

JULY-SEPTEMBER 1999

CQ

COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

*"In the
Beginning..."*





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JULY - SEPTEMBER 1999

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Welcome to *CQ*'s World!

The following pages represent the creative energy of a truly international group of Adventist young adults. The map above indicates the locations of the writers who have participated in *CQ*'s writing program for this quarter.

In producing this unique Sabbath School lesson quarterly, more than 300 individuals contribute to *CQ* each year. The wide variety—and occasional repetition—of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond individually to the subject under study.

Worldwide circulation of *CQ* is about 59,000. It is published in the English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and Finnish languages.

Ever think about writing a Sabbath School Quarterly?

Why not! Each year 300 young adults from around the world participate in the *Collegiate Quarterly* writing program. CQ gives Seventh-day Adventist young people aged 18 to 35 a unique opportunity to grow spiritually, to share the benefits of their Bible study, to exchange ideas, and to contribute to the mission of the church.

You are the most important ingredient in our CQ formula because you can be the answer to our greatest need—the need for caring, committed, contributing authors. If you think you'd like to participate in the writing of a lesson—and get paid for it—write us today:

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CQ
COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

This Quarter's Illustrator



Shane Johnson, the illustrator of this quarter's issue of *CQ*, hails from Blackburn, Australia. After graduating from Carmel Adventist College in 1993, he studied at Midland College of Tafe and graduated in 1997 from the Western Australia School of Art and Design. As hobbies he enjoys rock climbing, camping, hiking, caving—anything, in his words, “that gets the adrenaline pumping.”

Getting the Most Out of *CQ*

Facts You Should Know

CQ is based on the conviction that the Word of God offers transforming power and that group study is one important way to tap into that power. *CQ*'s purpose is to provide Seventh-day Adventist young adults with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed each week in Sabbath School. Many who use the adult quarterly find that because *CQ* deals with the same topics as the adult quarterly, it enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

Adventist young-adult groups work together in producing this quarterly. More than three hundred individuals contribute to *CQ* each year. The wide variety—and occasional repetition—of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond creatively and individually to the subject.

Circulation of *CQ* is about fifty-nine thousand.

Pointers for Study

1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.
2. The Bible passage on which each week's lesson is based appears in bold type in the "Logos" (Monday's portion of the lesson). Read this entire passage in conjunction with the quarterly introduction to give you an overview of the lesson.

3. The Bible passage for the week is divided into sections on the "Logos" pages (Monday's portion of the lesson). When studying this section, carefully reread the Bible passages indicated in bold headings before reading the comments beneath the heading.

4. Read the remainder of the sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passage.

5. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the quarterly:

"Introduction" (Sunday) is designed to stimulate your interest and focus your thinking on the week's theme.

"Logos" (Monday), as described above, is a guide for direct study of the Bible passage for the week.

"Testimony" (Tuesday) presents Ellen White's perspective on the lesson theme.

"Evidence" (Wednesday) approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective.

"How-To" (Thursday) discusses what the abstractions in the lesson mean for day-to-day living.

"Opinion" (Friday), a personal viewpoint on the lesson, is meant to encourage further thought and discussion.

CQ and the Church

CQ is the General Conference-approved quarterly for the collegiate/young-adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. *However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.*

JUST MAKE-BELIEVE?



“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1, NKJV).

A New Pair of Glasses

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rom. 1:20

As a child I was led to believe in legendary characters like Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, and the Tooth Fairy. I went to movies like *Mary Poppins* and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and saw how magical ladies and flying automobiles could make the world free of troubles and filled with happy endings. I learned about Creation and the Garden of Eden and Noah and the Flood. But these were lumped into the same category with Saint Nick and Disney: childhood myths.

When I grew up, I learned that there really was no Santa Claus who knew if you were naughty or nice, or fairies who could magically make things right again. I began reading the classics in search of other answers. Studying the Bible was just another intellectual exercise, however, and I still viewed the stories in Genesis as beloved fiction, no more sacred than other kinds of literature.

Raised in the Catholic faith, I dutifully confessed my sins to priests who determined my penance and prayed *for* me. I attended a secular college, turned away from Catholicism altogether, and decided just to “new-age it.” I looked down my nose at Christians handing out biblical literature. There was no place for God in my life.

Suddenly (actually, right on time) the Holy Spirit convicted my heart, and I fell

I turned away from Catholicism altogether and decided just to “new-age it.”

in love with Jesus. With childlike glee, more wonderful than hearing about a Santa Claus and more stimulating than any classic novel, I have grown to understand God’s power to redeem and His right to judge. I now rely on Jesus’ promises and wonderful counsel in times of trouble and guardian angels (not fairies) to watch over me.

As I look at the world through Christian eyeglasses, I endorse the doctrine of creation as it is spelled out in Genesis 1–11, that the creation of the earth really did occur in six literal, 24-hour days, that it is not just some beloved story—God spoke planet Earth into being, and it happened. It is plain to see God’s laws at work on this earth. He does not annul them or apply them to some situations and not to others. He continually moves through them, using them as His instruments.

So, if by chance you, too, are being swayed from God’s Word, know this: His laws are true, and only through faith nurtured by the presence of the Holy Spirit will you find intellectual, emotional, rational, and spiritual fulfillment. Embrace Romans 1:20 in faith: “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse” (NIV).

By Suzanne Bars, a counselor at Eastern Oregon University, at La Grande.

Real Acting

LOGOS

Genesis 1, 2; John 1:1-18; 14:16-28; 16:5-16

The triune God, the Creators, is credited with the formation of unnumbered galaxies. Together the Trinity plans to create yet another. On this futuristic planet, called Earth, a new order of being is planned with more Godlike capabilities than any other created being (Gen. 1:26). Such a creation could communicate, create, and bring ever more glory to the meaning of the name *God*. The Creators also considered the possibility that this new creation could turn against them. They agreed to a difficult but workable plan of redemption if needed (1 Pet. 1:19, 20).

Meet the Actors: The Dream Team

The supreme God being is awesome. The Father's devotion for His creation is compelling. His presence inspires all creation into spontaneous praise with music and song. The Son takes the lead role in creation (John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16). He creates with the power of the spoken word. His words spark the action that shapes the plans of the trio. Closest to the action is the Spirit, taking the words of the Son and forming them into their desired end (Gen. 1:2; John 16:13-15). The Spirit seems to choose the most hands-on relationship with the

The Creators also considered the possibility that this new creation could turn against them.

creation even from the beginning. Together they are the dream team of the universe. They have no beginning, no end, and limitless power.

Lights! Camera! Action!

The first day of action begins with God surveying a formless mass and asking for "lights, please." As the Spirit moves, so appear the lights. Next, God wants to make the mass take some shape. He commands it to separate into parts, having water in two places with atmosphere in between. On the third day, He separates the waters further, giving rise to earth. Immediately the earth gathers interest as all manner of vegetation appears at the command of God. Trees, grass, and flowers in abundance cover the new stage area called land. On the fourth day God wants even more light illuminating center stage, so He makes the spotlights and mood lights we call the sun, moon, and stars.

The action intensifies on the fifth day as the Holy Spirit guided by the Word of God forms all manner of living creatures to appear in the water and in the air. The small one-cell creatures in the sea are dwarfed by the mammoth whales. Hummingbirds are lost in the flowers yet not unseen by the majestic eagle's eye. But the center stage area of earth is still noticeably quiet.

On the sixth day all the universe focuses on the action. The Son speaks the words as the Holy Spirit deftly transforms each word into the marvelous third dimension. Living animals great and small explore their new home. Monkeys swing in the trees, and the dogs search for a master, but none is found. With mounting anticipation, the whole universe stops to see God form humankind from

the dust of the ground and breathe into him his first breath. They are amazed at the similarity between humanity and its Creator. After a proud tour of the new planet with its unnamed creatures, Adam rejoices with Eve, his mate who is made of a rib from his side. There is a certain uniqueness about this new couple as they are in the very image of God. All creation is aware of the superior and Godlike capabilities of these new beings called humanity.

The action is really not over yet. God is celebrating His accomplishment with a rest to relish communion with His new creation. He dedicates a final day to foster a relationship with humankind as the grand finale to the biggest stage play of the universe. It's a perfect marriage of needs. Humanity finds its most fulfilled moments in praise to God. As God receives the praise for His loving character, all His creative desires are fulfilled (Isa. 43:7, 21).

Back Stage With the Actors

Even the ancient writers of the Bible struggle to describe the great God of the universe. Nevertheless, Paul says we can know and understand the invisible qualities of God by the visible things He has made (Rom. 1:20). The cooperative and complex relationship of the triune God is easier to picture as we identify the various roles and abilities of each in the creative process. Though we struggle to understand the relationship of the Godhead, the power of God is beyond comprehension. Through the number of stars, Isaiah portrays the mighty power of God, yet God can name each one (40:25, 26). When Job tries to understand God, He answers by showing His awesome power to create the world we yet struggle to understand, let alone recreate (chapters 38-41). When God created the worlds, He hung them in space (26:7). He made everything from nothing, and when it was complete, He placed it upon nothing!

REACT

1. What are the similarities among the roles of the Trinity in creation and their more obvious roles in redemption?
2. How is it possible for us to regain the "express image of God" while living here on earth? (Col. 3:10).
3. Explain in your own words what is meant by the expression "without form and void" (Heb. 11:3).
4. What does the day of rest coming immediately after the creation of humanity tell us about God's needs? About human needs?
5. If God is omnipotent, how can He have "needs" of any kind?
6. How can a biblical concept of creation be compatible with a scientific study of nature?
7. We say that God's power causes His created beings to break into songs of praise, but this is not necessarily the attitude we carry through daily life. How can we truly increase our admiration and gratitude for the triune God?
8. If God had other planets to love and care for, why did He create a world knowing it would ultimately fall to sin?
9. How did other created beings worship God prior to the introduction of the seventh-day Sabbath through Creation?

By Dan Beckner, an optometrist in La Grande, Oregon.

Revealed in His Word

TESTIMONY

Key Texts: Heb. 11:3; John 1:1-18

Many scientists insist that our world evolved by chance—*billions* of years ago. However, the Bible reports that “in the beginning God *created* the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). Evolution or creation? Happenstance or structured design?

“The Divine Mind and Hand has preserved through the ages the record of creation in its purity. It is the Word of God alone that gives to us an authentic account of the creation of our world.”¹

To believe in Creation is to believe in our Creator. To believe in our Creator is to believe in His power to redeem us and His ultimate right to judge us. Despite this miraculous act of Creation, Satan has deceived humanity. “He had dared to change the only precept of the divine law that unmistakably points all mankind to the true and living God. In the fourth commandment, God is revealed as the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and is thereby distinguished from all false gods.”² Through Creation the Sabbath was introduced, and it will be a sign of faithfulness to God at the close of time (Rev. 14:7).

Some scholars don’t want you to believe that the Word spoke and “through him all things were made” (John 1:3). “Men will endeavor to explain from natural

To believe in our Creator is to believe in His power to redeem us.

causes the work of Creation, which God has never revealed. But human science cannot search out the secrets of the God of heaven, and explain the stupendous works of Creation, which were a miracle of Almighty power, any sooner than it can show how God came into existence.”³

Evolution offers no hope, no redeeming Savior. “Divorce God from the acquisition of knowledge, and you have a lame, one-sided education, dead to all the saving qualities that give true power to man . . . God is revealed in His word.”⁴ “When men leave the Word of God in regard to the history of Creation, and seek to account for God’s creative works upon natural principles, they are upon a boundless ocean of uncertainty.”⁵ To believe in Creation is to have faith in a God that loves you, who died for you, and is waiting to come again to take you to heaven.

1. *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, pp. 351, 352.

2. *The Great Controversy*, pp. 53, 54.

3. *Lift Him Up*, p. 59.

4. *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 395.

5. *Lift Him Up*, p. 52.

By David Riley, an electrical engineer in Union, Oregon.

Fossil Fallacies

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Gen. 1:1

Genesis 1:1 should be all the evidence required to prove that there is a creator, and for millions it is sufficient. Many of the greatest minds in the world, however, have turned to the theory of evolution because they have been taught to accept it as true. Yet evolution is doomed to remain a theory.

Most people will agree on one of two things: God does not exist, and it's just you and the elements; or there is a God by whom we were created.

One of the main things that prompted evolutionist ideas is the physical similarity between species. Logically, it only makes sense for God to simplify His task of creating a world of different species by making them similar (hence the similarity in DNA for instance). It is also logical that God would make the creatures of the world adaptable to their environment. Though a bulldog may be able to evolve into a pit bull, however, this doesn't mean a pit bull can evolve into a giraffe.

Another factor that prompts evolutionist theories is fossil records. Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, for example, has a display containing several fossils mounted on what looks like a family tree, with the base of the tree supposedly representing the first single-celled organisms ever to exist (our ancestors). The

Many of the greatest minds in the world, however, have turned to the theory of evolution.

base of the tree and all of the main branches, however, are devoid of any fossils. They are all theoretical! The parts of the tree actually containing fossils could as well have been drawn as several unattached columns. Not only are there no missing links between human and simian, there are no links between any species ever documented.¹

The exponential population growth of the human race proves well that human-kind hasn't been around for as long as many would believe. Even taking into account things like plagues, wars, and lack of modern life-saving technology, the world population would be considerably more than what it is now.²

The evidence for a Creator God is staggering. Do some research for yourself!

REACT

1. If the world were to dismiss evolution and accept God as Creator, how would faith be affected?

2. What should be our response to those who assert that Creation has no scientific proof and is therefore superstition?

1. Phillip Johnson, *Darwinism: Science or Naturalistic Philosophy?* (Colorado Springs, Colo., Access Research Network, 1994).

2. Kent E. Hovind, *Dinosaurs, Creation, Evolution.*

By Stephen Kunkel, a psychology student at Eastern Oregon University at La Grande.

To Believe or Not to Believe

HOW-TO

Key Text: Rom. 1:20

“Mom, did you know that sharks are the oldest fish in the ocean?” My daughter Jessie—a fourth-grader—asked me one day after school. She told me she was learning that sharks were the first fish in the ocean and that others came along later. We opened our Bibles to Genesis 1:21 and we read: “God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds” (NIV). My daughter, who was taught the creation story from early childhood, was confused by what she was learning at her public school.

We, too, can become confused by all the “scientific” explanations of evolution. It is reported as fact on the TV and in the newspapers. It is taught from kindergarten to college. Who should we believe? Ask yourself these three important questions and see how you feel:

1. Who am I? Evolution says that we are from a protoplasm that washed up on some beach. Creation says that we are made in God’s own image (verse 26).

2. Where did I come from? Evolution says that we came from a big bang 20 million years ago. Creation says that “In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth” (verse 1).

“Mom, did you know that sharks are the oldest fish in the ocean?”

3. Where are we going? Evolution says that we go back to the ground to come back as another plant or animal. If this theory holds true, then we must be here just to have fun. So, if it feels good, do it! Creation says that we are going to heaven to live eternally with our Creator. Those who have died in Christ will rise again at the Second Coming (1 Thess. 4:15-17).

Time to draw your own conclusions. Which belief gives you the most hope and reason to live? Why? If you have lost loved ones to death, which belief gives you reason to believe that you will see them again?

God has made every attempt to show you His majesty and wonder in nature. Romans 1:20 says, “Since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse” (NIV).

Nature speaks volumes about our Wonderful Creator—His order, how intricate everything is made, and most important, how much He loves us.

REACT

Most people probably do not directly decide their moral convictions based on their belief in evolution. Should we make the connection as Christians? How should we communicate the idea that origins are related to everyday morals?

By Wendy Onjukka, a teacher's aide in Imbler, Oregon.

It's Crunch Time

OPINION

Key Text: Ps. 33:6

"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth" (Ps. 33:6, NIV).

You've probably noticed that the final minutes of a great championship game have some of the best plays and greatest efforts by the athletes. If you're like me, you don't like to miss that part of a game. If it was your favorite team, you wouldn't want to be found asleep, would you? Have you been spiritually sleepy and lazy lately?

The final minutes in history are coming to a close now. As in the last half of a championship game, the time has come to wake up (Rom. 13:11). It's time to stand up, cheer, and support the winning team: God as Creator and Savior. The call from Scripture is to "fear God and give him glory. . . . Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water" (Rev. 14:7, NIV).

We live about 6,000 years from the tipoff of God's almighty act of Creation (Gen. 1:1). Don't be surprised that "your enemy [the other team] the devil prowls around like a roaring lion [a hyped-up team] looking for someone to devour [defeat]" (1 Pet. 5:8, NIV). Peter, who lived face to face with our Savior, knew plenty about being influenced and pressured by popular opinion. So just following

God is the hero and most valuable player.

this thought, he said, "Resist him, standing firm in the faith" (verse 9). The captain of the other team would love to defeat you with his plays of evolution.

Next time you're tempted to doubt what the Bible says about your origins, why not remind Satan that no member of his team has ever come back from the bench (death). On the other hand, your team captain, Jesus, died and rose after raising team player Lazarus from the bench of death. Doesn't that fill you with hope as you look to the future of earth's "final minutes" before our Savior returns? Support the winning side. "Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57, NIV). Keep watching and waiting for what God will do. He is the hero and most valuable player. He will carry you through life and into eternal life, where the mysteries of Creation will be studied for eternity.

REACT

1. In what ways can you let others know that you are a fan of God and believe in Creation as declared in the Bible?
2. Matthew 24:13 says, "He who stands firm to the end will be saved" (NIV). What are some ways to accomplish this daily, in order to stand firm over a lifetime?
3. Who should decide on what plays and strategies to use in the closing period of earth's history? Is it all the call of the coach (God)?

By Sam Onjukka, a microbiologist with the State Department of Fish and Wildlife, La Grande, Oregon.

MEETING GOD: VOLUMES 1 AND 2



“The word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does” (Ps. 33:4, NIV).

It Was Very Good

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Gen. 1

Do you remember those hot, sticky Sabbath afternoons at church? You were probably participating in Junior Adventist Youth Society or Pathfinders when the activity for the afternoon was announced: a nature walk!

For some this may bring back sweet memories—laughing and joking with friends. For me, however, the nature walk was my worst nightmare. It wasn't the fact that the nature walk was a 10-mile hike but the fear of being stung by bees, the possibility of stepping in something unpleasant, and the ritual of picking green flies out of my hair and off my clothes was too much for me to bear. The notion of getting to know God through this activity was not only remote but highly undesirable.

Although nature walks are still not my forte, as I have grown older I have developed a greater appreciation for God's creation, and truly "it [is] very good!" (Gen. 1:31). Take a moment to consider the flowers. Even the unbelieving world equates their beauty with love!

The notion of getting to know God through this activity was remote.

God is love! Everything He does is out of love, and all creation demonstrates His unconditional love for us. Matthew 5:45 says, "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (NIV).

This week, take time out, some quality time out, to study about God's marvelous creations. Everything He made from the beginning has been for us to enjoy. So try that nature walk (you may even enjoy it!) for God is speaking to you through His works. He is saying to you, "I love you."

By Andrea Dawes, a final year BA student in business studies at Demontfort University, Leicester, England.

God's Love Through Nature and His Word

LOGOS

2 Tim. 3:16; Rom. 1:20; 2:14, 15; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; Ps. 19; 33:4-9

“Nature and revelation alike testify of God’s love. Our Father in heaven is the source of life, of wisdom, and of joy. . . . It is God who supplies the daily needs of all His creatures.”¹

In this modern age of technology, human beings have researched various means of sustaining or prolonging life. No one, however, has been able to devise a method of creating life.

In the late 1970s Yale University biophysicist Harold J. Meremiths drew some remarkable conclusions on how much it would cost to make a human body. Here are his observations:

1. Taking into consideration the proteins and the enzymes, the RNA and the DNA, amino acids, and other complex biochemicals that make up the staff of life, fashioning this chemical shopping list into human cells might cost six quadrillion dollars.

2. Assembling the resulting heap of cells into tissue, the tissue into organs, and the organs into a warm body might drain all the resources of this world, with no guarantee of success.

The omnipotent God, who doesn’t even need the help of scientific research, can

Fashioning this chemical shopping list into human cells might cost six quadrillion dollars.

create the oceans and the mountains by one single breath and command life by just one word (Ps. 33:6-9). Human attempts show how feeble we are. Consider that what God created “stood fast” (verse 9, KJV). That is the mighty Creator! Do you not consider yourself fortunate to be a part of His handiwork?

Through the Scriptures, God has made it possible for us to gain the knowledge necessary to turn from our sinful ways, turn ourselves over to Him, and allow Him to transform us (Psalm 19).

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16, 17, NIV).

God created a perfect world in which peace, joy, and love reigned supreme in harmony with the will of the Creator. The entrance of sin disturbed this unity. Nevertheless, God’s love for us remains constant, and He reveals His love to us through His Word. The Bible, therefore, is our standard of God’s character. It teaches us, it guides us, and most importantly, it restores the broken relationship between us and our Maker.

Fortunately, we do not follow “cleverly invented stories” (2 Pet. 1:16, NIV). Furthermore, we can have confidence in what the Bible says because God cannot lie (Titus 1:2).

In 2 Peter 1:19-21, we are admonished that the Bible is inspired by the same God who is the inspiration behind this beautifully created universe. The warning

is also given to us to study the Scriptures carefully because it enlightens every aspect of our lives.

People who do not believe in Creation and challenge the idea of studying nature and the Bible simultaneously fail to acknowledge that the study of science itself directly points us to a greater power. The more one studies into science and nature, the more that person is without excuse in denying the very existence of God (Rom. 1:20).

The study of the Bible points to the author of creation itself. Some who acknowledge the existence of a higher being without recognizing the fact that this higher being is in control of their lives, however, may continue to uphold strong principles regarding the law and their own personal values and belief systems (2:14, 15). God does not want us to be ignorant concerning His identity and His nature. Ellen White gives us this advice:

“The clearness of our views of truth will be proportionate to our understanding of the Word of God. He who gives the Scriptures close, prayerful attention will gain clear comprehension and sound judgment, as if in turning to God he had reached a higher grade of intelligence.”²

Every time we open our Bibles, every flower we see in bloom, every drop of rain we see falling—all point to the fact that God wishes to close the gap between Himself and humankind that has been caused by sin. Are you willing to close that gap too?

REACT

1. How does God prove Himself to be faithful to His promises?
2. What did it cost God to buy us back from the devil? What does it cost us?
3. Can we disconnect Jesus’ act of redemption from our assertion that creation is truth? If not, why not?
4. Some things in nature are harmful and repulsive. How can these testify of God’s love?
5. How would you help someone to understand the link between nature and Scripture? Be specific.

1. *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, pp. 247, 248.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

By Sara Mullan, a student of law and French at Demontfort University, Leicester; and Aleffa Carbone, an A-level pre-medical student in Leicester, England.

Can Nature and Scripture Be Combined?

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Ps. 19:1

“Nature and revelation alike testify of God’s love. . . . Look at the wonderful and beautiful things of nature. Think of their marvelous adaptation to the needs and happiness, not only of man, but of all living creatures. The sunshine and the rain, that gladden and refresh the earth, the hills and sea and plains, all speak to us of the Creator’s love. It is God who supplies the daily needs of all His creatures.”¹

“God made man perfectly holy and happy; and the fair earth, as it came from the Creator’s hand, bore no blight of decay or shadow of the curse. It is transgression of God’s law—the law of love—that has brought woe and death. Yet even amid the suffering that results from sin, God’s love is revealed. It is written that God cursed the ground for man’s sake. Genesis 3:17. The thorn and the thistle—the difficulties and trials that make his life one of toil and care—were appointed for his good as a part of the training needful in God’s plan for his uplifting from the ruin and degradation that sin has wrought. The world, though fallen, is not all sorrow and misery. In nature itself are messages of hope and comfort. There are flowers upon the thistles, and the thorns are covered with roses.”²

“Natural things were the medium for the spiritual; the things of nature and the

**“ Even amid the suffering that results from sin,
God’s love is revealed.”**

life-experience of His hearers were connected with the truths of the written word. Leading thus from the natural to the spiritual kingdom, Christ’s parables are links in the chain of truth that unites man with God, and earth with heaven.”³

“Through the creation we are to become acquainted with the Creator. The book of nature is a great lesson book, which in connection with the Scriptures we are to use in teaching others of His character, and guiding lost sheep back to the fold of God.”⁴

“In these lessons direct from nature, there is a simplicity and purity that makes them of the highest value. All need the teaching to be derived from this source. In itself the beauty of nature leads the soul away from sin and worldly attractions, and toward purity, peace, and God.”⁵

1. *Steps to Christ*, p. 9.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 10.

3. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 17, 18.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

5. *Ibid.*

By Brian Simon, a pharmacist at Leicester Royal Pharmacy, England.

“It Was Good”

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Ps. 19:1

One of nature’s most compelling witnesses of God’s creation is to view a sunrise, to feel the sun’s warmth as it climbs above the horizon. Have you ever witnessed an earthrise?

Late in December 1968, as people rushed to do their Christmas shopping, pioneering events were taking place in the heavens above them. Three American astronauts, Frank Borman, James Lovell, and William Anders, aboard the *Apollo 8* spacecraft, were on their way to the moon. Till that point in time no one had left the gravitational pull of the planet they called home. The three astronauts did so on Christmas Eve, as they swung into lunar orbit. For 45 minutes the fragile craft was cut off from earthly communications as it disappeared behind the dark side of the moon.

When *Apollo 8* emerged from the blackout, the astronauts viewed a most impressive sight. Like a gleaming jewel floating in the darkness (Job 26:7), the earth rose above the moonscape. The astronauts witnessed an earthrise.

The words of the psalmist (33:8) came true as this marvel was shared with millions of people all over earth by beaming back pictures from the television

For 45 minutes the fragile craft was cut off from earthly communications.

cameras on board. During the broadcast the astronauts read the story of Creation from the first 10 verses of the Bible (Gen. 1:1-10) “and God saw that it was good.” Astronaut Borman concluded, “Good night, good luck, a Merry Christmas, and God bless all of you—all of you on the good earth.” The broadcast ended as the *Apollo* spacecraft blacked out behind the moon once more.

From whichever viewpoint you look on God’s creation, whether you are an astronaut in space or a farmer in the field, it can be said, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands” (Ps. 19:1, NIV).

My work is in computational fluid dynamics (CFD). I use computers to study fluids—gases or liquids—and their dynamics, the way they move. So what’s this good for? CFD is used to predict the weather, determine the shape of the next car model, and help get a supersonic car through the sound barrier. So what does this tell us?

Assuming that someday the intricate pattern of air flowing over an aircraft could be stated in an equation, there are no computers that could solve such a problem. I stand in awe at the complexity in God’s creation.

By Denver Reynold, a doctoral student in engineering at Leicester University, England.

Your Guide to “DIY Nest Building”

HOW-TO

Key Text: Gen. 1:1

How do we find God in nature? It doesn't seem possible when you think of it superficially. However, very little is gained when we look at things superficially.

It is a fact that when we look closely at creation, we can see God. Here are some examples:

1. Modern science is so advanced that it leaves very little to the imagination. Scientists have the knowledge, they claim, to clone humans in a laboratory. They can grow skin grafts and make replicas of body organs. They can do all this, but they cannot breathe the breath of life into a lifeless form. Only God can do that. Therefore, no matter how brilliant scientists are, they can only go so far.

2. How does a bird know how to build a nest? There are no bird libraries where they can get a manual on how to build nests. There are no bird supermarkets or DIY stores where they can buy a nest kit or a ready-built nest. What is more, humans cannot teach a bird to build a nest. Only God can do that. God has given them the innate talent to provide a home and shelter for their young.

3. Ants are very skilled and organized. They are able to work together in huge teams to build their accommodations and provide meals too. No one can decipher

There are no bird libraries where they can get a manual on how to build nests.

how they know how to do this. God is the answer. He has carefully engineered everything He has created to work perfectly.

Finding God in nature is possible only if we take time to do it.

REACT

1. How do we respond to scientists who say that complex animal behavior will evolve if you allow enough time?

2. What comparisons might we find in the scientific world that would help us explain God's role in creation? What do engineers do, for instance, that might illustrate how creation came about?

3. For you personally, what is nature's most compelling argument that God exists?

In the Beginning God *Evolved* the Earth?

OPINION

Key Text: Gen. 1:1

As a biology student, my thoughts on evolution were clear. The theory didn't match with God's account in Genesis 1 and 2, so it wasn't even worth paying attention to, and it never came up in exam questions anyway.

Then I started university. I met all different types of people from different backgrounds, religions, and creeds. But the people who puzzled me the most were some friends from the university Christian union. They called themselves "Evolution-Theists." They believed that God made the world but used evolution to do it. Now it was time to hit those biology textbooks again. In order to define my beliefs, I need to know a little bit about theirs. Why didn't I pay more attention in class?

My opportunity to find out more came when I attended a Christian students' conference. I actually went and sat in a seminar about evolution (never thought I'd see the day). Shocking revelations were made that top evolutionists, including Darwin himself, could not actually prove the theory and justified its existence only as a means of shutting out the possibility of God. Evolution is about the abolition of God, and modern science is out to prove that there are no gods, no designing forces, no absolute guiding principles for human society, no inherent moral or ethical codes. God and evolution are mutually exclusive.

Evolution is about the abolition of God.

The erroneous thought held by some that the Creation story in Genesis is just a bedtime story made up by Moses to keep Hebrew children happy doesn't hold true. Throughout the Bible—New Testament included—God's Creatorship is proved. Paul had a lot to say on the matter and linked the whole creation story to the supremacy of Christ (Col. 1:15-23). "Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20, NIV).

So here we have it. God is revealed plain and simple in His created work, and no one else can take credit for it. But the best news is this: God, who made everything on this planet, is on His way to reclaiming His work of art.

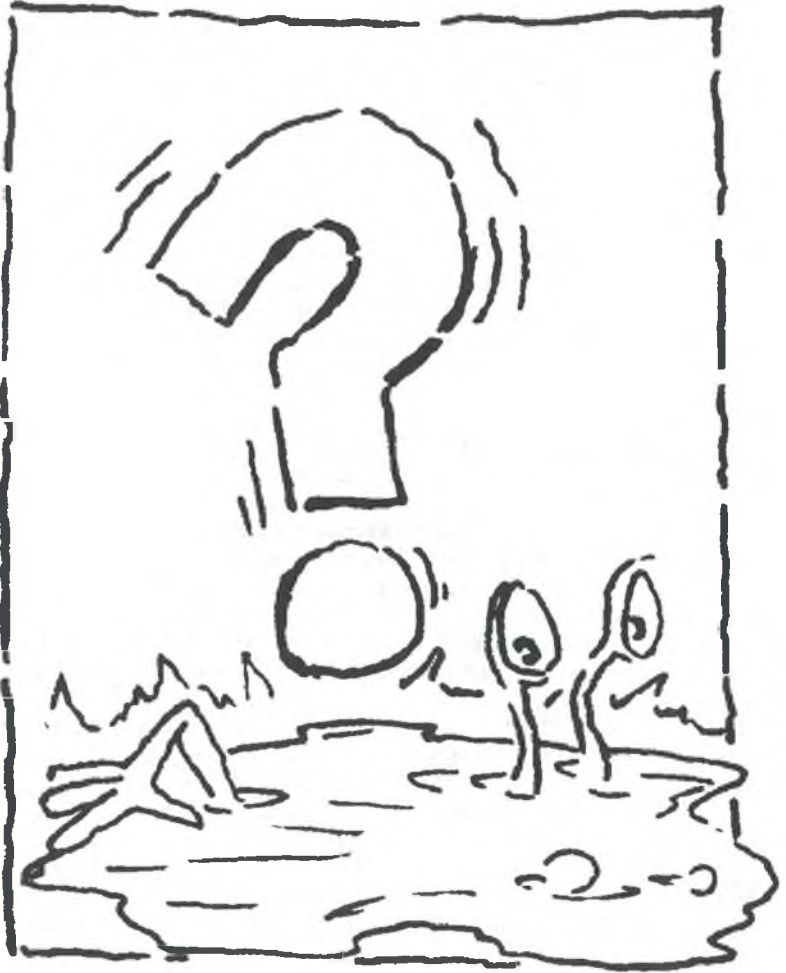
"He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon'" (Rev. 22:20, NIV).

REACT

If we engage in discussion with secular or Christian evolutionists, what should be the focus of our response to them? Should we argue away their position or present the creation/redemption scenario as a whole? Which do you find yourself doing?

By Desaline Joseph, a medical student at Leicester University, England.

BUT DID IT REALLY HAPPEN?



“I will remember the works of the LORD; surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will also meditate on all Your work, and talk of Your deeds” (Ps. 77:11, 12, NKJV).

Short and Spicy

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Isa. 43:1

Individuals have always looked for an explanation for their existence. Did creation actually happen? is a question commonly asked. A question answered Yes or No.

If one's answer is No, then there must be other means by which life came about. If we follow Newton's Law of Matter, nothing can be made from nothing. Human beings would therefore have to come from somewhere. Supposing Darwin's theory of evolution was correct, we would have to proceed to believe that human beings came from an amoeba and later developed into prehistoric humans and then us.

If one's answer is Yes, then the explanation of human existence needs no further acceptance criteria than faith. What is faith? (See Hebrews 11:1.) If one were to go on the bandwagon of faith, it could prove to be a mere excuse for human lack of knowledge. However, if we were to believe Darwin's theory that because of chance over millions of years we have evolved to what we are now, then why should we believe a theory that came from a human being who is the result of chance?

Why should we believe a theory that came from a human being who is the result of chance?

I believe in the Creation story (see Genesis 1, 2). I wonder, if it did not happen, what would be my purpose for living. Would I merely be a mistake? I am not, and neither are you!

The biblical account of Creation is one that is valid and credible. Look at the interplay of human beings and their environment: the intricate workings of the human body, the rising and setting of the sun, the ebb and flow of the tide. There must have been a Master Mind behind the origins of such wonders. They could not have happened by chance.

This week we will be looking at the question Did it really happen? As you study this subject, pray that God will strengthen and guide your mind for a better understanding of Him and His will.

By André Henry, senior information science student at West Indies College, Mandeville, Jamaica.

The Sure Word

LOGOS

Ps. 103:7; Isa. 46:9, 10; 2 Pet. 1:16-19; 3:3-7

Is God really responsible for the creation of the earth? Many persons do not believe that He really is, but the believer must take God at His Word. In His prophetic Word He declares: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. . . . For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. 33:6, 9).

"[He] laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever" (Ps. 104:5).

Our age is one that challenges confidence in what God says. Let us make a deliberate effort both to choose to believe Him and believe *in* Him.

God Is God (Ps. 103:7)

Job questioned, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" (Job 11:7). We have serious limitations in knowing God unless He reveals Himself to us. Unless this revelation takes place, the ways or methods of God's dealing with His people are past finding out. Humanity needs to be thankful that God has "made known his ways" (Ps. 103:7) to His people through His prophets.

The history of His dealings with His children reveals His love, His goodness, and His graciousness. Today, God still has immense power to deliver us from those

People may choose to ignore and behave ignorantly if they desire to.

powers that seek our enslavement. He still takes care of our needs. He is bigger than humankind. He can afford to be God.

God Is in Control (Isa. 46:9, 10)

That God is supreme in authority and power, and in knowledge and wisdom, are significant biblical truths. Although at times it appears that the earth is in chaos and humanity exercises absolute control, it is comforting to know that nothing happens by chance; God has a purpose in everything.

We can be confident that whatever God decrees He will fulfill, even if it takes a thousand years. His hands are always at work in the great movement of the ages: "The decision is announced by messengers; the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men" (Dan. 4:17, NIV).

Let faith, therefore, lay hold on this assurance that God will do what He says He will do. Consequently, "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord had led us, and his teaching in our past history."

His Word Is Sure (2 Pet. 1:16-19)

Can it be denied that God has consistently acted in history and that He is continuously acting in the present? He has revealed Himself to humanity in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, of Nazareth.

Certainly, people can deny if they choose, and they have. Men have concocted and followed cleverly designed myths in seeking to deny the historicity of Jesus. But the Jesus who died and was resurrected—the ascended and glorified Lord—is now our great High Priest in heaven. He is coming back to earth again. Peter affirms that “We have not followed cunningly devised fables” (2 Pet. 1:16). John declares, “We have seen his glory” (John 1:14, NIV). And if this transfiguration experience is not enough to persuade you, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy” (2 Pet. 1:19). The apostle is affirming the authenticity of the prophetic word.

While the senses of sight and hearing could be deceptive, the prophetic word never fails. It stands sure! The writings of the prophets can be trusted. Scoff at it if you please, but it predicted the mission and ministry of the Christ. Every iota of its fulfillment was evidenced in the life of Jesus. This same prophetic word has declared that the Christ of history, the resurrected, ascended, glorified Lord and King will come again (Jude 14; Rev. 19:10-16).

We may choose to deny the transfiguration experience. Yet to the three apostles it was a unique indicator that Jesus Christ was God.

Trust His Word: He Comes Again (2 Pet. 3:3-7)

As the decades go by and time elapses, humankind exhibits the tendency to believe that in the realm of God nothing is changing or will change. As a consequence, scoffers mock at the ways of God.

Noah, the servant of God, was derided and mocked for 120 years because he prophesied that the earth would one day feel the judgment of God in a flood of water (Gen. 6:11-13). Did it really happen? Did God destroy the earth?

He surely did! The story of the Noachian flood illustrates that the earth is not impervious to ruin. The same waters used in its creation were used in its destruction. The Bible says that the earth will again be destroyed by a flood, not of water, but of fire (2 Pet. 3:7).

Whatever God promises in His Word, He brings it to pass. People may choose to ignore and behave ignorantly if they desire to, but the stories of both Creation and the Flood affirm the “creative word of God.” His Word brought the world into existence. The same Word destroyed the antediluvians in the Flood. It will one day decimate this present age in one final, climactic act of judgment. Peter says, “the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men” (3:7, NIV).

Yes, it may seem that nothing is changing or ever will. Yet the God of the ages is going to act one day soon. He is going to take the initiative and vindicate His character. Get ready!

REACT

1. We have the word of three contemporary prophets of the reality of Christ’s transfiguration. Why do we not have more prophets?

2. What meaning should be given to the word *earth* in the above references to the Flood?

3. Since the Flood covered to more than the top of Mt. Everest all over the world, to where did it drain so as to reveal Ararat and then the subsequent dry land?

**Life Sketches, p. 196.*

By Teran Milford, vice president of student services, West Indies College, Mandeville, Jamaica.

God, Are You There?

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 2 Pet. 3:3-7

Have you ever wondered why God no longer comes to meet with us physically, as He did with Adam and Eve? Had He been doing this, there would be no need for anyone to question His existence and authenticity, and this would surely eliminate the scoffers. Or would it?

Second Peter 3:3-7 indicates the attitude of those who ridicule believers in God and clearly identifies the reason for their apathy. God is taking too long to carry out His promise to return to earth, and this has caused room for doubt, not only in the minds of scoffers but even among professed believers in God.

The Spirit of Prophecy is replete with thoughts of the powerful impact that God's creative force has had, and continues to have, on the universe. The views presented in a cross-section of the works indicate that as created beings we all receive life from Christ and can fully understand God and His works if we make the created the subject of our study and reflection. These masterpieces, which in their original perfect form bore the stamp of Deity, were the expressions of God's thoughts and testify of His wisdom and power. There is a clear message that we

Through our learning experience we are to gain lessons of obedience and trust.

all may come in contact and acquaint ourselves with God by the medium of His creative works.

God desires that we appreciate His gifts to us, but how can we appreciate these blessings when His works are as incomprehensible as His existence?

The "order and harmony of creation spoke to them of infinite wisdom and power." We must, however, understand that He cannot be proved scientifically, so through our learning experience we are to gain lessons of obedience and trust.

Why, then, you may ask, do some persons question God's existence? Why do they ask whether or not He will return? They ask because they wish to spread doubt and unbelief as they attempt to erode faith in the believers. Little do the cynical know that God's creation speaks of His character. Little do they realize that though marred by sin, the things of nature continue to support all people. God is just. He is fair! He is giving us all an equal chance to accept Him by prolonging the time. His Holy Spirit is here in His stead to lead us to all truth, but time is running out.

REACT

1. What could you do to convince an unbeliever of God's creative power?
2. Why do you believe in the existence of God?

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 51.*

By Vivienne L. Quarrie, a lecturer in the department of English, modern languages, and communication at West Indies College, Mandeville, Jamaica.

When or Where Did Life Begin?

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Gen. 1:1-11

Belief in the biblical account of the earth's creation (Genesis 1) would include God's creation of plants and animals after their kind in a day-by-day creation and not an extended developmental period. The Hebrew word *haya*, "to become," is used ("and light became"). "There was an instantaneous response to the command."¹ The evening and the morning were literal 24-hour periods "in exact conformity with the method of recording time in the Mosaic period."²

Where did life begin? The answer to this will influence our belief concerning the nature of humanity, salvation, and the character of God. "The strength of science exists in its ability to make observations of the physical world and predict future events. Herein also lies one of the greatest limitations of science. . . . A great potential for misunderstanding exists when scientists and laymen, of differing philosophies and convictions, fail to recognize that these hypotheses and theories are based upon assumptions and simplified models and do not accurately represent reality . . ." and "may include a bias derived from the personal viewpoints of the investigator."³

The evening and the morning were literal 24-hour periods.

The biblical account of the Noachian flood (Genesis 6-8) no doubt explains the order of fossils in rock layers that some scientists have used to support their theory of evolution espoused by Darwin. Professor Kerkut, of the University of Southampton, remarks, "I think that the attempt to explain all living forms in terms of evolution from a unique source, though a brave and valid attempt, is one that is premature and not satisfactorily supported by present-day evidence."⁴

The Bible, God's Word, gives a reliable history of the earth and is replete with accounts of His creative power (Gen. 2:2, 3; Exod. 20:8-11; 2 Pet. 3:5). Ellen White states: "Many wander in the mazes of philosophy, in search of reasons and evidence which they will never find, while they reject the evidence which God has been pleased to give."⁵

"In the beginning God . . ." Is this a question or statement of fact? What you believe will determine your future!

1. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 52.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Clyde L. Webster, Jr., *A Scientist's Perspective of Creation and the Flood* (Loma Linda, Calif.: Geoscience Research Institute, 1995), p. 26.

4. *Implications of Evolution*, quoted in *God and Evolution*, Francis D. Nichol.

5. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 432.

By Beverly Henry, director of continuing education at West Indies College, Mandeville, Jamaica.

Destroying Our Christianity

HOW-TO

Key Text: 2 Pet. 3:3-5

Does 2 Peter 3:3 sound familiar? It should. Every day we meet more and more scoffers, tearing up the fabric of our values, our morality, our lives—asking endless unanswerable and unethical questions. Questions: the world is filled with them now more than ever, and with them come doubt and fear. Now, these doubting Thomases are attacking the Bible's validity. But we need to retain our confidence in God's Word. Why? Because it leads us to know the Author of our lives.

But, you ask, how do we retain this confidence? First of all, we get to know the Author. In literary circles, it is well known that writers' lives influence their work. So, when we are familiar with their characteristics, their styles, their perspectives, we are better able to understand and identify the compositions of various authors.

It is also important, however, to be familiar with the original creation. Sometimes this means learning passages by rote, at other times learning them by knowing the contextual significance. But knowing the work also gives one the ability to identify fallacies and end inconsistencies in copies, quotes, or allusions.

Finally, we must trace the pattern. In literature, we are told to check the authenticity of a book or article by weighing it against historical facts or others' insights,

It is well known that writers' lives influence their work.

and even other works by the same author. By doing this we can map the pattern and see the outworkings of creation. So, as we look into how God has worked in the past and in our lives, we come to recognize His way of doing things.

Using these methods will help us reassess our knowledge of God and His word. They will also, with God's help, strengthen our faith. So, let us not be easily deceived: let us be wise.

REACT

1. How can I know that translations maintain the accuracy of God's thesis?
2. Why does belief in the Bible as God's sure Word affect my Christianity? In what ways, if any, does it change the way I demonstrate my Christian principles?
3. Explain whether there is a significant difference between a scoffer and a skeptic; what about a difference in their characters, lifestyles, perspectives? Can you tell whether you are one or the other?
4. Why do you think so many people find it easier to accept the evolutionary theory than the fact of Creation?
5. How would you convince a friend that we were created by God and not by coincidence?

By Terri-Karlene Peart, an instructor in the department of English, modern languages, and communication at West Indies College, Mandeville, Jamaica.

It Really Happened!

OPINION

Key Text: Gen. 1:1, 26

Genesis 1:1 is simply put and factual, yet so many people refuse this truth. They prefer to tangle with the mind-boggling theory of evolution, which leaves much to be desired and may take me a million years to comprehend.

Perhaps the problem lies in the fact that the theory of evolution is taught in so many schools to impressionable students, who unfortunately accept information from their textbooks as gospel. For most external exams, biology students are required to have an extensive knowledge of evolution theory. In some cases they are required to use this theory as a means of explanation. This makes a bad situation worse.

It really is sad to think that the very creatures whom God has created have allowed half-truths and deceptions to warp their minds to the extent that they can no longer acknowledge their Creator. If anything has evolved in earth's history, surely it is sin. "When Adam came from the Creator's hand, he bore, in his physical, mental, and spiritual nature, a likeness to his Maker. . . . But by disobedience this was forfeited. Through sin the divine likeness was marred, and well-nigh obliterated. Man's physical powers were weakened, his mental capacity was lessened, his

In every aspect of our lives, it is important to prove the Creation story.

spiritual vision dimmed."*

Sin has so degenerated humankind that people now liken themselves more to apes and lesser beings than to their Creator in whose image they were made. This is really sad!

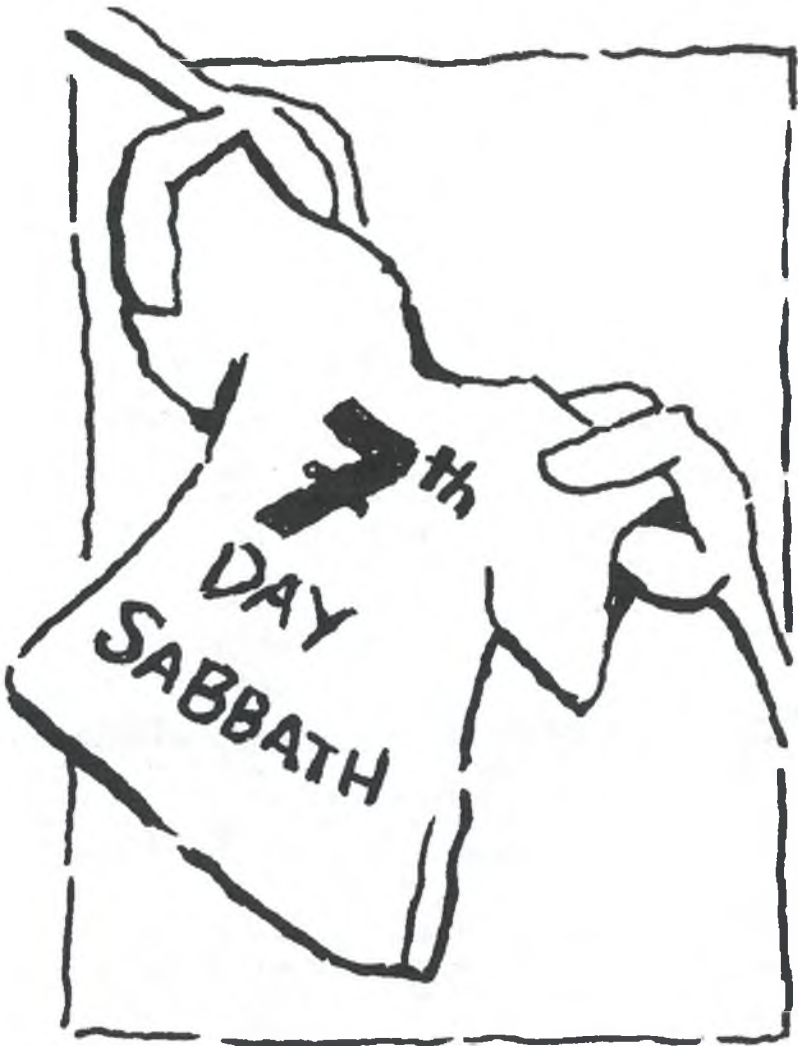
I believe it is important for us as Seventh-day Adventists to be knowledgeable of the evolutionary theory, because in order for us to dispute a claim, even if it is somewhat irrational, we must know the subject well enough to make logical and realistic arguments against it. In every aspect of our lives, however, it is important to prove the Creation story, and though sin has marred the perfect image in which we were made, we can strive to be more like our Creator.

Perhaps the best way to influence a nonbeliever as to the truth of the Creation story is to provide proof that we could not possibly have come about by accident, we must have been made by a divine, creative, and loving being—God.

**Education*, p. 15.

By Tricia-Ann Thelwell, a first-year business administration student at West Indies College, Mandeville, Jamaica.

GOD'S WORK WEEK



“In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (Exod. 20:11, NIV).

Quaku's Shirt

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rev. 12:17

"The dragon was enraged at . . . those who obey God's commandments" (Rev. 12:17, NIV) and sought systematically to remove their belief in the Bible.

This week's lesson focuses on God's creation of the heaven and the earth in six literal 24-hour periods, or as the Bible puts it, from sunset to sunset (Gen. 1:5, 8). We must know and understand the background of the real issue, however, for Satan is not attacking the Creation story and hence the Sabbath just because of a personal bias. Satan has a wider agenda.

There is a Jamaican saying that goes like this, "If yu caan ketch quaku, yu ketch im shut." (If you cannot catch Quaku, then grab onto his shirt.) This saying has many meanings. One of them refers to someone who, because of failure to get at a person or accuse a person, makes an attempt to accuse or get at someone else or something else that is closely related to the person. If Quaku can represent God, then Quaku's shirt could represent the seventh-day Sabbath. Satan has tried for ages to accuse God and has failed miserably, so an attack is made on the Sabbath by eroding its foundations, one such being the Creation story. It is said that Bible-believing Christians will have to watch out for five s's in the last days:

"If yu caan ketch quaku, yu ketch im shut."

- Sanctuary message (judgment)
- Sanctification (the constant growth of the Christian in Christ)
- The state of the dead (immortality vs. mortality of the human soul)
- Salvation (only in Jesus Christ)
- Seventh-day Sabbath (the Creation story)

This week we look at the Creation story, and we will see that to reject the Genesis account is to reject:

- God's creatorship and sovereignty
- The belief in God's re-creative power in lives and the new earth
- The seventh-day Sabbath
- The day-by-day relationship with God

Those who accept the Creation story and hence the Sabbath will always look forward to that day and will constantly communicate their gratitude and praise to God.

This week's lesson boils down to obedience to God, trust in God, and a relationship with God. The Creation story reminds us of how the world began and portrays how the world—and all who know God by their experience with Him—will be re-created in the future.

By Miguel Maloney, a computer operator in Kingston, Jamaica, West Indies.

Creation in Six Days

LOGOS

Gen. 1:1-32; 2:1-3; Exod. 20:8-11; Ps. 33:6, 9; 104; Heb. 1:10; 2 Pet. 3:3-5

The book of Genesis was not intended to be used as a textbook for science, though much authentic scientific data are within its sacred pages. Genesis 1 and 2 give a simple narrative account of Creation in “solar time” (within six literal days) and not creation in geological time (millions of years). The majesty of God and, by inference, God’s redemptive powers are here revealed.

Literal Time (Gen. 1:31)

Though literary rules ought to be applied to the Bible as to other literature, there is no need to apply rules of metaphor, imagery, and symbolism here in Genesis 1:31. It is quite evident that the writer intends to show that Creation week was a literal 24-hour day by two pieces of information: (a) “evening and morning” and (b) “sixth day.”

Evening and morning. This term shows that each creation day (see all of Genesis 1) had a literal night and morning. If the creation days were treated as thousands or million of years, then it would be quite absurd for the writer to use the expression “evening and morning.”

Sixth day. Whenever an ordinal is used before the Hebrew word *yōm*, i.e., day,

Creation was accomplished within “six working days.”

it always means a literal 24-hour day (see Exod. 12:15; Num. 1:1; Judg. 20:20). It makes no sense to see the passage of Scripture to mean anything else.

The Sabbath Evidence (Exod. 20:11)

Exodus 20:11 is a summary commentary on Genesis 1 and 2. The text completely overthrows the belief in theistic evolution (that God slowly evolves His creation over a long period of time). Creation was accomplished within “six working days,” and God put the Sabbath day right there to remind us that the Sabbath of Creation week was as surely 24 hours as were each of the Creation days. It is vital to remember that Sabbath day, not just to keep it holy but to keep us from falling into the snares of the false science of evolution. Thank God for the Sabbath day.

Every time we honor the 24-hour seventh-day Sabbath, we are reminded of God’s power that “He spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm” (Ps. 33:9, NIV).

Special Creation (Ps. 104:1, 2)

It is a precious blessing to meditate on God’s acts of creation as are repeated in Psalm 104. This passage speaks magnificently of God’s creative and redemptive acts. He is a God who personally creates and takes time to care for all His creation (see verses 11-18). This gives hope in a world of hopelessness and a sense of belonging to a God who cares.

The Moral Purpose in Believing in the Creation Story (2 Pet. 3:3-5)

If we give up the narrative account of Creation as recorded in Genesis, we plunge ourselves into an abyss of moral crisis. Second Peter 3:3-5 reminds us of such a situation.

Rejection of God's creative acts results in: (a) scoffing and cynicism, (b) a willingness to follow one's own desires even if they lead to destruction, and (c) a willingness to reject the clear and unequivocal revelation of God's Word. This does not look good. It is a fatal thing to intellectualize away the Creation story. The revealed evidences rejected results in what Romans 1:28 calls a "depraved mind" (NIV). Our attitude toward creation is inextricably linked with our salvation. Romans 1:18-32 demonstrates that those who reject the visible things of God's creation as evidence of the invisible God do so at their own peril. This attitude will so condition the mind to a point that God will not be able to do anything for that mind, which leaves God with no other choice than to give up on that individual (see Rom. 1:24, 26, 28).

To reject the Creation story of Genesis is to reject the God who "laid the foundations of the earth" (Heb. 1:10, NIV). It is a manipulative attempt to rid the Lord of our creation so that He will not be sovereign Lord of our lives. There is far more at risk in embracing the scientific evolutionary perspective of the origin of life. We may not have an exhaustive account of the Creation story, but that does not make it a myth. And, after all, which historical document is exhaustive in data? Which scientific research is exhaustive? We have more than enough from the sacred records. Let us just take time to contemplate the meaning of: "In the beginning God . . ."

REACT

1. Seeing that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, why should we apply human literary rules in understanding it? (2 Pet. 1:20, 21).
2. Why is the Sabbath so important in helping to prevent atheism and in upholding the literal six days of Creation? (Exod. 20:8-11; Rev. 14:6-7).
3. How can Psalm 104 help me to have confidence for the future?
4. Examine Romans 1:18-28 and describe at least three conditions of those who reject God's material evidences of the existence of a personal Creator.
5. After day four, the words "evening and morning" have a modern, natural meaning resulting from the earth's rotation as it orbits the newly created sun. Explain how to give them the same meaning before there is a sun about which to orbit. And note that the earth is well planted with vegetation before there is a sun.
6. When phrases similar to "the earth was destroyed by the Flood" are used, what image appears in your mind?

By Patrick Barrett, teacher and head of the department of geography at Jamaica College, at Kingston.

The Literal Week

TESTIMONY

Key Texts: Gen. 1:32; 2:1

“Like the Sabbath, the week originated at creation, and it has been preserved and brought down to us through Bible history. God Himself measured off the first week as a sample for successive weeks to the close of time. Like every other, it consisted of seven literal days.”¹

“In the law given from Sinai, God recognized the week, and the facts upon which it is based. After giving the command, ‘Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,’ and specifying what shall be done on the six days, and what shall not be done on the seventh, He states the reason for thus observing the week, by pointing back to His own example: ‘For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: Wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.’ Exodus 20:8-11. This reason appears beautiful and forcible when we understand the days of creation to be literal.”²

“The assumption that the events of the first week required thousands upon thousands of years, strikes directly at the foundation of the fourth commandment. It represents the Creator as commanding men to observe the week of literal days

“The Bible recognizes no long ages in which the earth was slowly evolved from chaos.”

in commemoration of vast, indefinite periods. This is unlike His method of dealing with His creatures.”³

“The Bible recognizes no long ages in which the earth was slowly evolved from chaos. Of each successive day of creation, the sacred record declares that it consisted of the evening and the morning, like all other days that have followed. At the close of each day is given the result of the Creator’s work. The statement is made at the close of the first week’s record, ‘These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created.’ Genesis 2:4. But this does not convey the idea that the days of creation were other than literal days. Each day was called a generation, because that in it God generated, or produced, some new portion of His work.”⁴

“God is the foundation of everything. All true science is in harmony with His works; all true education leads to obedience to His government. . . . Ignorance may seek to support false views of God by appeals to science, but the book of nature and the written word shed light upon each other.”⁵

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 111.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

By Horatio Stewart, a final-year student at the University of Technology in Jamaica.

God's Creative Activity

EVIDENCE

Key Texts: Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31

Many people may believe that the Creation days are not literally 24-hour periods. But it is very important that we allow the Bible to justify this account.

The Hebrew translation of the word "day" in Genesis 1 is *yôm*. When *yom* is accompanied by a definite number, it always means a literal 24-hour day (Gen. 1:5; 7:11; Exod. 16:1). These texts show another evidence that the Creation account speaks of literal 24-hour days.

If we should look carefully at the Ten Commandments, it would be evident that the Genesis Creation account involves literal days (Exod. 20:8-11).

In a very clear and concise detail, God retells the Creation story. Each day (*yom*) was filled with creative activity, and then the Sabbath climaxed the Creation week. "In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day" (Exod. 20:11, NIV). This makes it evident that the 24-hour Sabbath day commemorates a literal week of creation. If each day were stretched out into eons, the fourth commandment would be meaningless.

At creation, the Omnipotent God spoke, and instantly what He commanded

God could have taken less than six days for His creation.

was created. There were no long periods of metamorphosis. His powerful word was enough for His creation. In six literal days God created all things.

God could have taken less than six days for His creation. He could have done it in a day. But perhaps God took delight in the unfolding of our planet in those six days. Perhaps this "extended" time has a lot to do with the value God places on each created thing. Perhaps it shows His desire to reveal the seven-day week as a model for the cycle of activity and rest intended for humankind. Christ's creative activities are always in the best interest of the human race.

Oftentimes the Scriptures that deal with prophetic time periods are misinterpreted as literal time. "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years" (2 Pet. 3:8, NIV). Many use this passage of Scripture to prove that the days of Creation were not literal 24-hour days, forgetting the fact that the same verse ends by saying "a thousand years are as one day."

Those who interpret the days of Creation as long, indefinite periods are questioning God's Word, just as the serpent tempted Eve to do.

Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . ., pp. 71-76.

By Windel Montaque, a final-year student of Kingsway High School, Jamaica.

The World in Seven Days!

HOW-TO

Key Texts: Heb. 11:3; Exod. 20:10

In our age of “instant relief,” “instant results,” and “instant effectiveness,” it will be difficult to appreciate the seven-day process of Creation. On the other hand, many evolutionists have posited that the Creation story is really hard to swallow, as they believe it was a slow process taking millions of years. If we find it difficult to accept the testimony of Genesis 1, we need to examine Hebrews 11:3 and Exodus 20:10.

The Hebrew text beckons us to accept in faith that God spoke our world into existence in a literal six-day period. To reject this is to reject quite a few significant factors.

First, Exodus 20 is the beloved chapter of the law of God—the Holy Decalogue. It is what God has personally written and given to humankind as a guide to living, through the grace of Jesus Christ. The fourth commandment, in particular verses 9 and 10, speaks to the creatorship of God, declaring that the world was made in six days and that the seventh was a memorial day of His majestic work. Do we throw out the fourth commandment to satisfy the opinion of the evolutionists?

Second, even though we are called to accept the Creation story in faith, we have

In our age of “instant results,” it will be difficult to appreciate the seven-day process of Creation.

insurmountable evidence of the authorship of God through the acts of His Son Jesus Christ. Christ showed authority over the natural elements, the physical body, and the supernatural forces. He showed authority over the natural elements when the seas and winds obeyed His command and when He walked on water; over the physical body when He healed many and varied sicknesses and diseases; and when He raised the dead; over the supernatural when He commanded the demons to release possessed souls. These acts of power are more than enough to testify to the ability of God to speak “and it stood fast” (Ps. 33:9, NASB).

In looking at the wisdom behind six days of toil and labor and resting on the Sabbath day, we know that it must be God-ordained. The French have tried a 10-day cycle, and it failed miserably. Why did God not create our world instantaneously? He has the ability. The seven-day cycle introduces us to God’s normal way of working through a process. As Christians we need to appreciate this method. In His wisdom, God occasionally takes time to complete a project. Without the seven-day cycle many of us will overwork, running our bodies to destruction. Thank God for the blessings of a weekly cycle.

REACT

What other illustrations can we draw from the seven-day process of Creation?

By Denise Simpson, a final-year social science student at the University of the West Indies, Jamaica.

Spontaneous Creation?

OPINION

Key Text: Gen. 1:5-31

It's a well-known fact that individuals with varying views continue to discredit the Genesis account of Creation in six days.

"As George Wald, winner of the 1967 Nobel Peace Prize in Science, has written: When it comes to the origin of life on this earth, there are only two possibilities: creation or spontaneous generation (evolution). There is no third way. Spontaneous generation was disproved 100 years ago, but that leads us only to one other conclusion: that of supernatural creation. We cannot accept that on philosophical grounds (personal reasons); therefore, we chose to believe the impossible: that life arose spontaneously by chance."¹

Believers in the Bible adhere to Genesis 1:5. "God called the light 'day,' and the darkness he called 'night.' And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day" (NIV).

"But why bother to study origins anyway? Is it really worth all the time and energy?" "Well, there are many good reasons why it is important to have a correct understanding of origins [creation in six literal 24-hour days], and yes, it is a worthwhile pursuit. Everyone needs a sense of identity, purpose, and personal

"We chose to believe the impossible: that life arose spontaneously by chance."

goals. This is impossible without a sense of origin. What a person believes about his or her origin will condition that person's lifestyle and affect his or her ultimate destiny."²

The Holy Bible is the only book in existence that gives a correct account of Creation in six literal days. It is by the Holy Bible that all standards should be measured and by the Bible all actions are weighed.

Today, infidels continue to present arguments for creation in thousands, millions, or billions of years. The acceptance of these arguments will cause disharmony in nature and Bible beliefs. It will place the Sabbath in the dark, thus making the world more gloomy than it is and will shut out all hope of the earth ever becoming new.

Life has a meaning, and that is why Seventh-day Adventists have faith in the Word of God, why they share it with others so that they, too, may find the true meaning of life, our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Scott M. Huse, second edition, *The Collapse of Evolution* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), p. 19.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 22.

By Ron Russell, final-year student of the University of Technology, Jamaica, West Indies.

NOT JUST A MATTER OF TIME



“Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify” (Rom. 3:19-21, NIV).

Neither in Darkness Nor in Silence

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Ps. 103:7

The darkness was absolute and so was the silence, except for the throbbing of my heart. Together with a few friends, I stood within an enormous grotto, deep under a mountain in the Pyrenees, in northern Spain; or perhaps we had already crossed the border into France. We had no way of knowing.

After contemplating the breath-taking beauty of the formations that covered the ceiling and floor of the grotto, we decided to turn off our flashlights. Awesome! What would happen if the lights didn't go back on? How would we ever get out? How would we find our way around so many corners, choose between so many passageways, avoid the dangers? Turning the flashlights back on, we could see each other and see once more the path to follow.

It doesn't matter how dark it is if we have a light to show the way; it doesn't matter how much silence surrounds us if we can speak and hear when we need to. This gives us security amid darkness and silence; they do not trouble us because we have the solution.

As we observe our world and wonder where we came from, what we are doing

What would happen if the lights didn't go back on?

here, and where we are going, we can find ourselves without answers if we do not have the light and the Word of God. Actually, the Light and the Word are one when they come from the Creator of all things.

God made us intelligent beings so we could observe, reflect, and formulate questions. Perhaps for now we do not have all the answers, but we have enough, through His Word and through true science—science that is not pseudotheology, claiming to explain the *when* and the *how*, without any concern about the *who*, the *what*, and the *why*.

Neither fables nor evolutionary theories can answer many important questions. Ignorance is foolish when it declares things it knows nothing about; so is science when it refuses to include God in its explanations. For many people, science has become an all-powerful deity, requiring belief without proof. And that is not science, it is presumption and finally, deceit. But of course, without God, this is inevitable.

Let us thank the Creator who has revealed fundamental truths through His inspired Word. We need not be deceived about when our world was created. The biblical text assures us of a recent creation of humankind that has nothing to do with the fantasies of some so-called scientists. True science confirms what the Bible says, and if in some of the details we do not have all the answers, we will soon, when Jesus returns to claim His people. Meanwhile, we can and should trust in His Word; there is no need to walk in darkness or in silence! (2 Chron. 20:20).

By Alberto F. Guaita, president of Sagunto Adventist College, Valencia, Spain.

Project Crab

LOGOS

Gen. 1:1, 2; 5, 11; Ezra 7:1-5; 1 Chron. 6:3-15; 2 Pet. 3:3-5

In what year was our world created? How long has humanity been on earth?

Questions like these remind me of TV programs like *The Price Is Right*. Our Greco-Roman mentality betrays us. We are still more interested in dissecting time into extremely specific parts than in just enjoying the actions that occur during that time. That's the way we are. We like to count the stars, remember telephone numbers, check our bank balance (especially if we're afraid it might be in the red), weigh ourselves every morning, and do endless other daily numerical routines.

Well, all right, let's leave off our reflections on the nature of postmodern humanity and get down to the question at hand. If we are going to be honest, we don't have a biblical basis by which to know the exact date of the creation of the world. Hard to take, isn't it! But I guess that piece of information must not be very important for our salvation if God didn't spell it out for us.

Let me propose a little game, just for fun. Let's go backward in time to try to find out something about the origin of things. It's like when we were kids, and we used to link our arms back to back with a friend and have "crab races."

We are more interested in dissecting time than in enjoying that time.

First Jump: To the Birth of Christ (2,000 years)

Many people are worried about the year 2000. The whole world is in a frenzy about the turn of the millennium; most people don't know that it has already passed. The person who is responsible for this mistake was a monk in charge of making a study of the calendar—Dionysius, the Lesser—who made a mistake of over three years when calculating the date of the birth of Christ. It is interesting to note that Herod the Great died about 4 B.C. and that Jesus was already born by then. How is this possible? Well, nobody is perfect, and that includes Dionysius. Anyway, this means that we can jump 2004 years backward in our game, but to avoid other errors, we'll just use traditional dating and go back a nice, round 2,000 years.

Second Jump: To Solomon's Temple and the Exodus (3,445 years)

According to 1 Kings 6:1, 37, 38, construction on the Temple began in the second month of the fourth year of Solomon's reign. This second month (called *Zif*) can be situated in the year 966 B.C. and coincides with another indication of the date: "in the four hundred eightieth year after the children of Israel went out of Egypt." That means the Exodus took place around 1445 B.C. This jump takes us back a total of 3445 years.

Third Jump: To Abraham and the Flood (4,462 years; 5,112 years; 5,242 years; 5,342 years)

To take the next jump, we need to use the genealogies. Those lists of names that we always used to skip over when we were younger and followed the Bible Year are vital for the computation of the approximate dates of the events described in

the Old Testament. The Jewish world has an entire volume on the analysis of those lists (Seder 'Olam Rabbah) and Ussher became well-known for his computation of them. The truth is that the task is not as easy as Rabbi José thought, since the different versions of the Bible do not all have the same data. To begin with, the Septuagint presents one name that does not appear in the Hebrew or Masoretic Text (MT): Cainan. The years for each of the Bible characters vary quite a bit between these versions and the Samaritan Pentateuch. According to the Septuagint, the birth of Abraham would be in about 1955 B.C., and according to the MT, it would be in 2170 B.C. That means that the Flood would have taken place in 2462 B.C. (MT) or in 3242 B.C. (Alexandrine Septuagint) or in 3342 B.C. (Vatican Septuagint) or in 3112 B.C. Samaritan Pentateuch). Take your pick!

Fourth Jump: To Adam and the First Day of Creation (6,118 years; 7,584 years)

If we keep using the genealogies, we will come to the conclusion that Adam was born in 4118 or 4419 or 5504 or 5584 B.C. We add six days to that date, and there it is: the date of the Creation of the world. We have jumped back a total of somewhere between six and seven thousand years and find ourselves in Genesis 1:2. But is it really that easy?

I have often thought about those crab races we used to have when I was in Pathfinders. One of the players had to clumsily run backward, tripping at every step. Sometimes you ran too far, sometimes you stopped too short, because you couldn't see the finish line. With the Creation date, we have a similar problem. Was it a morning of the spring of 4004 B.C. when Adam was born? That's what Ussher tells us.

Personally, the exact moment doesn't really matter to me. What matters is that God was so generous that He created new beings, that He helped those new beings even though they turned away from Him, and that He gave us His Son so that someday we can stop counting the years! That is important!

REACT

1. How many years go by *between* the first two verses of Genesis 1?
2. The genealogies of Matthew and Luke are clearly thematic and not statistical. Might this be true of Genesis 5 and 11 also? Explain your answer.
3. Think about this sentence: Days are to our dreams what measures are to a melody. How does this relate to today's reading?
4. Genesis 1:28 (NIV) commands the new couple to "Be fruitful and increase in number." Genesis 1:29 suggests that certain agricultural skills will be used to select the proper type of foodstuffs. Chapter 2 elaborates on this point. Then in chapter 3:16-19 we find God talking to both Adam and Eve and comparing their future ill situation to that of their glorious past. Why would such before-and-after comparisons be made?
5. Adam had "before" experience in his agricultural pursuits, so God's comparison made sense to him. Did it likewise make experiential sense to Eve? That is, did she know childbirth "before"? If not, why would God speak to her as if in riddles of something about which she had no experience? Does it matter whether or not she had children before the "Fall"?
6. Explain why Scripture references to the Creation of the earth are not misused when they are interpreted to teach us science.

By Victor Armenteros, a teacher at Sagunto Adventist College, Valencia, Spain.

A Recent Creation

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Job 38:1, 4, 21

How long did the creation of life on this planet take, and how long ago did it happen? “Infidel geologists claim that the world is very much older than the Bible record makes it. They reject the Bible record because of those things which are to them evidences from the earth itself that the world has existed tens of thousands of years. And many who profess to believe the Bible record are at a loss to account for wonderful things which are found in the earth, with the view that creation week was only seven literal days, and that the world is now only about six thousand years old.”¹

Are these declarations about 6,000 years and the literalness of the Creation days the result of personal investigation, or did God reveal this information to Ellen White? Would the former lessen the value of the statement?

She used three main sources for the writing of her books: The Bible, her visions from God, and historical texts. W. C. White comments concerning his mother’s writing of certain books such as *Patriarchs and Prophets*, that “when she began to write about these subjects she had to study the Bible and history in order to find the dates and the geographic relationships, and thus perfect her description.”² Through biblical genealogies, previous authors had calculated the time since

“The Holy Scriptures should be accepted as of absolute authority.”

Creation, as there is no declaration in the Bible that specifies it; this calculation was of about 6,000 years, which she included in her writings, considering it to be certain.

“The Holy Scriptures should be accepted as of absolute authority and as the infallible revelation of His will.”³ “In regard to infallibility, I never claimed it; God alone is infallible.”⁴

Do the declarations that she makes about the time of Creation contradict the biblical text? “Little attention is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light to guide men and women to the greater light.”⁵ “The written testimonies are not to give new light, but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed.”⁶

1. *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 87.

2. Letter to L. E. Froom, December 13, 1934.

3. 1 *MS*, p. 42.

4. *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 37.

5. *Review and Herald*, January 20, 1903.

6. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 665.

By Antonio Cremades, a science teacher at Sagunto Adventist College, Valencia, Spain.

Tons of Evidence

EVIDENCE

Key Texts: Ps. 19:1; 85:11

When the technicians of NASA were preparing the voyage of *Apollo XI* to the moon with the goal of landing a human being there, they had a great concern: If the moon was thousands of millions of years old—as evolutionary scientists assured—then on the surface there should be a thick layer of fine dust, possibly 1.5 kms thick! This dust would make a landing impossible. The ship, instruments, or human beings would immediately sink down into it and disappear. However, this did not happen. Actually, there is very little space dust on the moon!

The rate at which elements such as copper, gold, tin, lead, silicon, uranium, and nickel presently enter the world's oceans is very rapid when we compare the small quantities of these elements already present there. If the earth were millions of years old, the oceans would contain significantly higher amounts of these elements. Therefore, the oceans must be of recent formation.

This is just one of the numerous evidences that exist in favor of a young earth. In recent years, geophysical, astrophysical, and biological studies have brought to light important supporting evidence for the story of Creation and of the Flood. Creationist models are based on increasingly solid scientific bases. From a linguistic point of view, many studies have been carried out about the Aramaic *yôm*

Actually, there is very little space dust on the moon!

(day) in Genesis, and these conclude that it means exactly what it is saying: 24-hour days, not long periods of millions of years. When the God of the Bible is replaced by chance, long periods of time are necessary for the processes to occur that in God's hands take place in a matter of seconds.

Paul talks about those who willingly ignore that in ancient times the heavens and the earth were brought into existence by the Word of God (2 Pet. 3:5). Peter is looking forward to today, indicating that the ignorance of these people is voluntary, because they refuse to accept the great mountain of evidence that supports the idea of a recent creation. The psalmist tells us that "truth shall spring out of the earth" (Ps. 85:11) and that "the heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" (19:1, NIV), thus pointing out where we should search for evidence in favor of a recent creation. We live in a time when scientific and theological information is sufficient to allow us to feel sure about the idea of a recent, divine creation. We just need to explore that information.

REACT

1. What evidence of a recent creation do you know about?
2. What value do you consider that the prophetic word has (2 Pet. 1:16-19) when confronted with the scientific word? Do they necessarily contradict each other?

By Raúl Esperante, a teacher of biology at Sagunto Adventist College, Valencia, Spain.

Creation and Redemption, by the Same Author

HOW-TO

Key Texts: 2 Pet. 1:16-19; Rom. 8:19-27

The first words of the Bible “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” tell us who our Creator, Sustainer, and Father is. God has revealed to us the major events in human history, from the beginning of time until the New Earth. Through the biblical writers, He has communicated to us everything that we need in order to know where we came from and where we are going.

Humankind has attempted to find explanations for its origins. Science has developed different hypotheses to explain facts that are difficult to understand. The mechanisms set into action to begin the existence of the universe and of life has been studied by many scientists, with different results. The Bible presents a simple explanation that can be understood by people at different cultural levels for an event that is of great importance for human beings.

The story of Creation written by Moses in Genesis gives us strength and assurance to continue believing in the rest of the Word of God. The second coming of Jesus is the event most looked forward to by Christians, and we have to be sure that it will happen in the way that God told us in His Word. What assurance would we have that Christ’s words “At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in

The Creation and the second coming of Christ report of literal events.

clouds with great power and glory” (Mark 13:26, NIV) will be fulfilled if we do not accept as valid what God says about the Creation story?

The Creation and the second coming of Christ report of literal events written in the Bible by people who could say “We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Pet. 1:16, NIV).

Life has not always existed, and since it does exist now, there are only two options: Either it sprang out of the forces of nature by spontaneous generation, or it came from the hand of the Creator.

For human beings, it will always be impossible to prove either of these two options empirically. But the literal Creation of Genesis gives us the assurance of a heavenly Father who sustains the universe and who is a friend who is preparing a place “that you also may be” (John 14:3, NIV).

Death is a paradoxical element in the life of the universe. God created human beings to live and develop eternally. All creation groans as it contemplates the devastation of sin.

Once again, the difference is in accepting God as our personal Creator, capable of caring for us and of guiding us to eternal salvation or of accepting a human alternative that confuses us and leads us away from God.

By Juan Duch, a science and mathematics teacher at Sagunto Adventist College, Valencia, Spain.

The Trustworthiness of the Word of God

OPINION

Key Texts: Ps. 33:7, 8; 2 Pet. 3:5; Job 38:4-6; 40:2

After more than a hundred years of evolutionary propaganda, during which the theory of earth's extreme age has been constantly reiterated, the great majority of the scientific world has accepted this position. The hypothesis that the earth is millions of years old has become an unquestionable axiom, not because of a large number of proofs to support this supposition but rather because the theory of evolution itself needs to establish that the earth is very old. Over the past decades, we have been witnesses to an incredible fluctuation of numbers as science has tried to situate the time of the origin of life.

Today an increasing number of scientists are proposing more recent dates for the beginning of the history of our world. Research into the magnetic field of the earth, meteoric dust, atmospheric helium, sediments and salinity of the oceans—all demonstrate that the earth cannot be as old as the proponents of the theory of evolution have constantly assured us.

But beyond scientific research, the position of the Christian is based on unswerving faith in the creative power of God. "For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm" (Ps. 33:9, NIV). Therefore, those of us who con-

The position of the Christian is based on unswerving faith in the creative power of God.

tinue trusting in God's revealed word are not surprised by the attacks on Creation, since it tells us that in the last days there will be those who "deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water" (2 Pet. 3:5, NIV).

Whenever scientists try to demonstrate the extreme antiquity of Creation, they do so by pre-establishing certain assumptions that are impossible to prove. The basic assumption is the hypothesis that for all practical purposes, conditions have not altered since the beginning of history. But the question that should be put to these scientists is the same unanswerable questions that God asked Job: Where were you when I formed the earth? (Job 38:4). We can know the precise age of the earth only if it is revealed by the One who was present when it was formed. Where scientists can base their theories only on a series of suppositions, the Christian has a surer source of knowledge in the Bible. Can anyone question the time-scale revealed by God?

"Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? . . . Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone? . . . Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him?" (Job 38:4-6; 40:2, NIV).

*See Antiago Esmain, ed., *Cronometria: consideraciones criticas* (Tarrasa: CLIE, 1987).

By Miguel Angel Roig, a teacher at Sagunto Adventist College, Valencia, Spain.

A CLOSER LOOK



“Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done” (Gen. 2:1-3, NIV).

Bathala's Bakery

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Heb. 3:9

I have always loved stories. Especially as a child, I loved stories because they helped answer questions that bothered me. Questions like Why is the sky blue? or How does an airplane fly?

Then there's that particularly pesky one: Where did I come from? One day, I asked my grandfather that question. To answer it, or so he thought, Grandpa asked me to sit beside him. Soon he was off to relating a fantastic story that helped address my inquisitiveness at the time.

A long time ago, so my grandpa said, our planet was a lonely place. Plants and animals were the only living things found on earth. And the god Bathala was worried.

Then it came to pass that Bathala decided to have someone for company, someone who could take care of his creatures. So Bathala decided to create humankind.

After scooping some fresh clay from the earth, he formed it with his hands after his image. He soon baked his masterpiece in an earthen oven.

But Bathala had to attend to some other things, and he forgot to remove his clay

He forgot to remove his clay masterpiece from the oven on time.

masterpiece from the oven on time. As it turned out, the human was overcooked and came out blackish.

So Bathala tried again, determining to make a perfect human. Again he got some clay, molded it, and started to bake again. Worrying that it might again be overcooked, Bathala removed this one from the oven too soon. Result? half-cooked and whitish.

Not giving up, Bathala took one last opportunity to redeem himself and make the perfect human. After all careful preparations were done, he placed the human in the oven. Then he waited for the right time to take it out. He wanted the human to be neither too dark nor too pale. Bathala's efforts were rewarded; the human came out of the oven just the way he wanted him to be—brownish.

Many people today want to know the real score about the origin of humankind and the universe. Unfortunately, we are bombarded with Bathala's bakery and other fantastic stories about how we came to be and how the world came about. And those stories could puzzle us.

This week, God invites us to take a closer look at what the Creator Himself says about the genesis of our world and humanity's coming into existence. I suggest that we look for the answer to the question, "Where did we and our world come from?" in His Word, the Bible.

By Felixian Felicitas, a Bible teacher at Baesa Adventist Academy, Caloocan City, Philippines.

Where We Came From—Can We Tell?

LOGOS

Gen. 1:1–3:24

Those who believe in the historicity of the Genesis narrative sooner or later are bound to face questions about origin. Let's take a look at these questions.

Was there a gap of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2?

Some people accommodate the Genesis narrative with the theory that the earth had passed through long ages of geological change. They see in the first verse the suggestion that God made a perfect world ("heavens and the earth") at some distant past. But chaos followed through worldwide cataclysm, as the second verse ("the earth was without form and void") seems to indicate. Then God decided to re-create the earth (verses 3-31).

From this idea, which has come to be known as "ruin and restoration" theory, came also the support for the belief that God created the earth from pre-existing matter. That's why some Bible translations (e.g., RSV, The Westminster Study Edition, Moffatt) in effect might render the first three verses of Genesis thus: "When God began to create the heaven and the earth, then the earth was without form and void, and the darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light.'"

Quite interesting. Yet the Hebrew expression *tohu wabohu* ("without form and void") does not mean being caused to be without form and void. Rather it describes

From nothingness, God made the earth step by step.

a state of chaos, formlessness, lifelessness.

As regards pre-existing material, Hebrews 11:3 negates the notion. Besides the Hebrew word for "created" (*bara*) is a word used only with God as subject, and thus it speaks of the production of something that's fundamentally new.

The alternative belief therefore is fiat creation. The ordinary Hebrew reader would have found no difficulty believing so, considering Israel's experience when God produced from nothing manna, quail, wind, and fire.

As to whether or not the creation of planet Earth was simultaneous with that of the universe, the Bible is silent.

Do Genesis 1 and 2 provide conflicting accounts of Creation?

Some liberal Bible interpreters think so. Pointing out what they interpret to be errors in the first two chapters of Genesis as well as assuming that four different authors wrote the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, they claim that these chapters indeed describe two conflicting creation accounts.

The issue stems from the misinterpretation of Genesis 2:4, which says, "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created." The two-account proponents take the verse as a conclusion of the alleged first account.

However, Genesis 2:1-3 may be the conclusion since God by now had already declared complete the work of creation and then rested at week's end. In verse 4,

the author may just be starting to relate the second division of Genesis, which is about genealogies or generations (*toledoth*), particularly of Adam and those who came after him. Here the author introduces not a new account of creation of heaven and earth but rather of the offspring of heaven and earth; namely, humanity in its original state. If the second chapter indeed presents a second creation story, why did the writer omit the fundamental elements like the formation of the earth, sea, land, firmament, sun, moon, stars, vegetation, and earth?

Moreover, in Genesis 3:18, humankind is to eat the herb of the field (*esev hassadhe*). This expression is rare in Scripture. Its only previous mention is in chapter 1, indicating unity of authorship and narration of these chapters.

As a result, chapter 2 should be seen as topical in treatment, not chronological. The chapter prepares the reader for the narrative of the Fall and a description of the nature of humankind, of Eden as the scene of temptation and the identification of the actors in the Fall, Adam and Eve.

Is the story of humanity's creation in Genesis 3 myth or history?

Serpents can't speak. With this proof, those who believe in evolution have yet another reason to dismiss the Genesis story as mere myth. Admittedly, the speaking serpent is unusual and striking. The Old Testament, with the exception of Balaam's talking donkey, ordinarily never taught that animals could speak as a human does.

But considering the element of the supernatural, this is not an impossibility. A dumb animal could be made to speak by some supernatural power. In some places in Scripture (Rev. 12:9; John 8:44; 2 Cor. 11:3), Satan is unmasked as that power.

Then there's the testimony of Paul. In Romans 5, the apostle regards as an accurate historical event the fall of Adam, the denial of which will dismiss the historicity and significance of Christ's saving death on the cross for humankind.

Now what does Genesis 1–3 really tell us? The first chapter of Genesis presents the fact of Creation wherein God is exalted as the Creator. From nothingness, God made the earth step by step into an ideal place where humanity could dwell in it. Humankind was depicted as God's crowning work, whose image resembled God's and who was tasked to manage the whole earthly realm for God's glory.

Then came the Fall. While in chapter two, the man and woman were seen as naked *and* without shame, in chapter 3 they lost their innocence because of disobedience. Unparalleled in any document of antiquity, chapter 3 explains the origin of sin and misery in the world, pointing out that evil came to earth as a stranger, but humankind welcomed it. Toward the end of the chapter, human hope was aroused through the Promised Seed of Genesis 3:15. Humanity is destined to partake of the tree of life again through Him.

REACT

1. In creating the world, God appeared to have left some questions unanswered. Why?
2. Is it necessary to accept Mosaic authorship to maintain consistency in doctrines implicated by the Genesis account? Explain your answer.
3. How can one be sure of the validity of God's Word and the Spirit of Prophecy about the Creation story?

By Ramon Baldovino, communication director of Central Luzon Conference, Malabon, Metro Manila, Philippines.

Those Were Literal Days

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Gen. 1:5

The problem with the creation of both our world and our first parents is that not one of us was there when it happened. And we can't replicate the process in some contemporary laboratory.

The good news is that the Creator Himself has made His acts known to us through His Word, the Bible—and through the pen of inspiration.

"I was then carried back to the creation, and was shown that the first week, in which God performed the work of creation in six days and rested on the seventh day, was just like every other week. The great God, in his days of creation and day of rest, measured off the first cycle as a sample for successive weeks till the close of time. . . . The weekly cycle of seven literal days, six for labor and the seventh for rest, which has been preserved and brought down through Bible history, originated in the great facts of the first seven days."¹

"Inferences erroneously drawn from facts observed in nature have, however, led to supposed conflict between science and revelation; and in the effort to restore harmony, interpretations of Scripture have been adopted that undermine and destroy the force of the word of God. Geology has been thought to contradict the

We can't replicate the process in some contemporary laboratory.

literal interpretation of the Mosaic record of the creation. Millions of years, it is claimed, were required for the evolution of the earth from chaos; and in order to accommodate the Bible to this supposed revelation of science, the days of creation are assumed to have been vast, indefinite periods, covering thousands or even millions of years."²

"The Bible record is in harmony with itself and with the teaching of nature. Of the first day employed in the work of creation is given the record, 'The evening and the morning were the first day.' Genesis 1:5. And the same in substance is said of each of the first six days of creation week. Each of these periods Inspiration declares to have been a day consisting of evening and morning, like every other day since that time With Him who could thus call into existence unnumbered worlds, how long a time would be required for the evolution of the earth from chaos? In order to account for His works, must we do violence to His word?"³

REACT

What does the literalness of the Creation week mean to you?

1. *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, pp. 85, 86.

2. *Education*, p. 128.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

No Human Author

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Rom. 14:8

Where did the hen come from? Simple. From the egg.

Where did the egg come from? Easy. From the hen.

But then, which came first—the hen or the egg?

Read Genesis 1:20-31. Doesn't the Bible assume an adult Creation proceeding from the breath of God? Not everyone thinks it does. Some think that life on this earth began by chance from a simple organism.

The author of Genesis is not the only one with a story to tell about Creation. The Babylonians likewise possessed their own account of our world's origin contained in *Enuma Elish*, which describes an epic of beginnings. The Egyptians and Phoenicians also had their own mythological cosmogonies.

With such a proliferation of Creation stories, it's not unlikely that some would claim that the Genesis account is but a variation of a few contemporary accounts, that it's not a narration of the true, genuine story.

For the Christian who believes that the Bible is the inspired and authoritative Word of God, to consider the Genesis creation account as a mere variant of an ancient legend would render to nothingness some basic Christian doctrines like

Doesn't the Bible assume an adult creation proceeding from the breath of God?

the state of humanity, the Sabbath, the marriage sacrament, and the etiology of sin. It would also gravely disparage the gospel of salvation prophesied in Genesis 3:15, which also defines the relationship of the Creator with all His creatures.

In the light of the great controversy that dates back to the great war in heaven between God and Satan, Genesis preserves the color of God's saving grace in the plan to restore original creation.

Notwithstanding the belief purporting that our universe came to being by evolution or the notion that God created the world but left all succeeding operations to chance, the Creator in Genesis is a divine, personal God initiating intimacy with His creatures. We simply must have faith in Him and in the straightforward claims of His Word.

Far from proposing a blind faith, this act indicates a serious consideration of evident indications that Moses, while writing the Genesis account, did experience an intimate relationship with the real Author of creation. So then like Moses, we understand that from God humankind and all other things come forth.

REACT

What role does faith have in settling discrepancies between face-value interpretation of the Genesis Creation account and rational, scientific propositions?

By Joveveney Macabeo, a ministerial intern at the Central Luzon Conference, Malabon, Metro Manila, Philippines.

Living a Dignified Life

HOW-TO

Key Text: Gen. 1:26

Among God's creation, humankind is the most unique. Surely the trees, stars, animals, rivers, oceans, mountains, moon, sun, fowl, and fishes are an awesome sight to behold. But a human being is the Creator-God's crowning glory.

Unfortunately, in this world of realistic imagination and imaginary reality, humanity has tried to alter—if not deny—his majestic, divine origin. Look, for example, at how some of us have made a big fuss about our looks. Haven't we sometimes tried, in a sense, to reinvent ourselves? It's probably nice to undergo a series of continuous bodily renovations. With our technology, we can in a sense re-create ourselves and have the honor or dishonor of being called the "unfinished creation."

This, however, might be extreme, and going to extremes even at how we look could be hazardous at times. It is as though we're being lowered to subhuman status. Others have tried to push us below the stratum of human dignity. Some want us to believe that we came from one-celled amoebas.

God's Word, the Bible, says otherwise. It even claims that a human being is more than a two-legged creature. The Bible says a human has a heart, a mind, a

With our technology, we can in a sense re-create ourselves.

soul. And molded out of the hands of God, a human owns a uniquely divine dignity.

Here's how you can live a dignified life.

Believe that you are special. As God's creation who was created in the divine image and according to God's likeness, you are special.

Exercise your freedom of choice. It's not as much a question of what you have, which is choice, but what you do or can do with that choice. God did not create you to be a robot. He created you as a thinking individual with the freedom to choose to do right or wrong. Though you have the choice (and the tendency) to commit wrongdoings, you also can opt to do right, to choose to live a godly life.

Exercise your responsibility. You're given "dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:28). As a steward of God's creation, you are responsible for taking care of what has been entrusted to you—your body, your resources, the environment, and the rest of God's creation.

REACT

What does God's special act of forming a human being with His own hands tell you about yourself?

By Lady Love Casanares, an editorial intern at the Philippine Publishing House in Manila.

Operation Restoration

OPINION

Key Text: Gen. 1:31

When I was a boy, my father worked for a company that transformed crude stones into polished marble. Oftentimes my father would buckle me up in the front seat of our Land Cruiser, and after a bumpy ride, we'd find ourselves going into huge cracks at the foot of the Sierra Madre mountain range.

We'd soon reach a mining site where mammoth boulders are loaded onto ten-wheel trucks. Soon the marble would be cut and polished, later to become part of hotel lobbies, posh homes, and other brilliant pieces of architecture.

In the beginning everything that God had made was "very good." I could imagine God standing before His creation, exclaiming, "Wonderful!" And truly it was wonderful! The God of beauty could do no less.

Enter this thing called sin, and the luster that once enveloped God's creation faded. Sin brought gargantuan damage to God's perfect creation. It caused everything to deteriorate, to rot. It turned crystal-clear waters to filthy liquids that muddied the radiance of a glorious Creator-God. The splendid landscape became a thing of the past.

And the image of God in humankind was also marred. Corruption came to the

Our damaged world is undergoing a restoration process.

once pure soul. So did turmoil, grief, pain—and death.

God saw everything that happened, and He decided to do something to control the damage caused by sin. He wanted to restore that which was lost—the magnificence of His creation.

So He did something extraordinary. He sent His only begotten Son Jesus Christ on a mission to this sin-ravaged earth (John 3:16). It was risky, Christ's mission, but it offered the only way to restoring the earth, its inhabitants, and everything He created to their original pristine form.

Today, our damaged world is undergoing a restoration process, and Christians have a part in that process. Soon it will come to an end. The earth and its inhabitants will become new again, and all God's creation will display the full radiance of its original beauty. Even now, I can see mountain ranges dotted with glistening marble. There won't be a need to polish crude stones anymore.

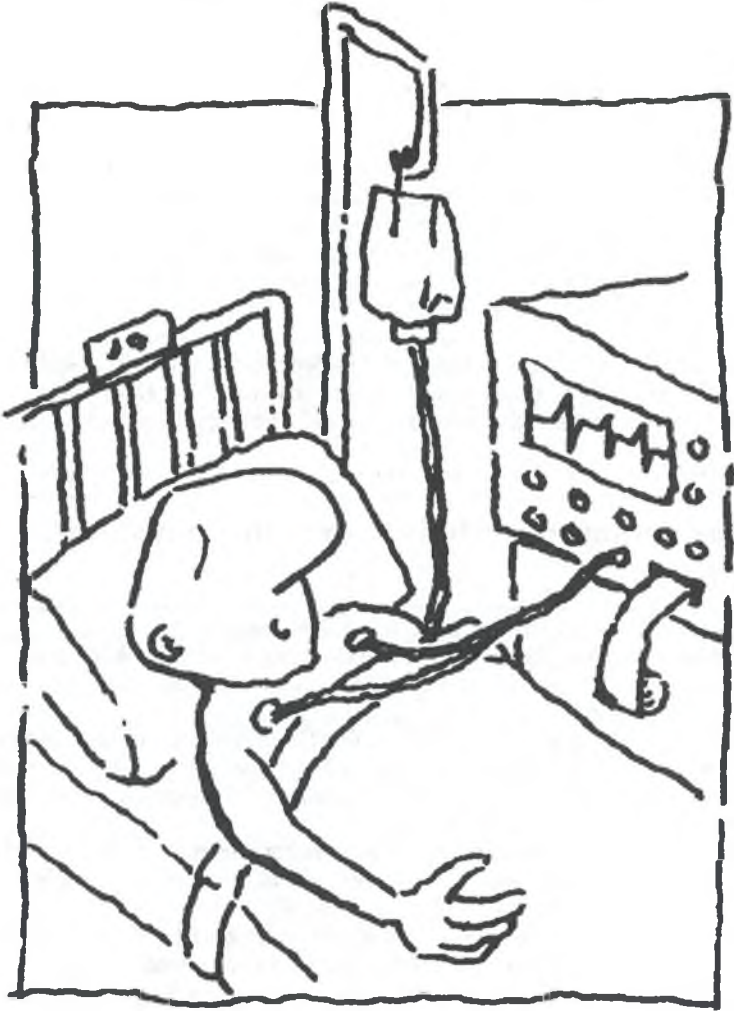
REACT

1. If you could, what part of God's creation would you like to see in its original form? Why?

2. How do you feel about the extent of damage you see in God's creation today? What can you do about the situation?

By Andronicus Galang, an editorial assistant at the Philippine Publishing House in Manila.

PARADISE LOST



“The whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Rom. 8:22, 23, NIV).

Too Young to Die

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rom. 8:23

Sherice was in shock—she could not believe what she had just seen. One minute her friend had been standing right next to her—complaining about the amount of work he had to do; and the next, he was on the ground, in pain. Later, as she walked upstairs to her friend's hospital room, she couldn't think what to say when she got there. Young people didn't have heart attacks—that was for older people with grandchildren and high blood pressure. This type of thing just didn't happen. When her friend first had the attack, Sherice was frightened.

Just weeks before this incident, she had attended the funeral of one of her church's most beloved mothers. The whole church attended—including all the youth. When the choir sang, Sherice heard the sorrow in their voices—the words hardly audible through their sobs. Sherice felt a feeling that she had never felt before—an empty kind of fear—the worst feeling she had ever had—until now. She didn't understand why people, things, had to feel pain—and die. Why did God let these kinds of things happen?

As Sherice approached her friend's hospital room, she whispered a quick

One minute her friend had been standing right next to her.

prayer, asking God to give her the words to say and thanking Him for sparing her friend's life.

The only hope for the world lies in coming to the Savior. Jesus' second return will bring with it a world that will be as perfect as the one that God created in the beginning. Only then will death have no hold over humanity or any of the creation. As Paul writes in Romans, we are "eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23, NKJV).

This week's lesson will focus on the effects of the Fall on God's creation.

By Amelia Durant, a senior at Bronx Science High School, Jamaica, New York.

Gloom to Glory

LOGOS

Gen. 3:14-19; Rom. 5:12-14; 6:23; 8:18-20

Genesis 3:14-19

“As they witnessed in drooping flower and falling leaf the first signs of decay, Adam and his companion mourned more deeply than men now mourn over their dead.”¹ The level of grief experienced by Adam and Eve after the Fall finds very few, if any, comparisons in our modern age. How could eating bring about such a cataclysmic change to the perfect world of Adam and Eve? Sin (disobedience to God) always results in negative consequences (Rom. 6:23). The Fall had the following consequences:

- Eve (Gen. 3:16). Pregnancy would be accompanied by pain (childbirth is symbolic of the most severe anguish of body and mind [See Micah 4:9; Rev. 12:12]). Eve’s relationship with God and her husband were adversely affected.
- Adam (Gen. 3:10, 17-19). There would be difficulty in eking out a living from the cursed ground, an alteration of his relationship with his Creator, a change in diet, rebellion from the inferior creatures², physical death.
- The serpent (Gen. 3:14). “Formerly the most clever and beautiful of creatures, the serpent was now deprived of wings and doomed henceforth to crawl in the dust.”³

How could eating bring about such a cataclysmic change to the perfect world?

- The ground. Prior to the fall, only plants that were either useful for food or beautiful to the eye grew from the earth. Now the ground was also to produce thorns and thistles.⁴

The impact of sin on God’s perfect creation was seen everywhere, and the sight was not pleasant. Animals became aggressive, flowers were dying, leaves were falling off trees, and Adam and Eve had lost their innocence. Just imagine God’s disappointment. He had provided the first couple with everything they needed to be happy, and they turned their backs on His Word. We wonder how Adam and Eve could have done that. Didn’t God take special care of them? Under those circumstances, some of us would have destroyed everything and started all over again. However, our God is the God of second chances. Although disappointed, He provided a way of escape.

Genesis 3:15; Romans 5:12-14

At first glance, Genesis 3:14-19 appears to be filled with doom and gloom. The scrutinizing eye, however, detects the promise of the Redeemer in verse 15. This verse reveals three essential truths: (1) that Satan is the enemy of the human race, which explains why God put enmity (related to the word “enemy”) between Satan and the woman; (2) that a spiritual barrier would be placed between Satan’s followers and God’s followers; and (3) that Christ, the representative seed of the woman, would deliver the deathblow to Satan but would be bruised in the process (Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8).

So, despite the Fall, there is hope in Jesus Christ. Even though divine justice required that sin should meet its penalty, divine mercy had already found a way to redeem the fallen human race (1 Pet. 1:20; 2 Tim. 1:9). If accepted, this sacrifice on our behalf will provide victories today and warm our hearts with the hope of the certainty of Eden restored.

Romans 8:18-20

Sin has left a negative impact on all created objects and creatures. But God's faithful people will one day realize that the glory that awaits us far outweighs our present suffering. In fact, the whole creation eagerly awaits the time when the curse of sin will be lifted and Eden restored.

REACT

1. Do the long-term and short-term effects of sin differ? Explain.
2. How does the hope of Eden restored affect your Christian walk? Be specific.
3. Was the death sentence too cruel a penalty for eating the forbidden fruit?

Explain your answer.

4. In what other ways could God have treated sin and remained consistent with His nature?

5. Do you agree with the statement that "sin always has negative consequences"? If so, why does it seem that "sinners" prosper and appear successful?

6. Why would God create beings in His likeness, knowing that they would sin?

7. How would you explain to a nonbeliever that this life is only temporary and there is a better day coming when sin will be eradicated?

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 62.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

3. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 232.

4. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 186.

Sin Thrills Then Kills

TESTIMONY

Scripture: Rom. 5:12, 14

“Satan assumes the form of a serpent, and enters Eden. The serpent was a beautiful creature, with wings; and while flying through the air, his appearance was bright, resembling burnished gold. He did not go upon the ground, but went from place to place through the air, and ate fruit like man. . . . with soft and pleasant words, and with musical voice, he addressed the wondering Eve. . . . He extolled her beauty and exceeding loveliness, which was not displeasing to Eve. But she was amazed, for she knew that to the serpent God had not given the power of speech. . . . Eve was beguiled, flattered, infatuated.”¹

Because of man’s fall into sin, the entire creation suffers. With respect to the serpent which was Satan’s medium of deception, God said, “‘Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.’ Since it had been employed as Satan’s medium, the serpent was to share the visitation of divine judgment. From the most beautiful and admired of the creatures of the field, it was to become the most groveling and detested of them all, feared and hated by both man and beast.”²

“She knew that to the serpent God had not given the power of speech.”

With respect to man, “Adam and Eve’s first son committed murder. Their descendants soon violated the sacred marriage union by engaging in polygamy, and it was not long before wickedness and violence filled the earth (Gen. 4:8, 23; 6:1-5, 11-13). God’s appeals for repentance and reformation went unheeded, and only eight persons were saved from the Flood waters that destroyed the unrepentant. The history of the race after the Flood is, with few exceptions, a sad account of the outworkings of the sinfulness of human nature.”³

“Under the curse of sin all nature was to witness to man of the character and results of rebellion against God.”⁴

“In humility and unutterable sadness they bade farewell to their beautiful home and went forth to dwell upon the earth, where rested the curse of sin. The atmosphere, once so mild and uniform in temperature, was now subject to marked changes, and the Lord mercifully provided them with a garment of skins as a protection from the extremes of heat and cold.”⁵

1. *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, pp. 35, 36.

2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 58.

3. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, p. 90.

4. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 59.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

By Raymond Alcock, a computer-technician student at Brooklyn (New York) Education Center.

Tough Love

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Pet. 5:10

One can only imagine the devastation experienced by the first couple. Some human development theorists have proposed that attachment between an infant and its care giver is formed as a direct result of the infant's helplessness and the care giver's ability to supply the infant's needs. When the infant realizes that it is separated from the care giver, anxiety usually results. Additionally, some human development theorists propose that an infant's ability to thrive can be directly correlated to the amount of physical stimulation it receives.

Adam and Eve, though adults, were infants in respect to time. They were babes in the world, nourished spiritually by the words spoken directly by God, the Creator. They were caressed by the glory of God's presence and the soothing sound of His voice. But sin deprived Adam and Eve of this intimate nurturing.

Initially, one might be tempted to view God as an extremist, but careful examination reveals His love for and mercy toward humankind. One of the trees in the Garden of Eden was called the tree of life. The word *hachayyim* is translated literally to mean "the life."¹ "The fact that this word is plural in form is explained by recognizing it as a plural of abstraction, the definite article indicating that this

Initially, one might be tempted to view God as an extremist.

tree had something to do with 'the' life as such, that is, that life would be obtained or preserved through the use of its fruit. . . . If one tree is distinguished from the others by the extraordinary name 'tree of life,' its fruit must have had the purpose of sustaining life in a way differing from and exceeding in value that of the other trees."²

The fruits from the tree of life produced immortality. If a human being, in the fallen state, had continued to partake of the tree of life, he or she would have been subjected to immortal sin. By evicting Adam and Eve from the Garden, God prevented the eternal perpetuation of sin, thus affording humanity the opportunity to eat of the tree when paradise is restored.³

Oftentimes we experience pain, spiritual separation, anxiety, and loss. We may not always be able to appreciate those experiences as they occur, but we should always remember that "the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast" (1 Pet. 5:10, NIV).

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 223.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, p. 236.

By Diane McAulay, supervisor of the department of social services in Rosedale, New York.

The Gift

HOW-TO

Key Text: Rom. 6:23

“The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

What a consolation and promise this verse is. God provided hope for lost humanity in one word, *gift*. The word *gift* connotes something special to celebrate a special occasion. Gifts are given by thoughtful individuals who spend the time considering the needs, wants, and hopes of the recipient. In the case of fallen humankind, there was neither merit nor celebration. Nevertheless, our loving heavenly Father bestowed upon His children a gift—eternal life.

1. Live to life again. As we live in our modern world, we often become absorbed in all of its goings-on and forget that this life is only temporary. We are bombarded by media coverage of cures for various diseases, the latest technology, scientific discoveries, senseless wars, and natural disasters. As a consequence of sin, “the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time” (Rom. 8:22, NIV). Our planet is reeling from the impact of sin. We are caught in that maelstrom, but let’s not forget the gift. God promises that

We are caught in that maelstrom, but let’s not forget the gift.

His people “will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest” (Isa. 32:18, NIV). This life is transitory. Let’s prepare ourselves to live again.

2. We must be changed. David states in Psalm 23:3, “He restoreth my soul.” Our acceptance of the gift must be validated daily. We do this by consecrating our lives to Him each day. The more time we spend with Jesus and the more time we allot to things of a spiritual nature, the more we will become like Him and appreciate the *gift*.

3. Spread the good news. Satan told the woman that if she ate of the fruit, she would *not* surely die (Gen. 3:4). We know that God stands by His promises, and as He told the first family that there was a consequence for disobedience, He also promises eternal life to those who love Him and keep His commandments. Our love for God will be demonstrated in our sharing the gift with others. As we share the promise of eternal life with others, we will hasten Christ’s return and experience the full measure of the *gift*.

The Lord declares, “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death” (Hos. 13:14, NIV). As we wait eagerly to see our Savior face to face, we have the assurance that if we daily put our trust in Jesus, we will live again in paradise.

By Dilys Brooks, a sixth-grade teacher in the New York City public school system.

Reflecting on Our Future

OPINION

Key Text: Rom. 8:18

Because of sin, our concept of paradise has been distorted. To us, heaven is a place where things will be absent rather than present. We think of no more death, fear, crime, drug problems, worries, sickness, bills, frustrations, etc., as what heaven will be like. However, there is so much more that will be there that we do not have the joy of experiencing now. A clean place to live. Food in abundance. Perfect bodies. A stress-free life. Perfect memories. Only good tastes and smells. Animals that respond to us positively. The ability to learn things and remember them forever. A constant feeling of safety. Wanting for nothing. But above all, we will be able once again to talk with God face to face, which was the ultimate loss when humanity was removed from paradise.

When our first parents lost their home, they lost more than a beautiful place to live. Things just did not look and feel the way they had before. It was as though a shadow had been cast over the earth. Yet God, in His mercy and love, allowed some of the direct results of the Fall of humanity to become beauty in our eyes. Consider the following: the vibrant colors displayed in the fall when the leaves turn

Because of sin, our concept of paradise has been distorted.

from their green hue to shades of red, gold, and brown; the silent beauty of a new snowfall; the elation of new parents after the pain of childbirth. All these things and more are a result of paradise lost—autumn, the cold of winter, the pain of bringing children into the world—yet our heavenly Father has covered these results of sin with a beauty that sinful humankind would be able to view positively. He gives us glimpses of what we have lost but in a way that we can still see His creative hand. It is no wonder that the psalmist says “The heavens are telling the glory of God; they are a marvelous display of his craftsmanship” (Ps. 19:1, TLB).

We are told in Isaiah 64:4 that humanity cannot imagine what God has in store for us. Knowing that what He is preparing is better than what we can imagine should give us a longing to have our original paradise restored.

REACT

1. Can you think of other areas in which God has turned the results of sin into something that we can view positively?
2. Why did God remove the original beauty of this earth after sin?
3. How does your answer fit in with the concept of what the new earth will be like?

By Rosalie A. van Putten, a financial aid consultant in New York City.

WHICH CAME FIRST?



“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23, NKJV).

The Same End

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Eccles. 3:19

“Man’s fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath” (Eccles. 3:19, NIV).

In his wisdom, Solomon maintains that death is a similar occurrence for both humans and other animals and that the way in which it should be faced is also similar. To humans, however, it is simply difficult to accept this, and perhaps that is why we feel so much sadness when a child loses a favorite pet or when a young person loses a parent. Death is not natural to God’s creation. It is a strange phenomenon to the divine will and to nature.

Death entered this planet as a direct result of the fall of Adam and Eve. Not only did it affect human beings but also the animals, plants, and all of creation. Nonetheless, the beauty of the biblical message is that God’s redemptive plan includes humanity and all creation. In God all things return to their original perfect state. In Him is found the full scope of a marvelously designed creation.

This position is not exempt from scientific research, which, because of fossils discovered, posits the occurrence of death as a phenomenon present for millions

This position is not exempt from scientific research.

of years on this planet, supposedly even before humankind was on earth. According to such theory, death is a natural part of a “system that has not yet reached its maximum development.”

To the Judeo-Christian position, the matter of death and sin is not like that story in which we ask which came first—the chicken or the egg? The Bible clearly teaches that death is a consequence of sin (Rom. 6:23). What came first—the fall of humanity or death? The Scriptures leave no room for doubt—sin came first. Obviously, scientific research goes way beyond the question of death or sin; I’m not proposing a debate between evolution and creation, or perhaps, in the background, the existence or nonexistence of God. Creation as we perceive it today, however, has a reason for being only in the context of biblical acceptance.

I hope that during this week we will come to understand the significance of an all-powerful God who through His power created us and redeemed us so that we may be freed from death and thus live eternally.

By Oscar Vargas, a kinesiology student at Colegio Adventista de Valparaíso, Chile.

The Search for Meaning

LOGOS

Gen. 1:20-28; 3:1-24; 6:11-13; 7:21-23; Rom. 5:12-14; 6:23; 8:18-22

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23, NIV).

Death is the most implacable stigma of the presence of evil. We human beings do not want to die. God has "set eternity in the hearts of men" (Eccles. 3:11, NIV).

Shakespeare dramatically declared that life is a play in three acts: birth, life, and death. Similarly, Heidegger, a German philosopher, maintained that the human being is "made for death," his only alternative of living authentically is projected toward death. Camus, a French philosopher, said that there is only one valid question that a human being must answer: "to decide whether suicide is worth it." Humankind has always wondered about the absurdity of living a life surrounded by death.

Death may take any one of us in an instant. Each day we hear of thousands of people who die because of disease, violence, hunger, natural disasters, ignorance, and a multitude of other causes. It makes us sick just thinking about it. And so we ask ourselves, Is it worth it to live like this? Is there something that is worth being called life amidst so much death?

The answers are many. Some have come to the conclusion that there is no meaning to human existence, and they have opted for the irrationality of denying every-

There is no pleasure in living under these conditions.

thing, falling into the casket without any way out of the anarchy and nihilism—that is, total confusion and no meaning for life.

Others have opted for denial or escapism, choosing the way of alcohol and other drugs, promiscuity, hedonism, violence—a path that has taken them to desire death with even greater anticipation.

Others, following an oriental model, have chosen the path of denying self, denying all individual decisions, for the abandonment of desire (Buddhism), the transmutation of this life (Hinduism), or submerging oneself in all (pantheism), etc. They have made life simply a dream or a temporary path, with the vain illusion of making this meaningless existence easier to bear.

How does the Christian respond? The Bible says that everything that exists today, in the conditions in which they exist, is simply meaningless. Nothing has meaning. There is no pleasure in living under these conditions. The Scriptures do not try to hide or minimize the problem; on the contrary, in some texts the problem seems to be emphasized, with examples of promiscuity, violence, irrationality, and perversion that could be part of a triple X movie or some television soap opera.

But although the Bible shows evil and its consequences, it also offers an explanation and gives hope for overcoming them.

What does God say?

- That He made us. Nonetheless, everything that we see today is simply a

degeneration of the original divine plan.

- That He loves us. Amidst all the hate, wickedness, and stupidity, there is a God of love who considers us His children.

- That He is in control. Even though there have been people such as Hitler and Idi Amin, God tells us that we should not be afraid, for He is ultimately in control.

- That He is just. God's justice consists in giving each of us the possibility of choosing. God in His justice gave His Son so that whoever will believe will have the opportunity of living the side of justice that we have not yet fully seen—eternal life (John 3:16).

- Finally, everything as we now know it in our lives will end, and there will be a new world order. The universe watches us, and all beings know that the almighty God will one day bring all human beings to judgment to demonstrate His kindness and mercy, making known all the opportunities we had to choose God and His grace.

Contrary to what Heidegger thought, the Bible maintains that the human being *is* made for life. Human beings were born to live in harmony with God, themselves, their neighbors, and nature. They were created to be happy, but sin affected God's original plan. The promise, however, is that God will soon end all this paraphernalia that sin has brought about and restore everything to its original form.

See the streets full of filth, tears, and pain. Smell the odor of violence. Watch the despair that fills our television screens and our homes. Observe the desperate cry of the innocent child that is born in war. In summary, watching seemingly unrestrained evil in its cruel reality is nothing more than an invitation to search for a better way of life, a life that no one except Jesus has lived in its full scope, yet is offered as an illustration of God's infinite love, who took upon Himself all our sorrows so that we might have hope.

Perhaps we should learn from the lily of the field, which cuts through the bottom of the mire, the filth, the darkness, and the pestilence in search of life. Christ is at the end of the tunnel waiting for us. God shines His light amidst the darkness and waits for us.

REACT

1. What biblical responses can we give to men such as Shakespeare, Heidegger, and Camus? Be specific.
2. What does God ultimately offer to human beings?
3. What lessons can we learn from the lily of the field?

Death Before Sin?

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Gen. 2:17

To talk about death in the biblical context is to talk about sin. Sin brought about death, and its entrance into the world was a consequence of human disobedience. Because of transgression, “the world that God had made was blighted with the curse of sin and inhabited by beings doomed to misery and death.”¹

“Immortality, promised to man on condition of obedience, had been forfeited by transgression.”² But does this mean that death, within God’s omniscience, was not a reality before the fall of our parents? Further, can we argue that it existed even before the fall of Lucifer? Death on earth came as a result of sin, but was there death before the creation of the world?

As death is a consequence of sin, it is what Adam and his descendants experienced and what we continue to experience. However, Satan, the author of sin, as well as his angels, have not yet experienced the reality of death; he will pay the mortal consequence of his rebellion at the end of time. “In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch—Satan the root, his followers the branches.”³

Death is a result of sin; it did not exist before sin itself. From eternity “God and

Why did death exist if they had not yet disobeyed?

Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God . . . made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So great was His love for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son.”⁴ Christ’s death, as a plan of salvation, existed before there was sin as a reality, for the lamb was “chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake” (1 Pet. 1:20, NIV). But this redemptive death is for the salvation of humankind; this death became reality because of love, to free us from the curse of eternal death. “The plan of salvation had been laid before the creation of the earth; for Christ is ‘the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world’ (Revelation 13:8).”⁵

In Genesis 2:17 God instructs humankind not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because it will bring death. Thus, hypothetically, death already existed and the couple already knew the consequence of a possible transgression. Why did death exist if they had not yet disobeyed?

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 63.

2. *The Great Controversy*, p. 533.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 673.

4. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.

5. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 63.

By Carlos Olivares, chaplain at the Colegio Adventista de Valparaíso, Chile.

Reaction to an Illusionary Theory

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Rom. 5:12

“Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12, NIV).

Following the general scheme of the theory of evolution, life on this planet existed before there were any human beings. A pillar in this theory is the fact that human fossils are not found until the end of the geological column, whereas numerous and different types for plants and animals are found in the earlier periods. To accept the dating of these successive periods means to accept the existence of death before there was human life.

Ellen White denied that animal fossils demonstrate the existence of life prior to Creation week. Rather, the remainder of these plants and animals is a result of the biblical flood and should serve to prove that there was a Flood as recorded in the Bible.*

Relative to this occurrence, let us keep in mind that many cultures the world over maintain within their traditions that there was a destruction of the world through a great flood.

The biblical flood lasted several months. Thus as the water rose, different forms

Some might reason that death is one of the last stages in the evolutionary process.

of life were gradually buried, from the less complex, associated with lower levels of life, to the more complex organisms that lived mainly in the higher altitudes. Thus the existence of fossils and their place in the sediment strata can be explained from a creationist point of view.

We can also draw another conclusion. To accept the scientific position implies acknowledging that death comes through a strictly natural process. So why, after thousands of years, is death still such a traumatic and disquieting experience for the human race? From a historical point of view, death has never been an occurrence that is seen as normal, no matter how much one makes it seem natural. Some might reason that death is one of the last stages in the evolutionary process, thus the resistance against it. But I'm inclined to see the matter in a different light. Death is not natural to humankind, which was perfect before there was sin. Even now we have something that we inherited from our father Adam: dissatisfaction with death. Let us not throw away the light we have, but rather let us wait with hope for the promised and needed restoration.

*See *Education*, p. 129.

Was There Death Before Sin?

HOW-TO

Key Text: Rom. 6:23

Death is a direct result of sin, as the Bible says; so, where there is no sin there cannot be death, and where there is no death there is also no sin.

We might ask, Where did sin begin? The Bible tells us that sin began in heaven; but right away our minds are filled with a disquieting question: Why didn't God get rid of it when it first sprang up? The answer, although simple, is not exempt from difficulties. We're not the only beings created by Him; there are other worlds where there is no sin and no death, with beings who intently observed the conflict in heaven. Had God destroyed Satan immediately, Satan's claims about God could be seen as true—that is, that God was selfish, authoritarian, and inflexible. So, instead, God allowed him the opportunity to reflect upon his actions by throwing him and his followers out of heaven without first destroying them. In this way other created beings could observe the development of Satan's decisions and his evil influence.

When God created human beings, He endowed them with the possibility for eternity; God did not intend that humans should die as a consequence of sin. He hoped that they would never know the experience of death.

As He established the laws of Eden, the Lord explained to Adam and Eve that

Had God destroyed Satan immediately, Satan's claims about God could be seen as true.

they should fear death, but even so the inevitable happened when God gave them the much-prized, but sometimes misused, freewill. They chose for themselves, without completely understanding the fatal consequences of their decision.

In His omnipotence, God knew what death was, how it came about, and its effects, but in theory only since it had not yet fully developed before the Edenic pair sinned. But everything is not lost and never has been: God in His infinite love provided a plan through the death of Jesus Christ. The dramatic point is that sin begins hurtling us toward death, and it is Jesus' death that finally anchors us to eternal life.

The responsibility to choose wisely is ours. God gives us freedom of choice. To choose is still the greatest prerogative given to humankind. I trust that with Jesus' message we will be able to make good use of this wonderful gift.

Was death a plan not yet put into practice by God?

Did Adam and Eve understand what God meant when He told them that if they ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they would die?

What will finally bring about the complete destruction of death?

By Ximena Gilbert, a law student at Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Chile.

Will the Green Revolution Save Us?

OPINION

Key Text: Gen. 3:17, 18

A minimum percentage of solar energy is captured by vegetables and changed into useful energy. If we could improve the efficiency of the capturing of energy, we would have plants whose production would astound us.

Malthus suggested that because of disparity in development, the harvests would not be enough to feed the world population in the future. This and other theories brought about the so-called “green revolution,” which generated the development and utilization of great quantities of food with the objective of making agriculture more productive. This focus, however, made agriculture less efficient, where consumption was high but productivity was low.

This tendency is fading, and the new focus is on “sustainable agriculture,” in which the idea is that resources must be used more efficiently and ecological relations of the system must be studied. This new vision takes health concerns into account because of the large quantities of pesticides used and the future projection of an agricultural explosion.

Human beings have been concerned about improving agricultural production as a way of ensuring future sustenance, and this concern has become more intense as population increases and the expanse of land available for cultivation decreases.

This concern has become more intense as population increases.

Why do human beings have to toil so much to get food? The answer is that there is a factor that escapes human control: “Cursed is the ground because of you” (Gen. 3:17, NIV). By sinning, humanity caused its own ruin as well as the ruin of the creation that was under its care. “The creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope” (Rom. 8:20, NIV).

Although humankind may give its all, this sentence will not go away, and there will be new challenges to face. But for those of us who await the kingdom of Christ, the panorama of the future is not one of despair but one of hope that creation will be restored to its original state (Isa. 65:17, 21-23). Our sustenance will be assured, and there will be no more curse on the ground when Christ establishes His eternal kingdom.

REACT

1. What was God’s objective in allowing humankind to have to toil for sustenance?
 2. To what is God referring when He alludes to thorns and thistles as fruit of the curse on the ground?
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By Luis del Canto, an agronomy student at Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Chile.

RAIN IN THE FORECAST?



“They deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed” (2 Pet. 3:5, 6, NIV).

Whosoever Will May Come

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rev. 22:17

The human race does not like to hear of impending catastrophe. Yet catastrophe does strike, with varied magnitude, more often than we can ever anticipate.

A myth is told among the Luo of Kenya to explain the origin of a small lake called Simbi Nyaima.* In a village called Simbi, there was a long dry spell. When the rain finally came, the village of Simbi engaged in merrymaking. They were so engrossed in celebration that when one night a strange old woman came seeking shelter from the rain, they heckled her away.

The poor woman trudged up a hill, not knowing what to do or where to go. Luckily for her, an old widow who lived alone on this hill welcomed the stranger to her hut, where she warmed herself. Infuriated by the way the villagers had treated her, the stranger cursed them. The rain for which they had waited for so long came down in torrents all night, and by dawn Simbi was covered with water. All the villagers except the widow on the hill perished in the deluge. To date, Simbi Nyaima, the resultant lake, stands at Karachwonyo, in Western Kenya.

When the rain finally came, the village of Simbi engaged in merrymaking.

The people of Noah's time had never seen rain, never heard of it. Probably the closest they ever came to the experience of rainfall was the dew that dampened the earth. So when Noah sounded a warning that God was going to open the floodgates of heaven upon them, they thought he was crazy. How could water possibly pour from the skies? Impossible! It had never happened and was not just about to happen. For one hundred twenty years, they scoffed at Noah's warning and went about their sinful ways of life. When the Deluge finally came, all but eight believers perished.

These two floods were in every way punitive. But is that God's character? Does He just wipe away a whole generation when they go astray?

In Noah's time, God destroyed a generation in order to restore His ideal race. In our time, generations will be destroyed, not by water but by fire, to restore humanity's original status. Only the faithful will escape the destruction. The good news is that the door of mercy still stands ajar and whosoever will may come.

*Nyaima: Drowned

The Word: A Sure Foundation

LOGOS

Genesis 6–9; Heb. 11:7; 2 Pet. 2:5; 3:3–6

The Word: A Sure Foundation (2 Tim. 3:16, 17)

In the study of logic, the Bible is the only book; not the logic of Aristotle or any other human being, but the logic that is manifest in divine reasoning. Paul says, “Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4, NIV). This New Testament verse sets forth the authenticity of the Old Testament writings and validates the six literal days of Creation and the worldwide Flood.

The Creation story is not a riddle; neither is the worldwide Flood a proverb. When God created the universe, the circle of love was His “good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13), and when it was broken by Satan’s rebellion, the peace and security of the universe were in jeopardy. But God devised the plan of salvation, in which He would take the initiative in meeting sin and its originator head on. Jesus thus is called the Lamb of God who takes away the world’s sin (John 1:29). His good pleasure is to replace sin in our lives by His righteous presence.

God’s purpose in the plan of salvation is to destroy sin by drawing sinners to Himself. He speaks gracious words and offers pardon and probation over and over

The Creation story is not a riddle; neither is the worldwide Flood a proverb.

again. He offers His power and holiness through the inward action of the Holy Spirit. This is the still small voice that kept knocking on the door of Noah’s conscience each morning when he awoke to begin a new day’s labor on the ark. Whatever is needed to combat the presence and power of sin and enable us to grow more like Christ, God offers to all.

The Word: His Creative and Redemptive Power (John 5:39, 46, 47)

Creative power is the distinguishing mark of divinity. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1, NIV). In this brief statement we have the whole truth of the gospel summed up. Consider for a moment who it was that created the heaven and the earth. “God created.” But Christ is God, the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of His person (Heb. 1:3). He Himself said, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30).

He it was who, representing the Father, created the heavens and the earth. “Without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:3, NIV). It is further said of Him: “In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands” (Heb. 1:10, NIV). The Spirit of the Lord, through His prophet Jeremiah, in describing the vanity of idols said, “The Lord is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. . . . But God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding” (Jer. 10:10, 12, NIV).

Building on the Word (Eph. 2:19, 20)

Having seen that Christ the Word is the Creator of all things and that He redeems by His creative power, we can then go on to learn how He created. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; he puts the deep into storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere him. For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm" (Ps. 33:6-9, NIV). The same Word that made the earth caused its overflow by a Flood, brought it transformed from the waters, and still upholds it. That Word therefore must indeed be substantial. It is more real and solid than the earth itself, even as the foundation of a thing must be more substantial than the thing.

There will come a time when "the earth is broken up, the earth is split asunder, the earth is thoroughly shaken. The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind" (Isa. 24:19, 20, NIV). But even in that awful time the Christian can say, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear" (Ps. 46:1, 2, NIV). Here are His words of assurance: "Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock" (Matt. 7:24, NIV).

Amos writes of Him that He is "the one who made the Pleiades and Orion, and turns deep darkness into the morning, and darkens the day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out on the surface of the earth, the Lord is his name, who makes destruction flash out against the strong, so that destruction comes upon the fortress" (Amos 5:8, 9, NRSV). So, in the six-hundredth year of Noah's life in the second month on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth and the windows of the heavens were opened. And great was the flood.

Does it not ring a bell in the ear of the reader, for humanity has been around close to six thousand years? The number six is indicative of slavery (Exod. 21:1-6). The invitation still goes out: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28, NIV).

REACT

1. What does moral decay in your neighborhood suggest about impending judgment?

2. What are you doing to encourage your friends to accept Jesus as their refuge in the face of the coming judgment?

By Apollo Amolo Amimo, a laboratory technologist in the National Agricultural Research Laboratories, Nairobi, Kenya.

Another Storm Is Coming

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 2 Pet. 3:5-7

“Another storm is coming. The earth will again be swept by the desolating wrath of God, and sin and sinners will be destroyed.

“The sins that called for vengeance upon the antediluvian world exist today. The fear of God is banished from the hearts of men, and His law is treated with indifference and contempt. The intense worldliness of that generation is equaled by that of the generation now living. Said Christ, ‘As in the days that were before the Flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the Flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.’ Matthew 24:38, 39. God did not condemn the antediluvians for eating and drinking; He had given them the fruits of the earth in great abundance to supply their physical wants. Their sin consisted in taking these gifts without gratitude to the Giver, and debasing themselves by indulging appetite without restraint. It was lawful for them to marry. Marriage was in God’s order; it was one of the first institutions which He established. He gave special directions concerning this ordinance, clothing it with sanctity and beauty; but these directions were forgotten, and marriage was perverted and made to minister to passion.

Professed followers of Christ are today eating and drinking with the drunken.

“A similar condition of things exists now. . . . Professed followers of Christ are today eating and drinking with the drunken, while their names stand in honored church records. Intemperance benumbs the moral and spiritual powers and prepares the way for indulgence of the lower passions. Multitudes feel under no moral obligation to curb their sensual desires, and they become the slaves of lust. Men are living for the pleasures of sense; for this world and this life alone. Extravagance pervades all circles of society. Integrity is sacrificed for luxury and display. They that make haste to be rich pervert justice and oppress the poor, and ‘slaves and souls of men’ are still bought and sold. Fraud and bribery and theft stalk unrebuked in high places and in low. The issues of the press teem with records of murder—crimes so cold-blooded and causeless that it seems as though every instinct of humanity were blotted out. And these atrocities have become of so common occurrence that they hardly elicit a comment or awaken surprise. . . . The picture which Inspiration has given of the antediluvian world represents too truly the condition to which modern society is fast hastening.*

**Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 101, 102.

By Patrick Kimaiga Aganyo, a lecturer in electrical and electronic engineering at the Kenya College of Communications Technology, Mbagathi, Nairobi, Kenya.

By Faith . . .

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Heb. 1:17

What one believes or disbelieves has far-reaching consequences. Noah's belief galvanized him into positive action and made a difference of life and death—literally. Faith saved him and his family.

In electing to believe God's Word regarding an imminent deluge, Noah was taking a lonely stand. His reputation was at stake as a man gone bananas. In entire experience of humanity to that point, "rain had never fallen; the earth had been watered by a mist or dew. The rivers had never yet passed their boundaries."* Talk of a flood was absurd.

The world today dismisses with similar contempt the message of an impending judgment, in particular, the destruction of this earth by fire at Christ's second appearing. The popular picture of the future is a rosy one. The majority expect a tranquil pre-Advent millennium. Talk of divine wrath is an unwelcome: "They say to the seers, 'See no more visions!' and to the prophets, 'Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions . . . and stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel!'" (Isa. 30:10, 11, NIV).

Today, as in Noah's day, the learned are foremost in discounting the Divine Word. Modern humanity, in whose cars run petrol, whose houses are warmed by

His reputation was at stake as a man gone bananas.

coal dug from the bowels of the earth, and whose food is cooked on natural gas—all products of a sudden catastrophe that buried the flora and fauna in a watery grave then compacted it—still doubts the biblical Flood. Yet from geology there is sufficient evidence to show it is no fairy tale such as I heard on my grandma's lap by the fireside on many a tropical African night. Nor do the theories of science explain it satisfactorily.

Fortunately for us, "we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place" (2 Pet. 1:19, NIV).

The Bible states categorically that there was indeed a Flood (Isa. 54:9, 10; Heb. 11:7; 2 Pet. 2:5; 3:6). Christ (who should know, seeing He was there then, as before) refers to it not only as a historical fact but also as an object lesson on the end (Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 18:26, 27).

The good news is that when disaster struck in Noah's day, the Lord acknowledged His servant's faith, and the ark, a symbol of God's love and grace, lifted the eight to safety. When the end shall come and a fiery flood descends upon earth, those in Christ shall be lifted to safety. The righteous shall live by faith.

**Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 96, 97.

By Patrick Kiage, a lawyer in private practice in Nairobi, Kenya.

Walking With God

HOW-TO

Key Texts: Gen. 6:9; 2 Tim. 3:14

What made Noah such an outstanding believer in the midst of great skepticism? In Hebrews 11:7 we read, “By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith” (NIV).

1. Faith in God. Noah’s trust in God was unquestioning and complete. Noah’s lesson for Christians is heroic as he responded to God’s will in a time of great testing. The parallel between those days and today is mentioned by Jesus. No doubt we will need strong faith not unlike Noah’s in these perilous times. In 1 Corinthians 15:58 Paul urges, “Stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (NIV). Our dependence on God will help us distinguish ourselves like Noah, by holy integrity and unwavering faithfulness.¹

2. Steadfastness through all circumstances. However daunting seemed the task before Noah, he didn’t flinch from communicating the will of God. “Nothing is gained by cowardice or by fearing to let it be known that we are God’s commandment-keeping people.”² The depth of Noah’s unwavering steadfastness

However daunting seemed the task before Noah, he didn’t flinch from communicating the will of God.

can be glimpsed in Ellen White’s words, “With an agony of desire that words cannot express, he entreated them to seek a refuge while it might be found.”³

3. Love of Noah for God and his own people. Actually, God gave the antediluvians a chance to repent. He didn’t want any to perish. It was not easy for Noah to preach to people who didn’t heed seriously God’s imminent judgment. His love for God and his desire to accomplish the mission entrusted to him gave him strength to go on. The message for that time exemplified by Noah, and the work for these times remain the same. God is not willing that any should perish but that all be saved (2 Pet. 3:9).

REACT

1. If the world has grown more skeptical, what can I do to find more effective ways of preaching the gospel?
2. What are the causes of this skepticism?

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 96.

2. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 527.

3. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 97.

By Daniel Ohad Masinde, an electrical technician in the Ministry of Education/ Human Resources, Nairobi, Kenya.

A Forecast of Judgment to Come

OPINION

Key Text: Matt. 24:38, 39

Events in our day are like those in Noah's time. Floods occur in different parts of the world. Though comparatively small in magnitude, they remind us of the great Flood. Lifestyles and general moral decadence are reminiscent of Noah's generation. As in the antediluvian world, we live at a time when morals have decayed such that we can hear God in our conscience saying, "The thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil all the time" (Gen. 6:5, NIV). Human life is no longer held precious; the press of a button could mean the end of humanity!

Noah's contemporaries had shut God from their lives. It is no different in our day. They did everything with total disregard for God's existence. In our generation people have not only shut God out as their Creator, but instead claim to be grandchildren of tadpoles. When people shut God out of their lives, the result is moral decay. There is something very wrong with the way people run their lives. Sadly, with the passage of time, people continue to view everything wrong to be "the normal way of life." It is no wonder murder, divorce, adultery, fornication, and related sins are glorified and brought to our homes to entertain us via television! Our young people find delight in seeing violence, gun battles, and the shedding of blood. Just as in Noah's day, humanity is so caught up in the web of Satan's

The press of a button could mean the end of humanity!

influence that "almost all remembrance of the Creator had passed away from the earth."^{*}

Inspired counsel tells us that this cannot continue indefinitely. In Noah's time "The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain" (Gen. 6:6, NIV). The outcome was judgment. We are to draw lessons from Noah's experience. The Lord says, "People were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man" (Matt. 24:38, 39, NIV). People went about their business as usual disregarding the stern warning.

In Africa there is an adage: "When you see your neighbor's head being shaven, apply soap on yours." The events in our day are a replica of what occurred in Noah's day. Noah's account is not recorded for entertainment but for learning, so let us be good students. The good news is that "Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6:8, NIV). You and I will find grace in the eyes of the Lord if we hide our lives in Jesus.

^{*}*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 178.

By Lawrence M. Kiage, a graduate student in biogeography at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya.

HOW I WONDER WHAT YOU ARE!



“Since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse” (Rom. 1:20, NIV).

What Are the Answers?

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Ps. 19:1

How this earth came to be, abundant with life and all of its majesty, is a wonder. The best explanation came to me from a friend of mine while we were camping. We were looking up at this huge sky on one of the clearest nights you can imagine and playing our own game of “Trivial Pursuit.” I had a couple of pretty good questions, but they were nothing after receiving a couple of his questions.

For example, did you know that our telescopes are so advanced that we can see 15 billion light-years away in either direction, but if we placed one of them on the nearest star, you couldn’t see earth (which is only $4 \frac{1}{3}$ light-years away)? How about this one—Did you know that if the thickness of one sheet of paper represented the distance between earth and the sun, you would need a stack about 71 feet high to reach the nearest star?

By this time, I knew I was done for. The game was over as far as I was concerned. How was I supposed to top trivia like that? Just then, he threw another one at me (as if I hadn’t already lost). If you took a dime and held it 75 feet away from you toward the sky, how many galaxies (not stars) do you think would fill that little space occupied by the dime? Give up? Fifteen hundred galaxies!

The biblical view of creation, however, isn’t in conflict with science.

The Bible never talks about evolution but rather, creation. The biblical view of creation, however, isn’t in conflict with science but rather in conflict with something that doesn’t have a creator. Equally sincere Christians have struggled with the idea of creation versus evolution. This is completely understandable with all the information proved on both accounts. Scientists and biblical scholars should be careful, however, not to make the scientific evidence or Bible say something it doesn’t say. Throughout this week, think not of the process of creation but of its Creator. Lying under the starry sky was enough proof for me to know that the world was not created by blind chance but only through the creation of God.

Knowing that God created the universe gives us insight into how phenomenal God really is. His awesome design and attention to the tiniest of details reveals so much about His character, personality, and a “sneak peek” of what He’s preparing for us in heaven.

Many wonder how earth came into existence. I can’t help wondering at what an amazing God we have and how He expresses His love for us through perfecting the intricate details of our lives.

By Trini Myers, a speech pathology student at Loma Linda (California) University.

The Original Design

LOGOS

Gen. 1:26; 1 Cor. 12:18; Ps. 19, 139

“This is what he promised us—even eternal life” (1 John 2:25, NIV). Just as “Eternal Life” played on my walkman, I looked up and saw a shooting star. Why did I happen to look up right then as I was running that early morning? God knew I had just decided to be a Christian. He sent me a smile of assurance that cold, winter day at Weimar College. I learned that God is not only my Creator but my best friend. He’s so intimately interested in my life that He’d say “I love you” with a star.

“Not one [sparrow] is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. . . . You are worth more than many sparrows” (Luke 12:6, 7, NIV). Who would bother counting your hairs? Someone who even cares about the small details of your life. That Someone would even help you find that matching sock in your laundry. That Someone is the God who created us. David praises this very personal God in Psalm 139. God knows all his thoughts, intents, and plans yet still loves him (verses 1-6). How many friends would you have if they knew everything you’d ever done or thought or said? God knows all about us and loves us just the same. “You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me”

That Someone would even help you find that matching sock in your laundry.

(verse 5, NIV). God is like that mother and father who walk their child down the street arm in arm, step by step.

God is always there for us, no matter what our situation in life (verses 7-12). You may be at your worst, yet you can say “Even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast” (verse 10, NIV). Though it’s true that God cares for all creation, humanity holds a special place in His heart. He told us that we are more valuable than the sparrows that are never forgotten. He left the ninety-nine in search for us. God created the plants and animals with simply a word, but with humankind He took His time. He fashioned us with His hands and breathed life into us with His lips (Gen. 2:7; Ps. 139:13-16). What a personal God! “How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you” (Ps. 139:17, 18, NIV).

Another lesson I learned that cold winter morning at Weimar is that all nature obeys the Creator’s will. God said to the star, “Send Tim a message for me.” The star immediately obeyed his Master. Nature obeys the law of God in reflecting His character (Ps. 19:1-6). Yet God deals with humanity more personally (verses 7-11). He uses reasoning that appeals to us. He uses illustrations like gold (our material needs) and money (our senses).

Yet even after seeing God’s care for the works of His hands, even after His many appeals to follow Him, David realizes that humanity is out of harmony with the rest of creation. Even though David expresses his hatred of all that is against God

(Ps. 139:19-22), he doesn't exclude himself from this group (verses 23, 24). He comes to the same conclusion in Psalm 19. He asks not only that God would change him but also keep him that way ("lead me in the way everlasting"). He wants his life, his words, and his thoughts once more to be acceptable to God.

Salvation is to restore the image of God in humanity, to bring us back to the original design. "Let us make man in our image, . . . let them rule . . . over all the earth" (Gen. 1:26, NIV).

I'd always thought of this likeness as physical. But note that being made in God's image is followed immediately by humanity's commission to stewardship of the earth. This is further explained in Genesis 2:15; humanity is asked to dress and keep Eden. The Hebrew words here can mean protect and serve. In Proverbs 12:10, the righteous man cares for all the creatures under his care. The Hebrew word for care is very broad and can mean to take thought for, to provide what is needed, and to sustain. In this we see how we were created in the image of God. We, like Him, are to serve and protect others, to help them and provide what they need.

On the ceiling frescoes of the Sistine chapel is "The Creation" by Michelangelo. It shows Adam reaching out after God and God reaching back toward him. This is what we need to restore the connection with our Maker. In the earth made new, all creation will be in harmony with God. In heaven "there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain" (Rev. 21:4, NIV). This is because there is no more sin (verse 8). "The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. . . . One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. . . . From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love."

REACT

1. Must all sin be overcome for humankind to enter heaven? Why or why not?
2. What is God's response to those who have confessed their sins yet still fall into them periodically? How about at the end of probation?
3. How can one become and walk consistently as a son or daughter of God? Be specific.
4. With numerous examples of Christ's love in nature, why do so many still lack faith in God?

**The Great Controversy, p. 678.*

God's Power in Nature

TESTIMONY

Scripture: Ps. 19

"The measure of divine attention bestowed on any object is proportionate to its rank in the scale of being. The little brown sparrow is watched over by Providence. The flowers of the field, the grass that carpets the earth, share the notice and care of our heavenly Father. The great Master Artist has taken thought for the lilies, making them so beautiful that they outshine the glory of Solomon. How much more does He care for man, who is the image and glory of God. . . . As the sunbeam imparts to the flowers their varied and delicate tints, so does God impart to the soul the beauty of His own character."¹

"The graceful forms and delicate hues of the plants and flowers may be copied by human skill, but what touch can impart life to even one flower or blade of grass? Every wayside blossom owes its being to the same power that set the starry worlds on high. . . . Through the flowers, God would call our attention to the loveliness of Christlike character. He who has given such beauty to the blossoms desires far more that the soul should be clothed with the beauty of the character of Christ."²

"In the loveliness of the things of nature you may learn more of the wisdom of God than the schoolmen know. On the lily's petals, God has written a message for

On the lily's petals, God has written a message for you.

you, written in language that your heart can read only as it unlearns the lessons of distrust and selfishness and corroding care. . . . He has filled the earth and air and sky with glimpses of beauty to tell you of His loving thought for you. The beauty of all created things is but a gleam from the shining of His glory."³

"Consider, says Jesus, how the lilies grow; how, springing from the cold, dark earth, or from the mud of the river bed, the plants unfold in loveliness and fragrance. Who would dream of the possibilities of beauty in the rough brown bulb of the lily? But when the life of God, hidden therein, unfolds at His call in the rain and the sunshine, men marvel at the vision of grace and loveliness."⁴

"God's law is the law of love. He has surrounded you with beauty to teach you that you are not placed on earth merely to delve for self, to dig and build, to toil and spin, but to make life bright and joyous and beautiful with the love of Christ—like the flowers, to gladden other lives by the ministry of love."⁵

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 313.

2. *Lift Him Up*, p. 72.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 97.

5. *Ibid.*

By A. Samuel Williams, a sophomore dental student at Loma Linda (California) University.

“Jesus Unmasked”: A Reader-Friendly Exegesis

EVIDENCE

Key Text: John 1:1-3

John 1 is called the prologue of the Gospel of John because in it is revealed the themes developed later in his book. Just a few of the themes in John 1 are life (verse 4), light (verse 4b), testimony (verse 6), and grace (verse 16). This chapter is important for our study of creation because it tells us who the earthly Jesus really is. He is not simply the unlettered itinerant preacher that some of the locals asserted He was (see 7:15). He is God and the Divine Redeemer and Creator. Let's see how John unfolds his presentation of Jesus.

John 1 is described by theologians as the “Hymn to the Logos” (i.e., Word) because the structure of John 1 reveals the strophes (verses) of an ancient hymn.* Notice the progression of the hymn. It's first movement celebrates Christ's pre-existent timelessness. “In the beginning was the Word.” This is not the same beginning mentioned in Genesis 1:1 where we read “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” John's assertion is grander and loftier. John asserts that prior to the beginning of time, the Word existed within eternity. Before our beginning began, the Word already was. This is important, as we shall see later.

John 1 is described by theologians as the “Hymn to the Logos.”

The second movement of the hymn celebrates Christ's preexistent relationship: “And the Word was with God.” Here John reminds us that Christ the eternal Word enjoyed a profoundly intimate relationship with God. The grammar of the technical Greek construction later points to that relationship that can only be described as “monogenes—only-begotten,” meaning unique (see John 3:16).

The third movement of the hymn celebrates Christ's preexistent status: “And the Word was God.” Lest anyone misunderstand, this Jesus whom we preach, teach, sing, and live about, is no created being like you and me. He is the uncaused cause, the self-existent one, the unaffected effect. Eternal, immutable, ineffable, and infallible, Christ is the eternal God. While concealed in the Old Testament, He is revealed in the New Testament.

Keep listening, as for our purposes John presents a fourth and final movement that celebrates Christ's preexistent function: “All things were made by Him.” The God of Genesis 1:1 is the Christ of John 1. He is the “I am” of Exodus 3:14 (compare with John 8:58). Christ is the Everlasting Father of Isaiah 9:6 (compare with John 10:30). The Jesus of John is not only redeemer, but also Creator. To the first-century onlooker, this truth must have struck them like a ton of bricks.

*See Jon Paulien's *John*, in the Abundant Life Amplifier (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press*, 1995), pp. 37, 38.

By Leslie N. Pollard, vice-president for diversity at Loma Linda (California) Health Sciences Centers.

The Luxury of Texture

HOW-TO

Key Text: Ps. 19:1-4

Color, glitz, and whirlwind tours are the way most people envision California. The wonder of a Parade of Roses on New Year's Day, viewed on a 27-inch screen from the comfort of an insulated living room while four-foot-high drifts sit just outside the house waiting for spring. Or perhaps a quick Christmas vacation rushing from Disneyland to Knott's Berry Farm to Sea World and Tijuana in a week of frenzied ogling and then back home. California is much more than this. Understanding California takes time.

As I write, just under my hands sits a brave book of photography focusing on California.* The photographer has removed the color and the glitz and in a world of black and white exposed the texture of California. It is in the texture that we find the wonder of the place. Cloud-kissed mountains, wave-slapped shores, barren stumps with character, and thought-filled human faces etching interest in our minds. This isn't a book you can enjoy in a day or a week or a month; it takes time to let an Ansel Adams print ease into your consciousness.

Creation is the same way. Scientifically we can dissect, theorize, and philosophize our way to a view that accepts the notion of an ultimate being responsible

Sometimes we think that looking at nature requires a trip away from home.

for our existence and the formulation of the reality we understand to be true—or there is the quiet discovery of the texture of life carefully created by a person who wants you to be still and know that He is God. These moments are found in a baby's first cry, a walk in the woods, and the joy of a body that can sense delight in the rough prickle of a grandfather's kiss, the engulfing odor of fresh baked bread, and the sweet soprano of an off-key 10-year-old wandering through *Amazing Grace*. It is in the texture of life that we get to know God. Looking at nature is the key.

Sometimes we think that looking at nature requires a trip away from home or perhaps the purchase of a book that will explain nature to us. Looking at nature is a way of looking at life. Finding the thumbprint of the designer simply requires removing color, glitz, and hurry for a moment or two and focusing on the texture of life. We can do that by:

- Looking at less rather than more
- Looking at why more than how
- Looking at people more than events

*Ansel Adams, *California* (Little Brown, 1950).

By Randall Skoretz, associate pastor of the Loma Linda (California) University Church.

It Takes Faith

OPINION

Key Text: Ps. 139:4-6

"Your honor," intoned the lawyer, "the prosecution calls B. G. Theorems to the stand." Pompous and deliberate, B. G. slowly made his way to the stand.

The bailiff leaned forward extending a textbook, "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you, Science?"

"I do," boomed B. G.

"State your name and occupation."

"My name is B. G. Theorems, and I create reality for intellectual communities."

"B. G., if I may call you that, what credentials do you have that allow you to create reality for intellectual communities?"

"I have a Ph.D. in the sum total of human scientific knowledge and an Ed.D. in dissemination of bias based on that knowledge and an M.A. in skepticism."

"Interesting," mused the lawyer. "I have an M.A. in skepticism as well. Is it true that based on your learning you accept the theory of evolution?"

B. G. slowly inhaled. He had prepared his whole life for this. He was ready to defend evolution, but he couldn't figure out why the prosecution had called him to the witness stand.

"First of all, it is not a theory. It is based in scientific knowledge."

"I create reality for intellectual communities."

"Human scientific knowledge," interrupted the lawyer, "the same knowledge that accepted primitive Lamarckian evolutionary theory, that was sure humankind could not fly, that at one time thought bleeding with leeches cured influenza."

"Well, we are past all that. We now know more."

"I think you mean to say that human knowledge is dynamic, always growing and changing. Isn't that right? Well, Mr. B. G. Theorems, if human knowledge is dynamic, what proof do you have that your theories of evolution are not as primitive and inadequate as previous theories based on the sum total of human knowledge?"

"You don't understand!" B. G. was beginning to get red. "The theory of evolution is accepted by . . ."

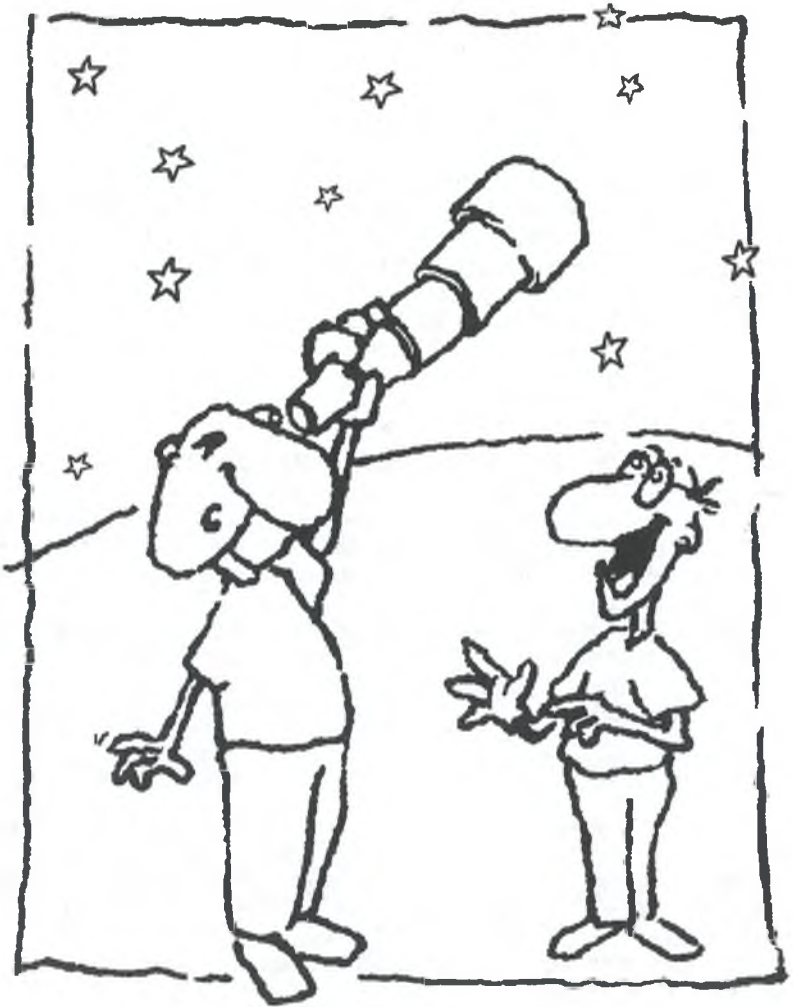
"Please answer the question! I have an M.A. in skepticism as well, you know," said the lawyer. "Dr. Theorems, isn't it true that your trust in the theory of evolution is based on trust in knowledge that is simply nothing more than unproven evidence that indicates in your mind that there is no God? Dr. Theorems, what does it take to believe the way you believe? What does it take?"

At that moment B. G. could think of only one answer, "Well . . . I guess you could say . . . it takes faith."

"Faith in what, Dr. Theorems, faith in what?"

By Randall Skoretz, associate pastor of the Loma Linda (California) University Church.

THE “NATURE” OF GOD



“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands” (Ps. 19:1, NIV).

The Heavens Declare God

INTRODUCTION

Scriptures: Ps. 19; John 3:16

One night my seven-year-old son and I went out to the backyard to view the stars through his new telescope. He was excited to be up late and to be engaged in a “scientific endeavor.” He shivered a bit in his warm-up suit, but he would not have changed places with his sister, warmly tucked in her bed, for anything in the world—not even marshmallows and hot chocolate.

My son stared in wonder at the magnitude of the universe and really became excited when we turned his telescope to the constellation Orion. It is believed, I explained, that the center star of Orion’s belt was not really a star at all but was a “gateway” to heaven. When I told him that, he nearly tripped over the telescope. “Really?” he asked. My son wanted us to “get closer, Daddy, get closer.” He was so eager to see the beauty God had created that he was frustrated with the low power of his telescope. If only he had more power, if only he had one of those telescopes he saw in Griffith Park, Los Angeles! Then he might “see beyond the pearly gate, down the streets of gold, to the very throne of God Himself.”

What might he see? I am sure he silently asked this of himself. I asked it of myself. What if I had the most powerful telescope in the world? What if I could

What would I see as I peered through the belt of Orion?

look through the best telescope NASA had? What would I see as I peered through the belt of Orion?

My son’s gleeful shouts brought me back to reality. “Daddy,” he said, “I think I will see the Jesus we have read about in the Bible Story books.”

“Is that right?” I replied. “And what will He look like?”

“I don’t know,” my son conceded, “but I’m sure I’ll recognize Him by His nail-scarred hands.”

When we look at nature, we are amazed by its beauty, its power. We see evidences, hints of what God is like. No doubt we are able to glimpse His majesty and holiness in the towering California redwoods, in the massive surf of a north-shore Honolulu beach, and in the stillness of Walden Pond. We are truly able to see God in nature.

Yet we see God in His fullness—we know that we have viewed His essence—when we set our eyes on Christ’s nail-scarred hands.

I was reminded of something profound that night—perhaps not about stars, meteors, or the intricacies of astronomy but about the God I love, serve, and look for in nature. Thank you, Son, for reminding me of the God whom we worship—the God with the nail-scarred hands.

By David A. Pendleton, a member of the State House of Representatives, Honolulu, Hawaii.

God's Power in Nature

LOGOS

Ps. 33:6; 104; Heb. 1:3; 11:3; Matt. 6:25, 26; Luke 12:22-24

Nature is God's creation. As such, it tells us something of the Creator. Nature tells us that God is powerful, God is majestic, God is a sustaining presence, and that God is in the stillness. We also learn that God is love.

Great are you, Lord and worthy of praise—these words find their way onto our lips during song service or during the music portion of a fireside service. Theologians and philosophers of the Middle Ages used the term "Omnipotence." God is all-powerful, the Almighty. He created all that is, spoke and there was light, He parted the Red Sea, He parted the Jordan River, He brought down the walls of Jericho, He healed the sick and lame, He died on a cross and rose on the third day.

There is no question that He is great, that He is powerful. Or at least there was no question until recently.

Modern humanity has become enamored with science and technology, so much so that we are rarely impressed by new developments, new inventions, or new facts. In fact, we are often impatient that our web browser works so slowly, forgetting that it is retrieving information from a computer located halfway around the world. We complain that the microwave oven is taking too long to cook the TV dinner. We grumble when we attempt to call a friend on a cellular phone and learn that that friend is temporarily out of range. We are shocked and appalled when we

Medieval theologians used the term *Oh happy Fall*.

find that a business does not own a fax machine. "How can they hope to do business?" we ask.

Psalms 104 is a call to pause. It is an invitation to modern men and women to stop, at least momentarily, our busy twentieth-century workaholic pace and to reflect on the greatness of our God. For with all of the technological advances, we still have not been able to rid our world of famine, pain, human suffering, loneliness, emptiness, and fear. Humankind has accomplished impressive feats. We have learned much, but have we forgotten God's greatness in the process?

We recognize God's greatness when we reflect on His creation. God is Creator. He is the author of all that is. Nothing exists apart from His sustaining power and presence.

Occasionally we are tempted to think that we have invented the principles of engineering or mathematics or physics by which we construct and build and plan. But God is the author of all that is and all that there is to know. We are but stewards with instructions to occupy until He returns.

When we contemplate the earth and how fragile in many respects our ecosystem is, we are convinced that we are created creatures, designs of a Designer. It takes too much faith to believe that we are here by chance. The improbability of it all is staggering.

We reside on a planet that is just the right distance from the sun to ensure that

our atmosphere is neither too hot nor too cold. We have the perfect atmosphere to protect us from the dangerous radiation of the sun but that lets in the beneficial rays that afford us vitamin D. Our planet is just the right size to safeguard us from floating off into space, but not so large that we are crushed under excessive gravitational forces. In short, God created everything perfect.

Though this is undeniably a fallen world—we see around us pollution, natural disasters, predatory behavior in the wild—we still see evidences of the perfect Eden God built so carefully so long ago. We see the beauty of the deserts, the oceans, the forests, the plains, and the mountains. We see God's greatness and majesty in the world He has built.

We see God's greatness in the variety of animal life inhabiting this world. The eagles with their remarkable vision, the geese with their inexplicable sense of direction, bumble bees that should not fly at all—and these are just a few of the creatures of the air. There are also the marvelous land animals and the oceans teeming with life. They are almost of infinite variety, and each is adapted perfectly to its environment. They are part of our world to be appreciated, not to be exploited.

Humankind is God's crowning achievement. Made in the image of God, we can learn a great deal of God through observing humanity. We also learn a great deal about God by observing humanity's condition. We serve a God who is great and majestic. We serve a God who is also loving and who so respects our freedom that He will permit us to exercise our own freedom, even if it means giving us up to our foolish ways.

God could have created Adam and Eve with the inability to choose anything contrary to God's righteous will. An omnipotent God could just as well have created robots, but He chose not to. He chose to create creatures that could reciprocate, that could choose to listen or not listen, obey or disobey, love or not love.

While we will forever regret the decision our forebears made on that fateful day in Eden, we rejoice for the God who gave us the opportunity to love Him. Medieval theologians used the term *Oh happy Fall*, which meant that the Fall permitted us to see God's greatness and love from a perspective otherwise unavailable. Whether we agree with them or not, we can all agree that the God we see in nature, the God we read of in Psalm 104, the God with the nail-scarred hands, is truly a great and loving God.

By David A. Pendleton, a member of the State House of Representatives, Honolulu, Hawaii.

A Rose Among Thorns

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Ps. 104:33, 34

I feel fortunate that my job involves working with flowers every day. It constantly reminds me that God is not only creative but also appreciates variety and detail. I don't know what He was thinking about when He created the rose, but I imagine He must have thought of something beautiful. So I am not surprised that the rose is often used as a flower of choice in showing one's token of love and affection. But even in all its beauty, sin has marred the rose with thorns.

In my work, my job includes removing the thorns so what remains is what people can appreciate—the rose. I have come to realize that God intended for our Christian life to be like a rose. In spite of sin, God still permeates our lives, so people see God, not our sin. “The book of nature is a great lesson book, which in connection with the Scriptures we are to use in teaching others of His character and guiding lost sheep back to the fold of God. As the works of God are studied, the Holy Spirit flashes conviction into the mind.”¹

“In itself the beauty of nature leads the soul away from sin and worldly attractions, and toward purity, peace, and God.”²

“As the works of God are studied, the Holy Spirit flashes conviction into the mind.”

REACT

1. Can a non-Christian appreciate nature as fully as a Christian? Why or why not?
2. How does nature influence people who are stressed, burdened, or discouraged? Be specific.
3. How can nature change the lives of people dependent on alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs?
4. What part does nature play in the plan of salvation?

1. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 24.

2. *Ibid.*

By Madeline Aquilina, who works as an assistant in a floral-design studio and as a homemaker in Honolulu, Hawaii.

The Assurance of Victory

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Ps. 104

God has given humanity the assurance that they can conquer any of life's difficulties. Compare Psalm 104:6-9 with Genesis 1:9, 10. How can you relate personally to the water being gathered together?

Isaiah 57:20, 21 relates the wicked to a tossing sea that cannot rest. The stress and turmoil of this world are like the sea that threatened to overwhelm the ancient world. People of that time believed that the world was flat and the sea was a great evil that, if left unchecked, would overtake them. The story of the Flood shows that only God's mercy keeps this evil in check. Just as God at Creation pushed the sea to its place, we can also push the sea of turmoil and stress to its place by using the power of Creation.

Read Psalm 104:8, 10, 13, 18. Why did God call Israel to live in the mountains rather than the river valleys?

Abraham was called out of Mesopotamia. Moses called Israel out of Egypt. Ezra and Nehemiah called Israel out of Babylon. Each time, Israel was called out of a river valley to live in the mountains. Digging out an existence in the mountains

Rather than allowing Satan to control our lives, we are given the power to control him.

was much more difficult than depending on the yearly floods in the river valleys. The followers of God can take on the challenges of the more difficult things in life because God lives in them.

Compare Genesis 1:21-26 with Psalm 104:23-26. Relate rulership and mastery over creation to your personal life.

God gave humankind the job of ruling over the creatures of the earth. Included in that command is authority over the sea creatures, including the great mystical creature leviathan. What was included in that command? Read the description of leviathan in Job 41 and notice that the characteristics of Satan are contained in the references to leviathan. Rather than allowing Satan to control our lives, we are given the power to control and subdue him. Through the creative power of God working within, the tables have been turned.

On Sabbath we celebrate the creative power of God. We celebrate the assurance that His power works within and through us. We realize that we can challenge and conquer any life difficulty. The turmoil, evil, and stress of this life can be pushed to its proper place just like the raging sea was given its place. We can take on the hardships of the more difficult path just as Israel did to live in the mountains rather than in the easier living conditions of the river valleys. We can shout our victory over Satan himself. No longer are we afraid of his existence, because we are empowered to rule over him and subdue him. Sabbath is a reflection of our victory over all life's difficulties.

By Daryl Chang, a businessman in Honolulu, Hawaii.

How Majestic Is Thy Name

HOW-TO

Key Texts: Ps. 119; 33:6

This week we have had the opportunity to reflect on God's greatness as revealed through nature. Although theory is important, practical application is no less so. Here are a few suggestions for meeting God in nature:

1. Take a family walk for worship time. Family worship usually follows a predictable pattern. We read from the quarterly then from the Bible. A daily devotional may supplement the readings. This is fine. But every so often we should really shake things up.

My family occasionally goes for a walk on the beach. This is time-consuming and takes planning. But it can be a wonderfully spiritual experience. Imagine watching a sunset while reading the verses in the Bible about God stopping the sun or about God speaking and creating light with His very words. Imagine recounting the tale of Jonah while you're whale-watching. Imagine walking along the seashore, feeling the cool water between your toes, as you retell the story of the parting of the Red Sea. There is nothing like getting all your senses involved in the worship experience.

2. Conduct Sabbath School out of doors. Church is often associated with a building or sanctuary. In this modern day and age, how can a church not have a

Imagine recounting the tale of Jonah while you're whale-watching.

physical structure? The Hebrew people could have answered this question, for they went many years without a physical structure—yet they continued to worship.

Get out-of-doors, take off the neckties, and worship in the mountains, desert, or beach. True, breezes may turn the Bible pages at inopportune times, it might be hotter or cooler than would be preferred, or birds might sing when you are trying to hear the speaker, but you will have a service to remember. Moreover, you will appreciate the physical plant you do have and gain a new perspective on the challenges faced by those without such conveniences.

3. Visit the zoo. God made human beings, but He also made the other animals. Take a trip to the zoo. Try to take in the tremendous variety of life God has created. Try to appreciate the splendid array of wildlife God has brought into existence for our enjoyment—not for our exploitation. By observing other species you will be awed by the might and creativity of our Creator.

4. Spend time reading the psalms. Finally, read the psalms. Maybe do this out-of-doors too. These poetic works often find themselves less popular among Bible students than the more meaty Romans or Hebrews or Revelation. But they have been recognized as canonical, inspired material precisely because they so eloquently and completely capture the glory and majesty and love of God.

By Noemi Pendleton, an elected member of the state board of education, Honolulu, Hawaii.

Read It in the Stars

OPINION

Key Text: Ps. 19:1

Visitors to Maui usually drive up winding roads to reach the 10,023-foot summit of Haleakala Crater to take in two sights: sunrise at the crater and silversword plants found only on the slopes of Haleakala and one other remote mountaintop in South America.

Last Christmas my sister Nancy and some other relatives discovered something even more spectacular than either the sunrise or the silversword. At 5:00 a.m. the sky was clear, and the stars, thickly studding the heavens, gave a dazzling show. "I have never seen so many stars in my life," said Nancy. "The stars seemed so much closer as millions of them pulsated." Nature gave a memorable show that morning, providing more than a dozen shooting stars in a single hour. The sunrise was just as beautiful as the travel brochures had promised, but to Nancy, the starlit heavens offered more than mere beauty; they provided a breathtaking, spiritual experience.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, in his essay "Nature," writes: "If a man would be alone, let him look at the stars. The rays that come from those heavenly worlds will separate between him and what he touches. One might think the atmosphere was made transparent with this design, to give man, in the heavenly bodies, the perpetual

"Every night come out these envoys of beauty."

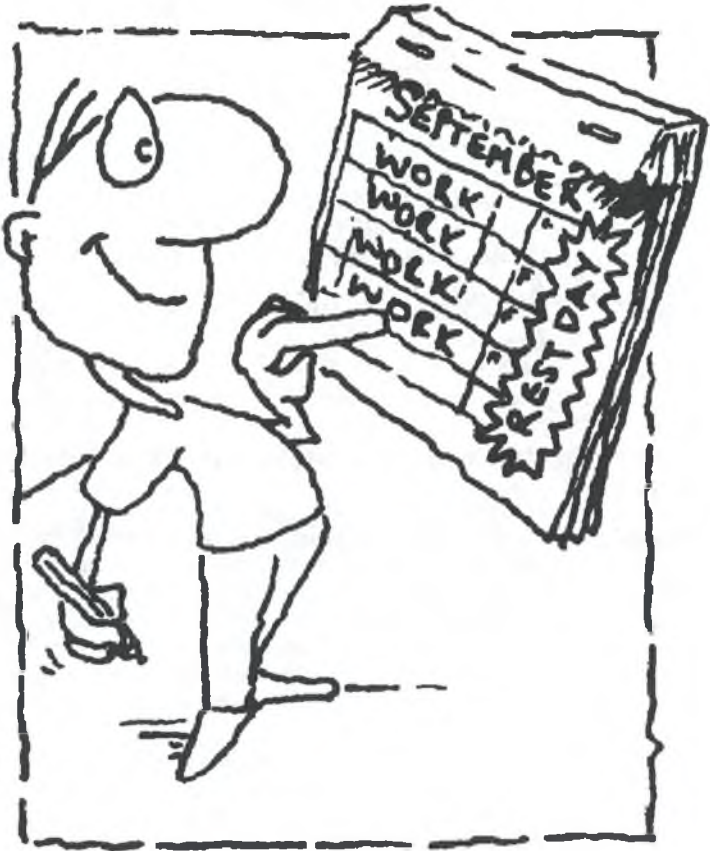
presence of the sublime. Seen in the streets of cities, how great they are! If the stars should appear one night in a thousand years, how would men believe and adore; and preserve for many generations the remembrance of the city of God which had been shown! But every night come out these envoys of beauty, and light the universe with their admonishing smile.

"The stars awaken a certain reverence, because though always present, they are inaccessible; but all natural objects make a kindred impression, when the mind is open to their influence." As Emerson notes, a mind open to nature will find evidence of God all around.

A person cannot help sensing God's presence and power while beholding the night sky with stars millions of light years apart. Our galaxy is but one of countless galaxies. It is impossible for the finite mind to comprehend the magnitude of God's greatness expressed in the starlit sky. The wonder of it all is that our powerful Creator-God knows our every need and desire and cares for us as if we are His only begotten. What an awesome privilege it is for us to call God—the Creator and Redeemer—our Father.

By Jane Cheeseman, who teaches English and English-as-a-second-language at Hawaiian Mission Academy, in Honolulu.

TIME TO TAKE A BREAK



“Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water’” (Rev. 14:6, 7, NIV).

On the Brighter Side of Things

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Gen. 2:2, 3

Have you ever just stopped to think about how beautiful the Sabbath day is? Isn't it exciting to know that our Father in heaven has set a special time for us to spend with him and our fellow brothers and sisters? Imagine that! That King in the universe wants to stop everything to spend time with *you*!

But even knowing this, it can still be quite easy to feel that keeping the Sabbath is more of a tedious chore that limits our activities than a day of rest and refreshment. We rest from our chaotic and troublesome lives to come into union with our great Creator so that we may be cleansed of our impurities and be forgiven by the Holy One.

For a very long time I did not understand the importance of “keeping” and “observing” the Sabbath. At least for me, it was a day I didn't have to worry about writing an important paper for school or having to go to work. But there's more to keeping the Sabbath; it's understanding the significance of doing so. The Sabbath was instituted before sin even entered the Garden of Eden. God “had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work”

Sabbath was a day I didn't have to worry about writing an important paper.

(Gen. 2:2, NIV). The Lord blessed the Sabbath and proclaimed it holy. After the fall of Adam and Eve, the Sabbath gained more meaning; it became the symbol of the covenant between God and us. The significance of this covenant is that it is the promise of salvation!

This week we will be taking a closer look at what the Sabbath was intended for and why it plays a crucial role in our redemption. I encourage you to read on and further your understanding of God's sacred Sabbath and learn how you can apply it to your daily experience. I know that after I began to understand what role the Sabbath could play in my life, I began to appreciate all the wonderful things my Father has done for me—especially those bright sunny days when I can feel Him smiling down on me. God is good!

By Icela Pelayo, a second-year student in international relations at the University of California at Berkeley.

God's Plan of Peace

LOGOS

Gen. 2:2, 3; Exod. 20:9-11; 31:12, 13; Rev. 14:6, 7

Hello, Friends,

This week, a group of friends from the West and East Coast will share our experiences with the study of the Sabbath. Our prayer is that, by the strength of the Spirit, we can grow in preparation to meet our Creator.

Today we will analyze the scriptural basis for the week. I invite you to take out your swords and, in prayer, join me in a walk through this earth's history and future.

A Perfect Peace (Gen. 2:2, 3)

With a sigh of satisfaction, the Lord rested on the seventh day. Not only did He rest, the Scripture says, but He “declared it holy” (Gen. 2:3, TLB). When we read this text in its context, we will see a beautiful world freshly created—perfection on earth. The Sabbath was set apart *before* sin. In an innocent and healthy state, Adam and Eve rested. The Sabbath was a time to worship God as Creator and Benefactor of the breathtaking wonders that composed their immaculate garden-home.

Peace Becomes Law (Exod. 20:9-11)

By the time we encounter the story of Sinai, the human race has fallen in sin. They have survived the horrors of the Flood, the brutality of war, the agony of

The Sabbath was set apart *before* sin.

famine, the desperation of drought, and the misery of slavery. For most, the perfection and peace of Eden is a distant tale. Ellen White states, “Living in the midst of idolatry and corruption, they had no true conception of the holiness of God, of the exceeding sinfulness of their own hearts, their utter inability, in themselves, to render obedience to God’s law, and their need of a Saviour. All this they must be taught.”*

Not only were the Ten Commandments a tool to teach the Israelites about the holy character of God, they served to prove that they were unable to match—on their own—the character of the Lord. Although the Israelites eagerly and confidently promised, “We will obey” (Exod. 20:19, TLB), we see in the following chapters that the people made graven images, defying the very first commandments.

Peace Through a Covenant (Exod. 31:12, 13)

God sets apart that which belongs to Him. The law given at Sinai was a pact of love. If Israel kept it, they would be God’s special people. “Now if you will obey me and keep your part of my contract with you, you shall be my own little flock from among all the nations of the earth; for all the earth is mine” (Exod. 19:5, TLB). The Sabbath, then, became a symbol of this pact, a *reminder* that they were a special nation, set apart for redemption.

Promise of Another Perfect Peace (Rev. 14:6, 7)

Before the close of time, as the preparation for the return of our Savior comes to its completion, the urgent messages of the three angels will sound. This truth is fundamental. I invite you, friends, to seek the meaning of these messages on your own. By doing so you will be convinced of the rapid return of Christ.

The first angel admonishes the people to recognize God as Creator and proclaims the arrival of His judgment. The second angel announces the destruction of a people who did not follow God's law. The third angel announces the symbol that will identify the people who worship God and keep His law. The messages of the last days are about fidelity to the ordinances of our Creator.

I encourage you, friend, to make the respect for Sabbath a topic of fervent study, meditation, and practice. The days are approaching when God's people will be separated. The distinguishing mark is the subject for this week. Through the grace of our Friend, Christ, I pray that we all bear it and one Sabbath meet in the Promised Land.

REACT

1. What is the significance of recognizing God as Creator?
2. How does the idea of God as Creator frame your belief?
3. If the Sabbath is a covenant, what is your role?
4. What does it mean to be a "seven-day" Adventist as opposed to setting one day aside for God?
5. How does my Sabbath-keeping lifestyle reflect the specialness of being one of God's chosen?
6. What are some current, popular "graven images" that keep us from following Jesus? Explain why we, like the Israelites, are quick to say "We will obey" yet continue to disobey.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 371.*

By Becky Arras, a fourth-year sociology major at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

An Eternal Pact

TESTIMONY

Scripture: Rev. 12:17

“When the law was proclaimed at Sinai the very first words of the fourth commandment were, ‘Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy’—showing that the Sabbath was not then instituted; we are pointed back for its origin to creation. In order to obliterate God from the minds of men, Satan aimed to tear down this great memorial.”¹

“Through the setting up of a false sabbath, the enemy thought to change times and laws. But has he really succeeded in changing God’s law? The words of the thirty-first chapter of Exodus are the answer. He who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, has declared of the seventh-day Sabbath: ‘It is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations.’ ‘It is a sign . . . forever.’ Exodus 31:13, 17. The changed signpost is pointing the wrong way, but God has not changed.”²

“In the closing work of God in the earth, the standard of His law will be again exalted.”³ “Boldly will men of God’s appointment denounce the union of the church with the world. Earnestly will they call upon men and women to turn from the observance of a man-made institution to the observance of the true Sabbath. ‘Fear God, and give glory to Him,’ they will proclaim to every nation; ‘for the hour

“The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul.”

of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.’ ”⁴

“The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The observance of the false sabbath will be urged upon us. The contest will be between the commandments of God and the commandments of men. Those who have yielded step by step to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will then yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. At that time the gold will be separated from the dross. True godliness will be clearly distinguished from the appearance and tinsel of it.”⁵

“When there shall be a ‘restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began’ (Acts 3:21), the creation Sabbath, the day on which Jesus lay at rest in Joseph’s tomb, will still be a day of rest and rejoicing.”⁶

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1. *Patriarch’s and Prophets*, p. 336.
 2. *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 184, 185.
 3. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
 4. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
 5. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
 6. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 769, 770.

By Joaquin Pérez, a theology student at Montemorelos University, Nuevo León, Mexico.

Freedom in a Day

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Isa. 52:3

The Sabbath is related to redemption in three ways. First, have you asked yourself, What is the meaning of redemption? In the New Testament we find three concepts that translate into redemption.

The first term is *Lustrosis* or *Lutroo*, which means “unbound” or “liberation.” After the fall of Adam and Eve, the Sabbath was again ordained, not only as a memorial to God as Creator (Gen. 2:2, 3; Exod. 20:11) but as a sign that it was God who liberated His people from slavery in Egypt (Deut. 5:15). The Sabbath is a symbol of liberation because through the sacrifice of Christ not only do we become children of God (Gen. 3:26-29) but we are liberated from the slavery of sin (Rom. 6:16-18, 22).

The second term is *Esagorasō*, which means “to purchase in a market” or “to rescue.” Through Christ’s death, we were purchased from the market of sin. It is interesting to discover that the meaning of the Sabbath rests on remembering that Jesus bought us with His blood (1 Cor. 7:23; 6:20; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19), since He died on a Friday and rested in the tomb on Sabbath as a symbol of redemption (Luke 23:53-56; John 19:30, 31).

It was God who liberated His people from slavery in Egypt.

The last concept that signals the Sabbath as a part of redemption is seen in the thousand years of peace in heaven (Rev. 20:1-7; 2 Pet. 3:8). God will bring final liberation or restoration to all His children at His second coming. Then, the last signs of corruption that sin engraved in us will be removed, and we will be redeemed in the blink of an eye in body, spirit, and soul, in God’s perfect image.

“Oh, wonderful redemption! long talked of, long hoped for, contemplated with eager anticipation, but never fully understood.”*

REACT

1. How does understanding the meaning behind a law influence one’s reaction to it?
2. What are some signs that my life has been liberated by God?
3. Why is it that a Christian may be liberated from the slavery of sin but continue to sin?
4. How can we better understand our redemption?

**The Great Controversy*, p. 645.

Worship Made Easy

HOW-TO

Key Texts: Ps. 150:1, 6; Rom. 15:4; Luke 4:31, 32

The youth group in our Spanish church in Boston has been recently moved by the Holy Spirit to begin a missionary group. We began as a small book club, feeding ourselves with the Word. After that, our book club developed into a missionary group. We became anxious to share our new experience! Before these activities, our Sabbath afternoons were not as action packed. Here are a few how-tos that worked for us toward keeping the Sabbath.

1. Worship. Jesus rejoices when you come to church. You worship Him with your presence. When you sing, pray, read, and learn in church, His heart rejoices. Jesus set the example by worshiping in the temple on Sabbath. David, too, never ceased to praise God. "Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens" (Ps. 150:1, NIV).

2. Learn. What better opportunity than to begin a reading group. Choose a book to study (we recommend *Steps to Christ*!) In your group share your learning experience. God speaks to us through His Word, and you will notice that you will grow spiritually with your group.

Jesus set the example by worshiping in the temple on Sabbath.

3. Teach. Jesus taught on the Sabbath (Luke 4:31, 32). Once you have grown spiritually through your learning experience, you will desire to share what you've learned—not only with your friends, but with everyone! You will no longer feel embarrassed or scared when you approach someone. Through you, the Holy Spirit will speak with conviction and power!

REACT

1. How can you let the Holy Spirit use you more effectively during the Sabbath?
2. What are some ways that we can recognize the holiness of the Sabbath in today's fast-paced society?
3. What Sabbath outreach activities could help set aside the seventh day not as an event but as a time of holiness in honor of our Creator?
4. What are today's churches unwillingly doing that aids in the destruction of Sabbath holiness?
5. What part of the way I currently keep the Sabbath am I unsatisfied with?
6. If I could serve in *any way* I wanted to, what would it be?

By Sallie Morales, a computer engineer for Analog Devices, Boston, Massachusetts.

A Call to Service

OPINION

Key Text: Matt. 11:28-30

One finger on the power button on my stereo, one eye on the time. My finger waited dutifully to turn off the radio as soon as the sun set. Years later, the early Sabbath hours found me in a high school activity while my conscience desperately sought to prevent me from compromising.

Then, as I learned to love Jesus, I became more and more restless and unsatisfied with the way I kept the Sabbath. Sabbath naps were almost torture. "How can you sleep? There's so much work to be done!" While I rested physically, something tired and lethargic was dragging me down.

The concept of taking a day off to rest is intriguing. Our finite bodies need time to unwind and regain energy. The Scriptures record times when Christ took His disciples aside from the crowds so that they could rest from their tiresome work: "Let's get away from the crowds for a while and rest" (Mark 6:31, TLB). Though physical rest is imperative, there is a more lasting rest that our Friend invites us to. When Christ invites us to take His easier yoke, it is a call to work! He does not ask us to take His down pillow or His deluxe armchair. The purpose of a yoke is

One finger on the power button on my stereo, one eye on the time.

to pull a plow, which in turn prepares the soil for cultivation. There is a vast work to be done in God's fields, and we are called to take part.

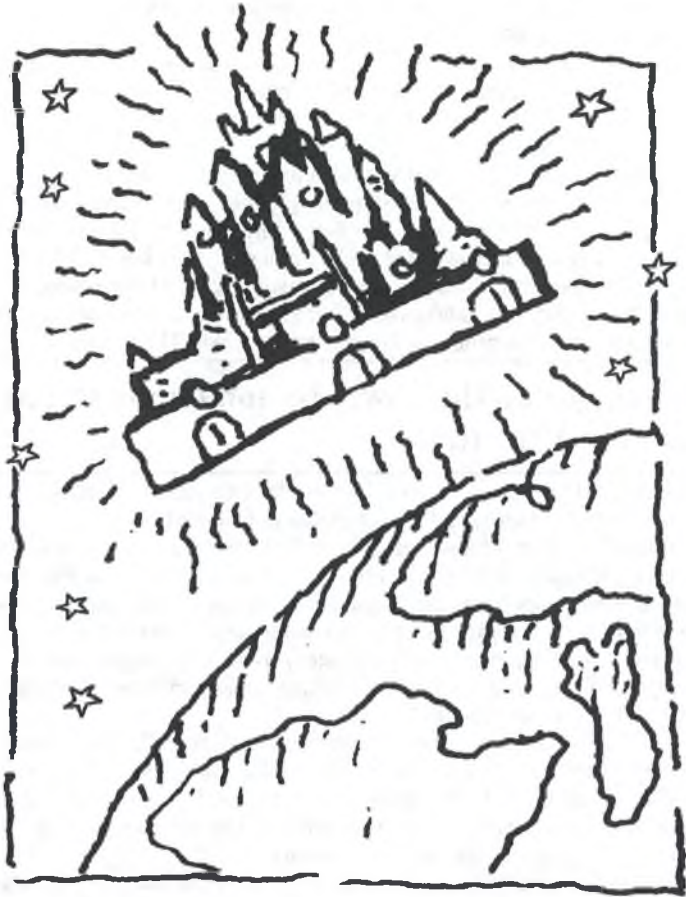
The miracle is that through service we find rest. Through work our spirit is invigorated, refreshed, and eager to cooperate. The thankful smile from someone in need, the warm tears from a new believer, the happy laugh from a lonely elderly person: All are priceless gifts that have an incomparable power to soothe the tired heart of a Christian. I can't think of a greater privilege or a higher honor than that of serving people, the way Jesus did. Each time we help someone, it is our Creator, our King, whom we are helping!

By studying the meaning of the Sabbath and understanding the reason behind it this week, we have gotten a clearer picture of the tremendous work Christ has invested in our salvation. Only one day a week? As we fall in love with our Creator and Redeemer, we wish every day was a Sabbath! Our love for Him naturally will result in a willingness to take part in His work.

Friends, we pray that the lessons of this week have inspired you to seek a deeper understanding of the crucial role Christ plays in the Sabbath. May we grow in Him and one happy day meet in the kingdom's Sabbath School.

By Becky Arras, a fourth-year sociology major at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

WHERE IS ALL THIS GOING?



“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband” (Rev. 21:1, 2, NIV).

Anticipation

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rev. 21:1, 2; 2 Pet. 3:13

Are you anxiously awaiting the
New heaven and new earth
That Jesus is preparing for us?
I imagine a perfect paradise!
Christ,
In all His wisdom and love, has
Promised us
A new body and new home
That will last beyond
Infinity.
Open your heart
Now and let Him in.

By Ruth E. Jackson, a self-employed graphics designer, San Antonio, Texas.

Time Zones: The Re-Creation Implication

LOGOS

Isa. 65:17-25; 1 Cor. 15:12-26, 35-55; Phil. 3:20, 21; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1-27; 22:1-6, 12-21

Browsing the shelves of a Christian bookstore, my eyes caught a most clever situation: books on the Second Coming arranged right above books on Creation! Not bad marketing, and not bad theology either: the past and the future impacting the present! Browse through some key texts with me that portray the three time zones—the past and the future in relation to the present.

Language (Isa. 65:17-25)

Past and future alter the present. Isaiah's structure¹ sandwiches the time zone of the present (intermittent corruption) between the time zones of the past (initial creation, here lost) and a sin-free future (imminent re-creation):

Past: chapter 34 Paradise Lost	Present: chapters 49–54 Personal Redemption	Future: chapters 60–66 Paradise Regained
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Isaiah 65:17 in particular echoes Genesis 1:1 and Revelation 21:1 in the triplets “created,” “heavens,” and “earth,” and a strikingly similar list of “no mores,” “neithers,” “nors,” and “nots” and “news.”

Logic (1 Cor. 15:16, 17)

The Resurrection resonates this theme of three time zones. Take a look at 1 Corinthians 15:16, 17:

Future → “dead do not rise” <i>Impact</i>	Past → “Christ not risen” <i>Impact</i>	Present → “faith futile” <i>Implication</i>
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Formula for Present Failure: No Past Resurrection = No Future Resurrection

Formula for Present Victory: Past Resurrection = Future Resurrection

Don't miss 1 Corinthians 15:57: “But thanks be to God! He gives [present tense!] us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”² Victory now! Past and future reaching into the present and grabbing death by its throat! Time Zone 1 + time zone 3 transform time zone 2.

Longing (Phil. 3:20, 21)

These same three time zones break out of Paul's prison cell to unbound freedom. The entire letter to the Philippians is arranged around the past-present-future motif:

Chapter 2: <i>Past</i> Standard of Christ Chapter 3: <i>Promised</i> Status at the Second Coming Chapter 4: <i>Present</i> Standard of the Christian
--

Past and future confronting and challenging the present, as conclusively expressed in Paul's eighth and final "Therefore . . . stand fast" (4:1).

Legacy (2 Pet. 3:11-15)

As Peter's life clock ticks to an end (he died the year he wrote 2 Peter), final words sketch a picture from which paint drips thickly from the future into the present. Feel the profiles of the pattern in 2 Peter 3:11, NKJV: "Therefore [concluding from the imminent re-creation = future] . . . what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness [current lifestyle implications = present]." Impending status changes immediate standards. Past and future alter the present.

Life on the Edge of Eternity (Rev. 21:6; 22:7, 12, 13, 16, 20)

Scripture masterfully weaves these time zones into a triple ovation of "It is finished": at the initial creation (Gen. 2:1); during Christ's substitutionary intermittent corruption on the Cross (John 19:30); and in its final imminent re-creation after the Second Coming (Rev. 21:6). At that point Jesus hurls four ultimate phrases into the closing scenes of Holy Writ's great controversy arena, prompting John to thirst for a heavenly future after having witnessed human nonfuture for 20 chapters. Graciously Revelation then closes, not on a calculation but on an invitation of Jesus' second coming. Former creation and final re-creation climax with a man standing on the edge of eternity—on his toes, pleading, "Come, Lord Jesus!" "I want *now* what once was and soon will be."

Not bad marketing, and not bad theology either.

REACT

1. What is re-creation?
2. Do a brief "hard-drive scan" of Scripture. Why do you think God and humanity's major spiritual events in Scripture were written in the language of creation (i.e., the Flood, Genesis 6–8; the Exodus, Exodus 14:19-22; and effects of the end of the Babylonian captivity, Ezekiel 47:7-12)?
3. We are living between the two time zones of past creation and future re-creation. What implications do these two time zones have for your present lifestyle?
4. In what areas of your life are you noticing God's re-creative power right now? Where/When/Why are you missing it?
5. How do Jesus' final words affect you today (Rev. 22:7, 12, 13, 16, 20)?

1. Adapted from Craig A. Evans, *On the Unity and Parallel Structure of Isaiah*, VT 38 (1988): pp. 129-147.

2. I use this text to show smokers who wish to quit God's past and future resurrection power *active in the present*. The past and future have lifestyle implications now!

By Ingo Sorke, pastor of the Highland Hills Seventh-day Adventist Church in San Antonio, Texas.

Home Is Where the Heart Is

TESTIMONY

Scripture: Matt. 6:10

Led by the first family feud, we have been a part of the most tragic rebellion of all time. We call this account the Fall, the time at which life on this planet Earth was radically altered—but not forever.

Lucifer has now demonstrated the horrible results of sin. Someday soon, the world will be restored to its pre-Fall glory. God's literal kingdom will be fully and finally established at the end of the millennium. "Then the nations will own no other law than the law of heaven. All will be a happy, united family, clothed with the garments of praise and thanksgiving—the robe of Christ's righteousness.

"All nature in its surpassing loveliness will offer to God a constant tribute of praise and adoration. The world will be bathed in the light of heaven. The years will move on in gladness."¹

"In the future the earth is to be lightened with the glory of God. A holy influence is to go forth to the world from those who are sanctified through the truth. The earth is to be encircled with an atmosphere of grace. The Holy Spirit is to work on human hearts, taking the things of God and showing them to men."²

"The world will be bathed in the light of heaven."

"All the perplexities of life's experience will then be made plain. Where to us have appeared only confusion and disappointment, broken purposes and thwarted plans, will be seen a grand, overruling, victorious purpose, a divine harmony."³

And still, no Sabbath School lesson could do it justice. " 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.' 1 Corinthians 2:9. Human language is inadequate to describe the reward of the righteous. It will be known only to those who behold it."⁴

God's true follower is an ambassador to this present world. Citizens of God's kingdom possess a peace attained only through constant communion with Him. Their hearts are teachable, yielding to His will. As the expression "Home is where the heart is," it is home that is longed for when it is prayed, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done *in earth*, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Is it not from the earth that we are formed (Gen. 2:7)? So we must harbor God's kingdom and His will within ourselves for yet a little while (Luke 17:21).

1. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 988.

2. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 40.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 305.

4. *The Great Controversy*, p. 675.

By David Ross, a self-employed certified nurse's aide, in San Antonio, Texas.

The Proof of Heaven?

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Heb. 11:1

The kingdom of heaven. The new earth. What do you think of when you hear these? Some people think of clouds and harps, others think of a large hunting ground, while others believe in a land of plenty.

People have to believe in Jesus before they can believe in the first creation. Examples of His existence are all around us. For example, ponder the concept of infinity. In higher mathematics, there is a theory that two parallel lines will touch in infinity. This theory is something that our limited finite minds could not have produced without the help of some higher being.

Heaven, like the mandala or circle, is a belief that has spread cross-culturally with little or no exchange among peoples. Even in the most isolated tribe, you will probably still find some belief in a heaven. It may not be that portrayed in the biblical perspective, but this is something that Satan has not been able to destroy our belief in. Even the atheist yearns for a heaven. A good example of this is the song *Imagine*, by John Lennon. In this song, even though he is saying that there is no heaven, he states: Imagine there is a world without war and without disease. In essence, he is dreaming of a heavenlike existence.

Even animals display a belief of heaven.

Even animals display a belief of heaven. Scientists have been unable to explain a strange behavior in monkeys. When some threat is introduced, before the monkeys will scream or run away, they will look upward.

Heaven is a belief that God is going to re-create earth. This belief cannot exist without the belief in the first creation. Even though people strive for a heaven, they totally miss the point when they begin believing in evolution.

Ellen White stated that the Holy City will come down through the open space in Orion.* This is one of the few places where you can find information on the actual place that heaven resides. From this many Adventists now believe that heaven is in the middle star of Orion's belt.

Even though all these things are strong arguments for the existence of heaven, none of them is really hard proof. But as it says in today's key text, faith is the evidence of things unseen. Heaven is something that must be taken on faith.

**Early Writings*, p. 41.

Ready or Not

HOW-TO

Key Text: Ps. 51:10

Throughout this week's lesson we have talked about God's re-creation time to come. He will finally end the pain and sorrow (Rev. 21:4). I have always just assumed God's people would simply leave this earth for heaven till in my own personal study I learned it's not that simple. It's *better* than simple. God's people will have an escort of magnitude and grandeur, yet it will be of less significance than heaven's immeasurable beauty. Then they will live the experience a second time, returning to the re-created earth. We can be a part of it all if we begin our preparation now.

Though Jesus Himself is preparing this magnificent paradise (John 14:2), we are the real spoils of this war. He is coming to claim us as the prize. I've come to the conclusion that my Creator is going to have a more difficult time changing me for the kingdom than building the kingdom for me. There are days I want to begin over again, and I want it all to work the way I want it to.

By now you should have noticed I am using the pronoun "I" quite a lot. In order for God to change me, I must allow Him to. I must die to self. That is the first step I take at being prepared for the re-creation.

1. Ignore the "I's." I can avoid trouble if I let go and let God. I can believe I don't have time to wait for God's intervention, but that's just make-believe. Wait

Be a secret sunshine to the biggest grouch in your church, school, or workplace.

for God. It will save time in the long run. Concentrating on God's goodness makes it harder for our joy to be taken away because the joy of the Lord is our strength.

2. Find your own mini-ministry. Service plays a big part in my life. Helping others and serving as Jesus did in His life has become a real joy to me. Ephesians 4:12 states how we really need to be prepared for works of service so the body of Christ will be built up. Service helps to ease—and keeps our thoughts elevated and our minds on a higher level. You will be surprised at how it changes your outlook on everything.

3. Share the goodness of God until it hurts. Every day make it a goal to share Jesus with someone. Share Jesus in a smile; share Jesus by listening to tears; share Jesus in living the love we have learned from Him. Be a secret sunshine to the biggest grouch in your church, school, or workplace.

4. Face the responsibility. In our spiritual lives, we need to meet with our responsibility to exercise a consistent relationship with God. He can create in each of us a clean heart if we invite Him to. Human remedies don't work. When heart-ache arises, reach for the Master and His remedy—His Word.

By Peggy A. Norris, head teacher at Maranatha Adventist School, San Antonio, Texas.

Mission Accomplished

OPINION

Key Text: Luke 17:21

Praise the Lord! It's show time! If you don't have your ticket yet, *be sure* that your decision of accepting Jesus Christ as your personal Savior is confirmed. God will accept only the true believers who cling to, and claim the promises of, His glorious words.

Recently I was diagnosed with diabetes. At first I blamed myself; then, as most people do when some tragic event occurs, I blamed God. As my body slowly weakened, I questioned what plan God had in store for me. This is when I began to pray. A calmness came over me as never before. My body was refreshed!

Since that day, I knew that I had to begin living my life for Christ. As a result of the Holy Spirit entering my life, I no longer desire the things of this earth. Now I have the burning desire to live my life for Christ. And I learned to show others God's glorious and unconditional love for all of us. It never ceases to amaze me how God is always there to take care of us even when we don't ask Him to. I can now understand the joy and the sincere love the woman at the well felt as she came face to face with Jesus.

Why would anybody want to live among all this madness in the world today? But this is nothing new. Back in Noah's time, the state of the earth was in the same predicament, even worse! It's no wonder why our day of victory is being pro-

I can now understand the joy and the sincere love the woman at the well felt.

longed. Because of sin we have been forced to reside in this sin-sick world. But guess what? There is hope. Glorious promises and blessings have been bestowed upon us. "The kingdom of heaven is within you" (Luke 17:21). Praise God!

God has promised to give us a multitude of glorious treasures that our hearts long for. We will have the ability to live forever, stay in perfect shape—with riches beyond our wildest dreams—and most importantly, meet Jesus. Face to face I will finally have the opportunity to stand with the glorious one who cared so much for me that He would pause in the great plan of things to speak me into existence.

That's why it is important as Christians to let the kingdom within us shine through our actions. I challenge all of you, as Christians through Jesus Christ, to make a difference in someone's life today.

By Martai Shawn Hysaw, a mental-health/mental-retardation home provider/training specialist for the Center for Health Care Service, San Antonio, Texas.

Next Quarter's Lessons

CHURCH: A FAMILY OF FRIENDS

If you have not received a copy of *CQ* for fourth quarter 1999, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

Lesson 1: We Are Family

Scriptures: Ps. 27:10; 34:8; Isa. 41:10; Jer. 31:3; John 3:16; Rom. 5:5; 1 Pet. 2:9.

Theme: As you study your lesson this week, search for the answers to these questions. How does God's love make a church not merely a congregation but a loving fellowship of brothers and sisters? How does God use such fellowship to spread His love and truth in the world?

Lesson 2: The New You

Scriptures: Isa. 55:6, 7; Eph. 2:1-10; 4:17-24; Gal. 5:16-26.

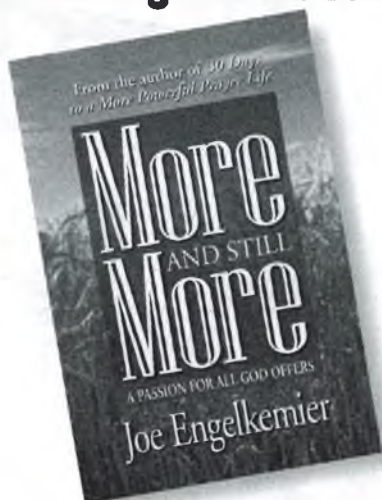
Theme: As you study this week's lesson, look for answers to these questions: Before people find Christ, what are they like? What can we become *after* we accept His salvation? And how does such a transformation take place?

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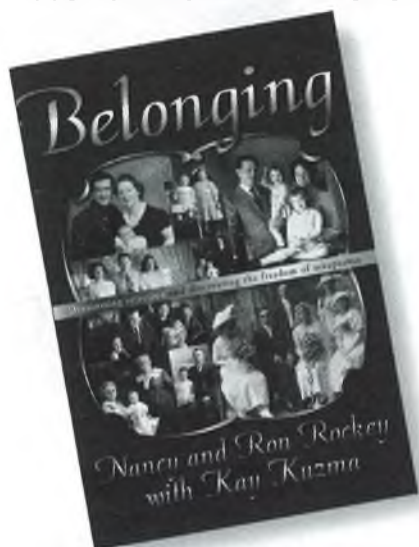
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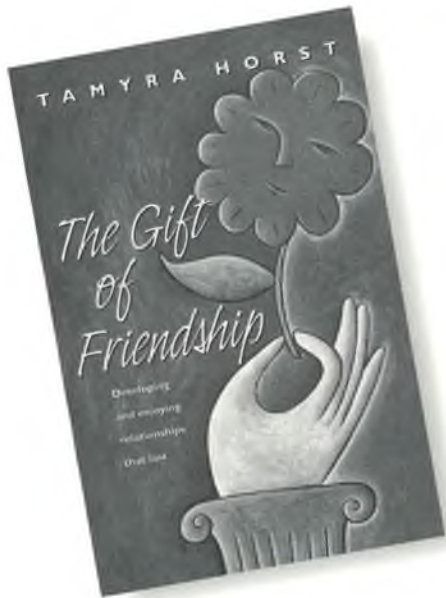
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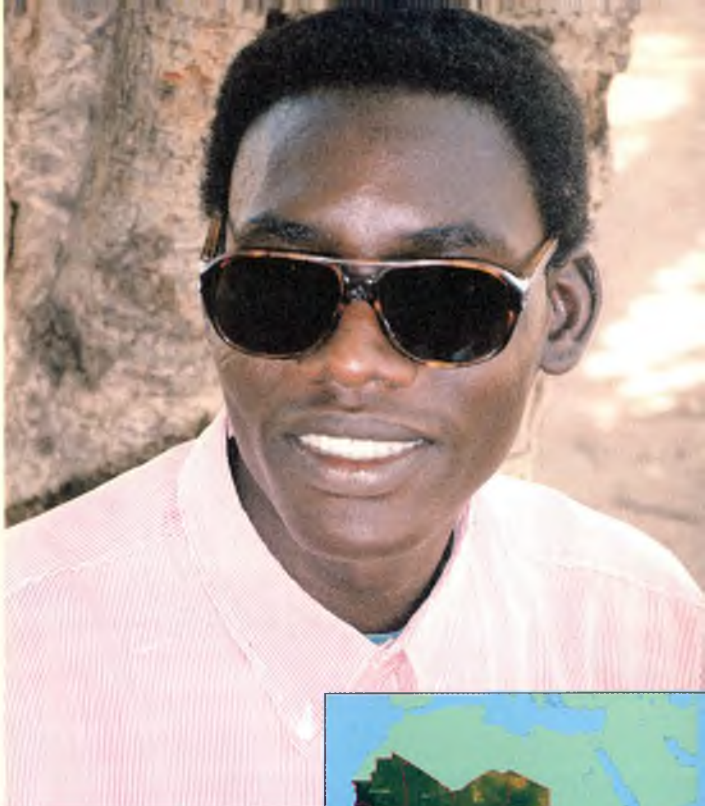
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MISSION PROFILE



NAME:

Kalsou-Jean, Global Mission pioneer in Doba, Chad.

BACKGROUND:

Kalsou-Jean began his work in the village of Doba, Chad, in March of 1997. Through his witness in this village, 18 people have been baptized and 25 are worshipping with him each Sabbath. He feels so strongly about his calling to spread the gospel that he has remained in the village even though his funding ran out three months after he began his work. The most exciting thing for Kalsou-Jean is “the willingness of people to listen to the Word of God.”

THE THIRTEENTH SABBATH OFFERING:

One of the projects to be funded by this offering is an Adventist secondary school to be built in the country of Chad. In addition, a secondary school in Liberia that was damaged during a civil war will be restored with funds from this offering. The division also hopes to renovate a hospital facility in Cameroon and one in Ghana to better serve their communities.



Africa-Indian Ocean Division