witnesses among nations living in spiritual darkness. At times He raised prophets among them and divine light reached them (cf. Num. 24:2). Jesus, through the Spirit, continues to be “the true light that gives light to every man” (John 1:9, NIV). This suggests that non-Christians who live out of contact with

Christ *and* Salvation



QUESTION:

Is it possible for people who never hear about Jesus to be saved?

By
ANGEL MANUEL
RODRÍGUEZ

the people of God, when touched by the Spirit, sincerely yearn for something better (cf. James 1:17). They then experience the saving power of God on the mind and character. Their knowledge may be extremely limited, but they have been transformed by His grace and unknowingly became children of God through Jesus. The Spirit implanted the grace of Christ in their hearts and without knowing about Jesus they have been blessed by His saving grace.

This work of the Spirit does not legitimize non-Christian religions or allow for religious pluralism. Of course, in His work the Spirit could use fragments of truth that may be present in any religion, but He is not bound by such elements. Grace is directly mediated to people by Christ through the Spirit. Neither does the work of the Spirit make witnessing irrelevant. On the contrary, the work of the Holy Spirit prepares the way for the church to fulfill its mission more effectively.

Angel Manuel Rodríguez is director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference.



Christ-Centered Living

By
MARK A.
FINLEY

Have you ever felt frustrated in your Christian life? Perhaps you see yourself as a failure for repeatedly falling for the same temptations. Maybe you have longed for deliverance and victory, only to be defeated again. Today's lesson will share Christ's plan and power to live a godly Christian life. As we study His Word we will discover biblical principles for living victorious Christian lives.

The plan of salvation provides pardon from the penalty of sin and release from the power of sin. As Christians we may occasionally stumble and fall, but we are no longer in bondage to sin.

1. What promise do the Scriptures give to those who surrender their lives to Christ?

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

The Bible assures us that if we are "in Christ" _____

things have become _____.

To be "in Christ" means that we surrender our will to Him and invite His Spirit to fill our lives with His love, grace, and power.

2. Is it possible for us to change ourselves? Without Jesus, what are we accustomed to do?

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil" (Jer. 13:23).

Our natural inclination, what we are accustomed to do, is _____.

3. How did Jesus describe this miraculous change to Nicodemus?

"Jesus answered and said to Him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'" (John 3:3).

Jesus instructed Nicodemus to be _____ again.

In a few words, describe how you understand being born again.



4. The apostle Paul used another image to describe the miraculous change that takes place when we come to Jesus. What is it? *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).*

Paul said: “I have been _____ with _____.”

In your own words describe what it means to be crucified with Christ.

5. When Jesus enters our lives through His Holy Spirit, what three things take place? Read the verses below and list the changes that occur on the lines provided.

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12).

“And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:24, 25).

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

6. When does this miraculous new birth occur? Circle the words in the text that describe our role?

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me” (Rev. 3:20).

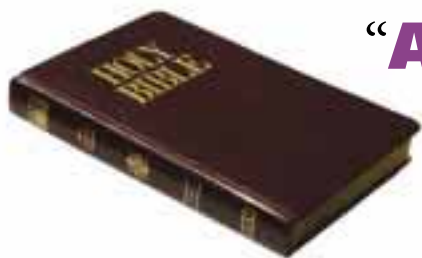
To experience the new birth, all we have to do is open our hearts to Jesus, and let Him work His will in our lives.

7. What promise does Jesus give us when we come to Him?

“The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out” (John 6:37).

Jesus will not _____ us _____.

This is incredibly good news. We cannot change ourselves. But as we come to Jesus, He changes our lives. He will not cast us out; He loves us; He accepts us just as we are as we come to Him. We come as we are, but we do not stay as we are. There is power in the gospel of Christ to change us. That is wonderfully good news.



“A Life-Changing Faith”
is the topic of next month’s
Bible Study.

LETTERS

Giving Back in Vietnam

I read the news story about Vietnam granting the Adventist Church official recognition, in the January 2009 issue, and am interested in doing mission work in Vietnam, especially around Ho Chi Minh City. My birthplace is only about 45 minutes from Ho Chi Minh City, and I hope to return there one day and do God's work. I hope to be able to contact Pastor Khoi Tran so I can ask him if I can help the next time I return to Vietnam.

Thank you very much for writing this article. It touched my heart as well as my soul.

My family came from Vietnam as immigrants to the United States many years ago and, with God's blessings, we are doing well. To thank Him, I would like to give some service to Him in Vietnam.

KIMBERLY LU, M.P.H.
Thousand Oaks, California,
United States

Global Church Preaches Antismoking Message

I am responding to the January 2009 World Health column entitled "Global Church Preaches Antismoking Message." Congratulations to the Health Ministries Department of the General Conference for its proposal to act in the field of world health in partnership with other entities on the smoking issue, rescuing its image of pioneers in the area. Times are different and the challenges thus determine it.

Brazil has one of the three best programs on smoking control in the world, coordinated by the organization known as INCA

“The Father’s commandments and Christ’s commandments are one and the same.”

—LARRY R. VALOROZO
Makati City, Philippines

(National Institute of Cancer) of the Ministry of Health whose original structure, from the 1970s, utilized the experience of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with the Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking.

JONATAS REICHERT, M.D.
Curitiba, Brazil

Hands Raised in Worship

I appreciated Angel Manuel Rodríguez's willingness to look at a very controversial topic in "Raised Hands in Worship" (February 2009). The question posed was the correct one: Is there any biblical support for this?

Much of the article pointed out the numerous places in Scripture where both permission and directive are given. The only unfortunate thing was that Rodríguez's conclusion to the article was focused more on people and culture rather than answering the question of what God's Word says. There may be wisdom in his suggestion to "follow the common practice of the congregation." But

does the fact that someone raising their hands can be disruptive reflect negatively on the hand-raiser, or on those who are so easily distracted and intolerant of something so scriptural? It seems David and Paul would feel very out of place in most of our churches.

MARC JUDD
Moorpark, California,
United States

The Law

I was touched by the November 2008 Bible Questions column by Angel Manuel Rodríguez. As I see it, there are laws to differentiate in this issue on "God's law" or "Moses' law." Many professing Christians today are completely ignorant about these laws. Most of these religious organizations, either Catholic or Protestant, believed that the "law of God has been abrogated and was crucified in the cross of Calvary" when Jesus died. To illuminate the minds of our readers, I wish to convey what Jesus said about God's law. How did Jesus address

LETTERS

God's law in His famous sermon? He said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:17, 18, KJV).

Some theorize that the Ten Commandments are the Father's, while Christ's commandments are just two, totally unrelated to the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament. A careful study of the Ten Commandments, however, reveals that the first four deal with our love toward God, while the last six deal with our relationship to our neighbor. This is why Jesus said, "On these two commandments hang

all the law" (Matt. 22:40, KJV). The Father's commandments and Christ's commandments are one and the same.

LARRY R. VALOROZO
Makati City, Philippines



Work Appreciated

I am humbled to learn that God has [people] like you working for Him! I know your work at *Adventist World* is quiet,

yet powerful. May the Holy Spirit continue to use you.

Your magazine has performed a lot of work in Zimbabwe. Before I

left for Dubai, United Arab Emirates, my conference sent me to a remote district called Dete, with the task of working under the theme "Lift up Jesus, tell the world without delay." After distributing the magazine, a young man came to me after reading it and asked to be baptized. He told me that he had actually read *Adventist World* several times, and the appeal for baptism continued to trouble him. We baptized him.

THABANI MOYO
Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Letters Policy: Please send your letters to the editor to: letters@adventistworld.org. Letters must be clearly written and to the point, 250-word maximum. Be sure to include the name of the article, the date of publication, and page number with your letter. Also include your name, the town/city, state, and country from which you are writing. Letters will be edited for space and clarity. Not all letters submitted will be published.

THE PLACE OF PRAYER

I need a blessing in my life—my self-esteem is poor and I am depressed. I am young and want to achieve my goals, but have begun badly. Please pray for me.

PERCY, *United States*

I am currently pursuing a master's degree in neuropsychology. Please pray for me to successfully finish this program within the stipulated time; and pray that I should be able to financially support my two young sisters and a niece who are in school.

GABRIEL, *Zambia*

Please pray that God will bless me with wisdom and a stable job. Pray also for my family.

VICTOR, *Malawi*

Thank you for your prayers in the past regarding my studies. I continue to pass science courses at the university and I am planning to apply for a scholarship to study for a bachelor's degree in aviation if it is God's will. Please remember me in your prayers.

ROBERT, *Vanuatu*

During my 12 years of marriage I have been trying to have a baby. I have had miscarriages instead. Please pray that this year will be a good year for me and all those with similar problems.

SIHLE, *Zimbabwe*

Please pray for my uncle who suffered a stroke. I pray that God will heal him and prolong his years, and that he will give God his life.

ELLE, *United States*

Please pray for my two siblings and me for financial support for our college studies. I hope to graduate next year. My dream is to work at Palawan Adventist Academy.

MELODY, *Philippines*

The Place of Prayer; send to prayer@adventistworld.org. Send us your prayer requests and praise (thanks for answered prayer). Keep your entries short and concise, 75 words maximum. Items sent to this category will be edited for space and clarity. Even though we will pray for each entry during our weekly staff meetings, not all submissions will be printed. Please include your name and your country's name with your entry. You may also fax requests to: 1-301-680-6638; or mail them to *Adventist World*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600 U.S.A.

EXCHANGE OF IDEAS

A Well-worn Bible

This month a reader shows a mother's prayerful dedication.



Top: Anice Schwarzer shows friends the worn Bible she inherited from her mother, Sarah Lee Peterson. **Bottom:** For 39 years, Sarah Lee Peterson put her hand on Isaiah 54 and 55 in her Bible as she prayed for her children.

RALPH NEALL

the judgment the influence of her prayers upon the life of her children.... When passion is warring for the mastery, the power of love, the restraining, earnest, determined influence of the mother, may balance the soul on the side of right" (*The Adventist Home*, p. 266).

—SUBMITTED BY RALPH NEALL, from Ooltewah, Tennessee, United States

For 39 years, from 1945 until her death in 1984, Sarah Lee Peterson prayed daily for her children. She put her hand on Isaiah 54 and 55 while she prayed each time. As you can see in the photos, Peterson wore the pages out as she claimed the promises in those chapters, especially noting Isaiah 54:13. Peterson's daughter, Anice Schwarzer, from Collegedale, Tennessee, United States, recently showed the worn book to the women's Bible study group she attends.

Peterson lived well the admonitions in Scripture. She also epitomizes these words from Ellen G. White:

"It is impossible to estimate the power of a praying mother's influence. She acknowledges God in all her ways. She takes her children before the throne of grace and presents them to Jesus, pleading for His blessing upon them.... The power of a mother's prayers cannot be too highly estimated. She who kneels beside her son and daughter through the vicissitudes of childhood, through the perils of youth, will never know till

"Behold, I come quickly..."

Our mission is to uplift Jesus Christ, uniting Seventh-day Adventists everywhere in beliefs, mission, life, and hope.

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The PEOPLE'S PLACE

ADVENTIST LIFE

While in Jamaica as a volunteer at Andrews Memorial Hospital I was hurriedly called upon one Sabbath to speak at the Andrews church, since the invited speaker had not shown up.

After I spoke and was greeting members at the door, I was paid the greatest compliment I have ever received. A young girl about 13 years of age said, as she shook my hand, "I did not sleep today."

—Linbrook Barker, Riverside, California, United States

One Sunday morning we had rushed out to go swimming. My husband, Craig, said to our son rather sternly, "Edmund, you have your shirt on backwards; did you not look at yourself?"

I then looked at my husband and said, "Honey, did you not look at *yourself*? You have your shirt on inside-out." This was my opportunity to paraphrase and remind them of the text in Matthew 7:5 where we are told to "take the plank out of our eyes, before we take the speck out of someone else's eyes."

—Nadine Brown, Ajax, Ontario, Canada



WHERE IN THE WORLD IS THIS?



DANIEL R. DA SILVA

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Measured against eternity, our time on earth is just a blink of an eye, but the consequences of it will last forever."

—Larry L. Lichtenwalter, senior pastor, Village Seventh-day Adventist Church, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States, from his book, *Revelation's Great Love Story*

SHARE WITH US!

We are looking for brief submissions in these categories:

ADVENTIST QUOTES (profound or spontaneous)

ADVENTIST LIFE (short anecdotes, especially from the world of adults)

WHERE IN THE WORLD? (high-quality photos of members from around the globe)

Please send your submissions to The People's Place, *Adventist World*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; fax: 301-680-6638; e-mail: marank@gc.adventist.org. Please include phone number. Submissions will not be acknowledged or returned.

ANSWER: In Melchtal, Lucerne, Switzerland, Pathfinders from the club Estrelas do Sul enjoy the outdoors. The club is from the Angolan church in Zurich, and is composed mostly of people from Angola, but also Brazilians and people from Paraguay. The church community speaks Portuguese.