



ADVENTIST Review

March 25, 1999

AnchorPoints

Heaven Still Matters

The expanses of outer space beckon

Already Forgiven

When People Hurt

Heaven's Gate
or Hell's Detour?

LETTERS

Adventist Congregationalism

George Knight's "Adventist Congregationalism: Wake-up Call or Death Knell?" (Jan. 28 AnchorPoints



Edition) is to be applauded. During the past few months, prior to the appearance of the article, several members from at least four churches in two

conferences have initiated conversations with me concerning their dissatisfaction with our church organizational structure. These were all baby boomer professionals who have been church members all their lives.

Their complaints include: the four hierarchical levels above the local church, which they consider to be inadequate, inefficient, and anachronistic in this day and age of instant communication; the existence of two conferences in the same geographical area; the apparent lack of supervision and accountability of pastors; and the financial arrangement in which it is possible for local churches to return their tithe faithfully and simultaneously struggle to meet their monthly mortgage.

Indeed, the restructuring of our organizational structure is of great urgency.

—Merlin F. Walwyn
BRONX, NEW YORK

I congratulate you for printing this article and others that give us food for thought. It is time, if we want to see

our church survive, to evaluate our situation as a church and grow up.

—Dorice Lindsey
VIA E-MAIL

George Knight superbly articulates the concerns, but articulating the concerns is easy. The real issue will be the church administrators' response. Rank and file are proclaiming it; the press is printing it; will administrators implement it? I hope and pray they will respond before it is too late.

—Richard Roethler, PASTOR
LONGMONT AND ESTES PARK,
COLORADO

This article hit close to home. I agreed with all nine of the appealing features of congregationalism. Feeling utterly stifled in my own church by what seemed to me a dead congregation with leadership resistant to healthy change, I voted years ago with my feet. Having found no better alternatives (though in an area rich with Adventist churches), I remain on the books and continue to follow an Adventist lifestyle, but do not attend church or support it financially. And yes, I am spiritually drifting away.

After reading this article, I wish I could find an Adventist congregationalist church. It would be worth a try at church again.

—Name Withheld

In a sidebar George Knight stated that in North America some young ministers are being sent to non-Adventist seminaries for pastoral training. We seem to have a large, well-educated staff at the seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Is this not sufficient to teach our young ministers? What are they gaining from non-Adventist seminaries that enables them to better present God's love as reflected in our beliefs?

—Blake Hall
GREENWOOD, INDIANA

This article aroused both my interest and concern. I am a longtime opponent of congregationalism, since I do not believe it provides an adequate basis for the carrying out of the gospel commission. At the same time, as one who has held many local church offices for the past 62 years and dealt with the difficult job of financing the church, I have felt the oppressive weight of the local conference.

I do not hold conference officials responsible for these problems, since they inherited the out-of-date organizational setup just as I did. Our system makes them remote from us, having no sense of the problems of running a local church, financially or otherwise. Many conference presidents are lifetime bureaucrats, not participants in a local church. After 20 or 30 years of this isolation, they have little or no knowledge of the problems of the local congregation, whose day-by-day operations they dictate by their life-and-death grip on the local pastor.

With the local congregations subsidizing the education of their children and providing much other financial aid in addition to their salaries, they do not live in the world of those who sweat tuition and local church expenses. Sometimes their wives find employment in the conference office, while the local church tries to provide the pastor with a secretary, funded by the starved church budget. The stewardship director is responsible for coaxing more money from the members, but never dares to speak of stewardship by the conference. This remoteness is uncomfortable for them and us.

(Let me mention that none of these remarks are made with my present local conference in mind. I have only recently moved here.)

I pray earnestly that this article may awaken all of us to the possibilities of a better way to solve our problems than to continue an "us versus them" approach. I have no ready answer, but I think it is time to start talking.

—Barney E. McLarty
CALHOUN, GEORGIA

The Curse of the Law

Clifford Goldstein's "The Curse of the Law" (Jan. 28) touched my heart—and also the heart of the gospel. Eternal life is found only in a person—"This life is in his Son. He that hath the Son [not the law] hath life" (1 John 5:11, 12).

Again taking Ellen White's line "The law of God could condemn, but could not pardon" to its ultimate logical conclusion: God does not forgive sins—He forgives sinners. The wages of sin is death, and someone must pay. That Someone is Jesus—the Lawgiver Himself, who alone can meet the law's demands. He is our only hope. Through my tears of gratitude, I cry out, "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable Gift!"

—Bob Dubose, PASTOR
HOT SPRINGS, NORTH CAROLINA

I am afraid that Clifford Goldstein gives a distorted view of how God deals with our sin. He states that "if salvation is based in any way on our obedience to the law," then Christ's perfect obedience to the law and substitutionary death "wasn't sufficient to pardon us." This ignores the fact that initial pardon, or justification, is only one step in our salvation or our at-one-ment with God. In brief, it requires Christ's life, His death, and His priestly ministry, along with our broken and contrite heart.

—Vernon Sparks
TELLICO PLAINS, TENNESSEE

Travelers' Clearinghouse

I think that Earl Furman's idea of a travelers' clearinghouse (see "Dream Center," Give & Take, Jan. 28) is terrific. Having just returned from carrying some things with me on an overseas trip and wanting to get some things back into the country, I found the concept very meaningful. I hope that this can be worked out.

—Donald E. Casebolt
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Broken for You

After reading all of the excellent January 28 AnchorPoints Edition, including the always-anticipated Leslie Kay contribution, I was tempted to skip the last article—Elizabeth Jones's "Broken for You." But something told me to keep reading, and as I did I was brought up short when I realized that she was writing about me. I am still waiting for an answer to my prayers for healing, but it is much easier now to say those words of Christ—"O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done" (Matt. 26:42).

—Sterling Wallace
GRAVITY, IOWA

ADVENTIST Review

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ADVENTIST Review

"Behold, I come quickly . . ."

Our mission is to uplift Jesus Christ through stories of His matchless love, news of His present workings, help for knowing Him better, and hope in His soon return.

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Danger Ahead

ROY ADAMS

I sense a tendency among some Adventists to take advantage of our historic position on last-day events to foist upon our people inflated and unwarranted claims of contemporary threats to religious liberty. When such claims are based on surmise or flimsy evidence, they turn intelligent people off. But I think astute Adventists sit up and take notice when presented with credible, dispassionate evidence of serious dangers to religious freedom. I thought I sensed one such danger while attending the World Council of Churches (WCC) Eighth Assembly last December in Harare, Zimbabwe.¹

Let me go back a few years, however, to the WCC's Seventh Assembly in Canberra, Australia, in February 1991. I can still remember the half-veiled frown on the face of the highest-ranking member of the Roman Catholic observer delegation when the issue of proselytism surfaced during a press conference. Uppermost on his mind was the evangelistic activity of Pentecostals, Evangelicals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists, and other such groups in Central and South America. He was not amused. And I remember also the strong reaction a day or so later from a Greek Orthodox delegate to what was, in truth, a naively impolitic statement from a witless American delegate, who announced that his church was ready to take its evangelistic campaign to Greece that summer. The Orthodox delegate was scandalized.

But however strongly felt at Canberra, the antiproselytism sentiment never made it to center stage. In Harare, however, it did. Devoting an entire section to it in his report to the assembly, moderator Aram I asserted categorically that "ecumenism and proselytism cannot coexist." In a line that must have sounded like music in the ears of the Orthodox, he lashed out on developments in Eastern Europe and in the former U.S.S.R. countries. Following the collapse of Communism, he said, we have seen "scores of foreign mission groups and sects directing competitive missionary activities at people already belonging to one of the churches in those countries."² At no time during the ensuing days did I pick up even a single iota of dissent to the moderator's pointed remarks.

A Hard Line

So what we as Seventh-day Adventists regard as *evangelism*—

a perfectly legitimate and praiseworthy activity—the WCC labels *proselytism*, sheep stealing, an activity it sees as illegitimate and unethical. "Recent years," said the moderator, "have seen an increase of aggressive evangelism [read proselytism] and competition in mission in an almost free-market spirit" in many areas of the world. This ought not to be, he said. And he urged member churches to implement the recommendations contained in the WCC document entitled: *Towards a Common Witness: A Call to Adopt Responsible Relationships in Mission and Renounce Proselytism*.

It doesn't take much to see that this is a philosophy that flies smack in the face of the fundamental mission agenda of Seventh-day Adventists—to take what we consider God's message for this hour to every person on earth.

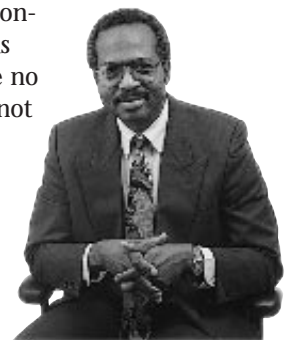
This should not mean, of course, that we operate without regard for the status quo in any particular area, or without any concern for the sensibilities of other faiths. But it does mean, in the language of Article 18 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (a document the Harare assembly formally reaffirmed), that "everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion . . . [including] freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

I've found that no matter how liberal we might be, there's always some issue on which we are rabidly conservative. For many member churches of the WCC, proselytism is that issue. And it would come as no surprise to me if it one day becomes a catalyst that stirs the dragon's wrath. Said a WCC official at a press conference I attended in Harare: "Religious liberty is a right for which there can be no derogation. But at the same time, it is not an unrestricted right."

The danger I see ahead is related precisely to that kind of double-think.

¹ See my reports in the *Adventist Review*, Feb. 11, pp. 6, 14-19.

² WCC Assembly Document PL3.1, p. 4.



Baptism—It's Not Magic

ELLA M. RYDZEWSKI

I remember my baptism on a warm summer day just after my seventeenth birthday. I remember that special feeling of cleanliness after emerging from the water and getting dressed. I pondered it as I got in the back seat of our old Ford, with my parents in the front and cousins in the back. I felt blessed and cleansed from all my sins!

I sat next to Aunt Daisy (a cousin), who always showed great concern for my welfare. In her warm Caribbean accent she pointed out a loathsome dark grease stain on my new church dress. I turned toward the window and breathed out an exclamation, "Oh, ———."

Horried, I turned to see if Aunt Daisy had heard. Apparently she hadn't. Here I had just been baptized, and I had cussed already! I felt as soiled as my dress. Shame wrapped its reptilian coils around me. *I wasn't worthy of being a part of God's kingdom*, it seemed to say. *The language of public high school is part of my character. How can I possibly fit in at an Adventist school?* All these thoughts went through my mind.

Since that day I have matured enough to know that bad habits hold on tenaciously to new and old Christians alike. Baptism, a symbol of the new birth, does not work as a magical ritual to loosen that hold. Through baptism we tell the world that we have made a choice to go in a new direction. Baptism into the Adventist Church holds no merit in itself. As a symbol it is not the gateway to heaven (Christ is the only way).

So what can one say about life after baptism? It is often not so much like a warm bath as it is a shocking cold exposure to reality. Not only will there be the disappointments of "the flesh" to contend with, but also the discouraging reactions of others. Friends and relatives may be reluctant to hear your "good news"—they may even be hostile toward it.

The battle may sometimes seem overwhelming. Whereas in your old life you had no uneasiness about certain matters and desires, in the new life you find struggle, as Paul describes in Romans 7:19: "For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing" (NIV). Paul goes on to ask, "Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (verses 24, 25, NIV).

In the war of good and evil, the spirits of the latter can become much more active in the life of one who has left their domain. But fortunately we have a Protector. When we choose whom we will serve and surrender to Christ, a

change does take place in our hearts and minds. In spite of the ingrained habits of our sinful bodies crying for immediate satisfaction, we now have a sense of freedom. We don't have to give in, and if we fall, we have a forgiving Father. When that heavy pressure of having to perform "perfectly" disappears, even a heavy burden seems light as Christ lifts it off our backs. When the struggles come,

we call out to God for the power that we don't have in ourselves. Over a period of time—usually years—our will becomes God's will as we work in cooperation with the Holy Spirit. And during the journey we have the assurance of His salvation in the present.

The secret—which is not really a secret—is that all we have to do is ask and wait. God promises that He will always answer the prayer to live a holy life. But unfortunately in our human state we go through a time of transition. It is not the good deeds and the occasional bad deeds that give us victory, but the general direction of our lives. I suppose it is like losing weight. Some people become so discouraged when they fall off their diets (and they always do) that they give up and go back to their old ways of eating. But just as in dieting, if we understand there will be times of backsliding, it will not come as a surprise. We will soon be back on track, asking for God's power. These slips will be fewer and fewer the closer we come in contact with Christ in thought and prayer—communication between two beings who love each other.

Whether your baptism was yesterday or years ago, if you look down and see your soiled garments, don't get angry as I did at age 17—and momentarily regress. Instead you can claim the robe of Christ's righteousness and keep traveling through life on the narrow heavenly road.

*Just baptized
and I'd cussed
already!*



GIVE & TAKE

SPRING IS HERE

I must start my spring garden.
I plan to start with peas—prayer,
patience, and perseverance,
And I must proclaim His promises and
prune my wants as I pick and
ponder His Word.
Lettuce love, and then turnip faith
with joy and peace, long-suffering,
kindness, and goodness.
I must squash and beet all rumors
about others as I plant.
My—what a radish garden this will be
as I go to-ma-toes in prayer.
—Millicent Presley, Havertown, Pennsylvania



PHOTO © PHOTODISC

WE NEED YOU

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ADVENTIST LIFE

Back when I attended Columbia Union College, a student colporteur rally one evening featured numerous colporteur leaders from the union and its various conferences. When the dozen or so leaders had filed onto the platform they discovered that there were not quite enough chairs for all of them. After considerable embarrassed shuffling and adjusting, each one finally found a seat.

The amusement of the student audience was mild at this point compared with what followed. As soon as the platform participants had settled down, the student song leader announced, "We will now sing number 194: 'Help Me Find My Place.'" Several minutes passed before the laughter died down enough to sing.

—Eugene F. Durand, Adamstown, Maryland



ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY CREWS

Last summer at the Carolina Conference camp meeting, General Conference vice president Calvin B. Rock was the Sabbath evening speaker. Before his sermon, two men sang a duet. During their skillful rendition, the fire alarm began buzzing. Despite repeated attempts to silence it, the alarm kept buzzing. Finally the singers stopped singing, and soon silence reigned. But as they resumed singing, the alarm resumed buzzing.

After the song was over, Elder Rock stepped to the podium and stated, "This is the closest I have come to seeing this church on fire."

—Barbara Ensley, Fletcher, North Carolina

A DOG NAMED NAAMAN?

MAKING CONNECTIONS: Waylene Swensen, of Loma Linda, California, had been wondering why her 2-year-old son, Micah, kept saying, "Doggie named Naaman! Doggie named Naaman!" Then she remembered that Micah's favorite Bible story was of God healing Naaman of leprosy spots—and Micah's stuffed animal was a spotted Dalmatian puppy. No word on whether Micah took a seven-part bath that night.



DREAM CENTER

In this feature Adventists share church-related dreams.

OUT OF LAODICEA: I dream our beloved church will, by the power of God's Holy Spirit, be led out of its Laodicean condition and fulfill its mission to share the "everlasting gospel" (Rev. 14:6-12) with a hurting world. May we be as faithful in our God-given task as Elijah was in his (1 Kings 17). Let nothing detour us from our appointed rounds as we share the good news that Jesus Christ is risen and coming back to take us home to be with Him.

—Richard Dibeel, Adrian, Michigan

NOAO

Heaven Still Matters

Updating a 20-year-old Review article

BY GERRY COLVIN

NEARLY 20 YEARS AGO I HELPED A colleague edit his awe-inspiring depiction of the ascension of the redeemed from earth to heaven at the Second Coming of Jesus. His discussion of parsecs (units of measure for interstellar space) and nonearth landscapes enticed me and others beyond our paltry perspectives.¹

But much has happened in the world of astronomy since our collaboration, not the least of which is the construction and placement of the Hubble Space Telescope. Just this one event has extended our vision more than 10 billion years into the past.

Today we are witnessing heavenly events of which few liberal arts majors like me could have conceived in 1980. Yet this "magic" has not occurred overnight. Since the invention of the telescope 400 years ago, observers have moved inexorably closer to finding not only where we have been but where we are headed. Only recently, however, have they been able to observe systems like ours both emerging and dying. For some of these systems, celestial dying comes quietly, while for others it is accompanied with awesome violence

as they spew matter and chemical elements into the interstellar void as the seed for future generations of stars and planets.

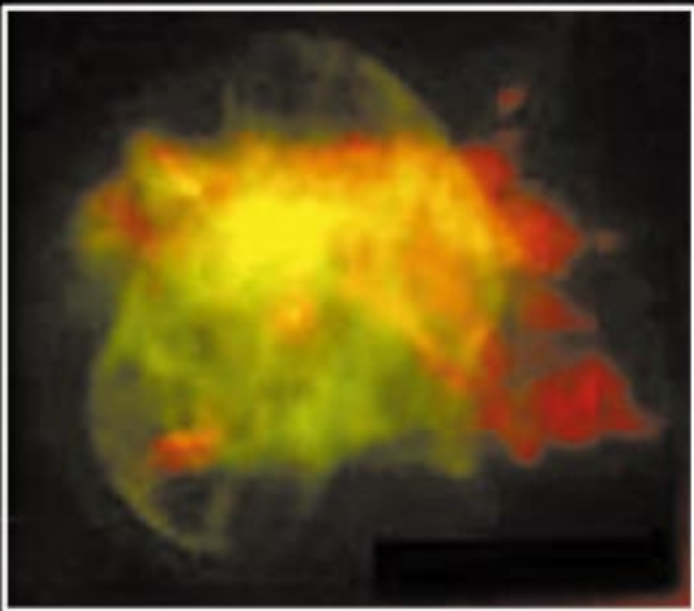
Since Galileo first lifted his tiny telescope toward the heavens, scientists have been building ever bigger and better telescopes with which to examine the stars. Yet these Earth-based telescopes have always faced a serious challenge: our own atmosphere terribly degrades stellar images, producing

frustratingly fuzzy views with even the best of terrestrial instruments. Today, however, orbiting some 380 miles above us in a near vacuum, the Hubble telescope reduces twinkling stars to approachable, steady points. From this vantage we are able to study the fine detail never before possible, to probe into the once-private hearts of the stars.

"Near" Space

As biblical Christians, Seventh-day Adventists are convinced that our Creator is the God of the total universe, sovereign over solar systems, galaxies, and constellations even farther than Hubble's "eye" can see. And as Christ pilots His redeemed through the heavens following His second coming, they will observe firsthand that even the vast spaces between the heavenly bodies





Top, page 8: Photo by the Hubble space telescope shows Centaurus A, one of the most studied nearby stellar formations. According to astronomers, it contains a massive black hole that is gobbling up a spiral galaxy containing millions and millions of stars. Brilliant clusters of young blue stars lie along the edge of the dark rift. Outside the rift the sky is filled with the soft hazy glow of the galaxy's much older resident population of red giant and red dwarf stars. The inset photo is a ground base telescopic view. (AP Photo/NASA)

This page: Shrouds of gas surrounding dying sunlike stars in nebulae NGC 6210. The larger image shows the entire nebulae; the inset picture captures the complicated structure surrounding the dying star. (AP Photo/NASA)

The Creator-God is always more magnificent than our modest images of Him.

Page 10: Photo shows the faintest galaxies ever seen in the universe. At right, two views of objects that may be more than 12 billion light-years away. Each is centered in the frame. The reddish color may mean that all of the starlight has been stretched to infrared wavelengths by the universe's expansion. (AP Photo/NASA)

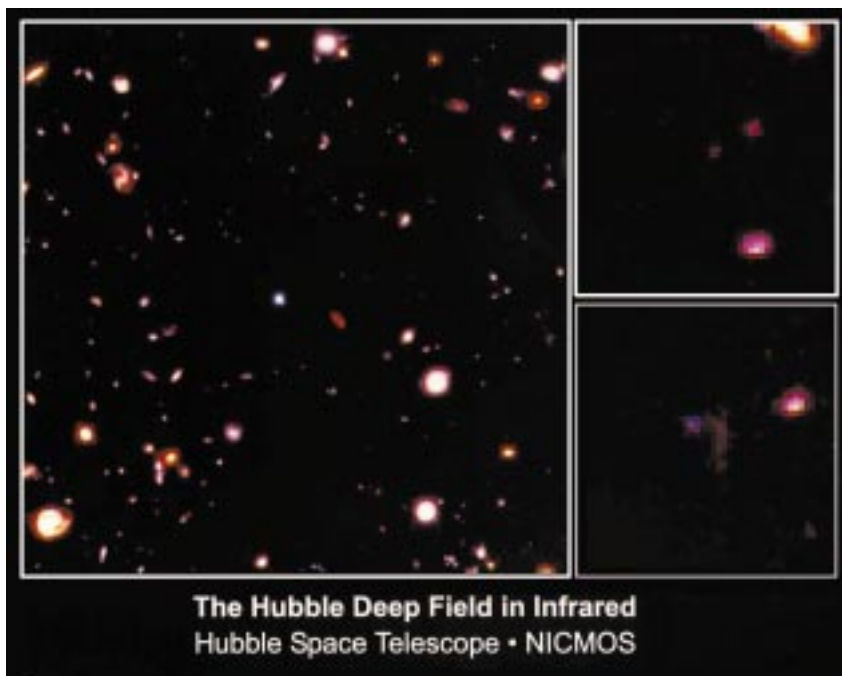
are not empty. Scattered about over the immense distances between the stars, dust particles and hydrogen atoms have been drawn by gravity into enormous clouds spanning hundreds of light-years. (So immense are these clouds that even driving at 60 miles per hour, we would still spend 3 billion years traveling from one end of a cloud to the other!)

The redeemed will find that such clouds are actually stellar nurseries, containing enough matter to form tens of thousands of stars.² But they are also stellar “graveyards,” holding the ashes of stars having long since exhausted their nuclear fuel and faded into the interstellar night. Approximately 6,000 of these molecular clouds have already been spotted within our galaxy alone. Although hydrogen and helium dominate, these clouds are also thought to contain a host of complex molecules such as water, alcohol, ammonia, and a variety of carbon-based organic compounds.

Through serendipitous comparisons, the travelers may observe that these clouds are always teetering on the edge of gravitational collapse. Ultimately a shock wave from a nearby supernova or a stellar wind from a massive star or a density wave rolls through with just enough impetus to tip the scales for gravity to take over. Then, over the course of several million years (more than 330 times longer than the history of human beings), thousands of relatively dense spinning concentrations of gas, or globules, form within the cloud. Because these globules have more mass and thus stronger gravitational forces than the surrounding material, they attract even more matter and progress from “dense

cores” to “protostars” with “spinning disks.” Friction further causes material in these giant maelstroms to spiral inward, feeding more and more material to the ravenous protostar. Talk about intergalactic fireworks!

Hubble has uncovered—and the redeemed may see—a veritable gold mine of such disks in the Orion Nebula. At a distance of 1,500 light-years, the Orion Nebula is one of Earth’s closest large star-forming regions. Astronomers have already recorded material surrounding 153 of Orion’s embryonic stars, roughly half the stars surveyed. These disks seem to



The Hubble Deep Field in Infrared
Hubble Space Telescope • NICMOS

be a natural outcome of star birth and maybe mirror the origins of our own solar system. Witnessing the transformation of these bodies into solar systems could be like watching the creation of our own. Because the other planets in our solar system orbit the sun in the same direction and in approximately the same plane, it is possible that they originally assembled themselves inside a disk similar to the ones in the Orion Nebula,³ even while our own planet, or at least the life on it, was the object of God’s special and fiat creation.

For Christ’s remnant, God’s way of creating and maintaining the universe will doubtless seem logical and natural,

and wholly congruent with their conception of the overshadowing power of the Divine. To the rebellious, however, such spectacular deconstructing, coalescing, and reemerging would appear exasperatingly pointless. In fact, one atheist has already called the starry expanse a stupendous waste of energy spent in the production of the trivial. Vast stores of solar energy are squandered throughout the interstellar depths, he argues, while bodies needing light and heat are suspended in total darkness and absolute cold.⁴ He contends that these means are out of all proportion to the ends achieved, and

border on the criminal. Everywhere prodigious activity is wasted in boundless dissipation.

“Untold billions of years are spent in the ceaseless revolutions of orbs only to result in a small inhabited planet and a myriad of barren and uninhabitable globes! An ocean of stars kept in endless rotation—for what? Vast continents or clusters of stars, too hot for the sustenance of living forms, move in stupendous circles in dreary monotony.

Stars are born from nebulae only to pass through successive degrees of temperature and end in death. The endless grind of motion of going nowhere and arriving at nothing is the supreme accomplishment of the universe.”⁵

This view is altogether different from the delight of the redeemed in the new earth, amid the fantastic revelations of creative science:

“There, immortal minds will contemplate with never-failing delight the wonders of creative power, the mysteries of redeeming love. There will be no cruel, deceiving foe to tempt to forgetfulness of God. Every faculty

will be developed, every capacity increased. The acquirement of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body.

"All the treasures of the universe will be open to the study of God's redeemed. Unfettered by mortality, they wing their tireless flight to worlds afar—worlds that thrilled with sorrow at the spectacle of human woe and rang with songs of gladness at the tidings of a ransomed soul. With unutterable delight the children of earth enter into the joy and the wisdom of unfallen beings. They share the treasures of knowledge and understanding gained through ages upon ages in contemplation of God's handiwork. With undimmed vision they gaze upon the glory of creation—suns and stars and systems, all in their appointed order circling the throne of Deity."⁶

"Far" Space

We cannot know the speed with which the Saviour will transport His redeemed through space. We do know, however, that the earth is eight light-minutes from the sun, and that the next nearest star, Proxima Centauri, is 4.19 light-years away from us. The Milky Way, the galaxy to which our solar system belongs, is approximately 100,000 light-years in diameter. The nearest large-scale galaxy to us is Andromeda at 2.2 million light-years away. Thus we can be certain that "light" travel would be much too slow for the saints. Christ must have a much speedier means for traversing space. (And, after all this time, I still think it will be something strikingly akin to "thought" travel!)

Two teams of astronomers using a revolutionary new detector have discovered a population of previously unseen galaxies in the early universe.⁷

The galaxies appear to be forming stars at prodigious rates, suggesting that galaxies were forming the majority of their stars much earlier than had been thought. This finding strongly indicates that massive star formation was occurring in galaxies roughly 11 billion years ago, when the universe is presumed to have been only one eighth of its present size. Both groups used a detector recently installed on the James Clerk Maxwell Telescope, atop Hawaii's 14,000-foot Mauna Kea. This device locates star-forming galaxies behind a vast curtain of surrounding dust that blocks other telescopes' views of dusty objects in the early universe. It finds hot young stars in the early universe indirectly: their visible and

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ultraviolet light is absorbed by nearby dust and reemitted as infrared light. These newly discovered galaxies are converting more than 100 solar masses of gas into stars each year. By comparison, the Milky Way's rate is only about one solar mass per year.

Doxology

Most of us have read that our journey following the Second Coming will take seven days.⁸ But where is heaven and how far away is God's throne? Will we stop along the way to observe other worlds and converse with unfallen beings? Will we pause to watch the latest volcanic eruption on Saturn, or inspect the massive moons of Jupiter, or tempt a terrible spinning disk, or smile across the light-years of a neon cloud hatching globular eggs? We can only imagine the answers to such questions.

God teases us, as He did Job, with yet another rhetorical question: "Where is the way to the dwelling of light? And darkness, where is its place, that you may take it to its territory and that you may discern the paths to its home?" (Job 38:19, 20, NASB). While the speed of light, though great, is finite, the God of that light is infinite, unfettered by distance, time, or dimension. With Christ's return we will never again experience the pangs of darkness, for where He is, there also is light. He is not only the source of all light, but the only true Light. Our answer to God's query, therefore, can be found in a paraphrase of Peter's inspired observation: "Thou art the Light, the son of the living God" (see Matt. 16:16).

Beyond, beneath, and through our glimpses of this complex universe lies a profound theological truth: the Creator God is always more magnificent than our modest images of Him.

Does heaven matter as much today as it did 20 years ago, you ask?

Absolutely! ■

¹ Ray N. Montgomery and Gerald F. Colvin, "Heaven Does Matter," *Adventist Review*, Aug. 28, 1980, p. 3.

² Robert Nayege, *Through the Eyes of Hubble: The Birth, Life, and Violent Death of Stars* (Waukesha, Wis.: Kalmbach Publishing, 1998).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴ Woolsey Teller, *The Atheism of Astronomy: A Refutation of the Theory That the Universe Is Governed by Intelligence* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1972).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), pp. 677, 678.

⁷ Rex Graham, "Starburst in Early Universe" (found at www.kalmbach.com/astro/astronomy.html), Aug. 28, 1998. (The teams, led by Amy Barger of the University of Hawaii and David Hughes of the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, reported their results in the July 16, 1998, issue of *Nature*.)

⁸ Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1882), p. 16.

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Lifelong Learning

Marveling at God's goodness through eternity

BY ELLEN G. WHITE

HEAVEN IS A SCHOOL; ITS FIELD OF study, the universe; its teacher, the Infinite One. A branch of this school was established in Eden; and, the plan of redemption accomplished, education will again be taken up in the Eden school.

"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 Cor. 2:9). Only through His Word can a knowledge of these things be gained; and even this affords but a partial revelation.

The prophet of Patmos thus describes the location of the school of the hereafter:

"I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. . . . And I John saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:1, 2).

"The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (verse 23).

Between the school established in Eden at the beginning and the school of the hereafter there lies the whole compass of this world's history—the history of human transgression and suffering, of divine sacrifice, and of victory over death and sin. Not all the conditions of that first school of Eden will be found in the school of the future life. No tree of knowledge of good and evil will afford opportunity for temptation. No tempter is there, no possibility of wrong. Every character has withstood the testing of evil, and none are

longer susceptible to its power.

"To him that overcometh," Christ says, "will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7). The giving of the tree of life in Eden was conditional, and it was finally withdrawn. But the gifts of the future life are absolute and eternal.

The prophet beholds the "river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." "And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life." "And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 22:1; 22:2, RV; 21:4).

"Thy people also shall be all righteous:

They shall inherit the land forever,

The branch of my planting,

The work of my hands,

That I may be glorified" (Isa. 60:21).

Restored to His presence, man will again, as at the beginning, be taught of God: "My people shall know my name: . . . they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I" (Isa. 52:6).

"The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:3).

"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple. . . . They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the

midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters" (Rev. 7:14-17).

"Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face:" now we know in part; but then shall we know even as also we are known (1 Cor. 13:12).

"They shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads" (Rev. 22:4).

There, when the veil that darkens our vision shall be removed, and our eyes shall behold that world of beauty of which we now catch glimpses through the microscope; when we look on the glories of the heavens, now scanned afar through the telescope; when, the blight of sin removed, the whole earth shall appear in "the beauty of the Lord our God," what a field will be open to our study! There the student of science may read the records of Creation and discern no reminders of the law of evil. He may listen to the music of nature's voices and detect no note of wailing or undertone of sorrow. In all created

things he may trace one handwriting—in the vast universe behold "God's name writ large," and not in earth or sea or sky one sign of ill remaining.

There the Eden life will be lived, the life in garden and field. "They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands" (Isa. 65:21, 22).

There shall be nothing to "hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord" (verse 25). There man will be restored to his lost kingship, and the lower order of beings will again recognize his sway; the fierce will become gentle, and the timid trustful.

There will be open to the student, history of infinite scope and of wealth inexpressible. Here, from the vantage

ground of God's Word, the student is afforded a view of the vast field of history and may gain some knowledge of the principles that govern the course of human events. But his vision is still clouded, and his knowledge incom-



plete. Not until he stands in the light of eternity will he see all things clearly.

Then will be opened before him the course of the great conflict that had its birth before time began, and that ends only when time shall cease. The history of the inception of sin; of fatal falsehood in its crooked working; of truth that, swerving not from its own straight lines, has met and conquered error—all will be made manifest. The veil that interposes between the visible and the invisible world will be drawn aside, and wonderful things will be revealed.

Not until the providences of God are seen in the light of eternity shall we understand what we owe to the care and interposition of His angels. Celestial beings have taken an active part in the affairs of men. They have appeared in garments that shone as the lightning; they have come as men, in the garb of wayfarers. They have accepted the hospitalities of human

homes; they have acted as guides to benighted travelers. They have thwarted the spoiler's purpose and turned aside the stroke of the destroyer.

Though the rulers of this world know it not, yet often in their councils angels have been spokesmen. Human eyes have looked upon them. Human ears have listened to their appeals. In the council hall and the court of justice, heavenly messengers have pleaded the cause of the persecuted and oppressed. They have defeated purposes and arrested evils that would have brought wrong and suffering to God's children. To the students in the heavenly school, all this will be unfolded.

Every redeemed one will understand the ministry of angels in his own life. The angel who was his guardian from his earliest moment; the angel who watched his steps, and covered his head in the day of peril; the angel who was with him in

the valley of the shadow of death, who marked his resting place, who was the first to greet him in the resurrection morning—what will it be to hold converse with him, and to learn the history of divine interposition in the individual life, of heavenly cooperation in every work for humanity!

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. ■

This selection, excerpted from the book Education, pages 301-305, first appeared in 1903. Seventh-day Adventists believe that Ellen G. White (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.



Already Forgiven

Shame washed over me.

BY CHARLOTTE MCCLURE

MY FATHER TAUGHT ME TO DRIVE ON country gravel roads and to park on the steep one-way streets of downtown Madison, Wisconsin. Never bored with practice and more practice, we aimed for the prize. The next day after that magic sixteenth birthday, he seemed as thrilled as I that tucked carefully into my little purse was proof that he had instructed me well and that I could operate a car safely and legally.

I loved to drive the family car. I was no longer relegated to the back seat with my two brothers—finally. Instead, Jeannie, my little sister, was moved from her designated spot between Mother and Dad, and I took my place up front with the adults. It was one of the important changes in my life.

One Sabbath afternoon, after a picnic with fellow members from the Madison church, where Dad was the pastor, enough people to fill three or four cars decided to drive over to Lake Kegonsa. And I begged to drive.

Dad elected to sit in back with the boys, right behind the driver's seat. As we traveled, he counseled and assured. "Take it easy now, honey." "You're doing fine." "Keep a safe distance." Once he leaned forward, put his hand on my shoulder, and cautioned, "Watch out for that guy. It doesn't look like his brake lights are working."

At the lake we walked along the beach that summer day, waded up to our knees, and laughed and talked until the sky turned pink and reflections on the water were long and golden. Barefoot children were called in, and sand was brushed from their hands, arms, legs, and feet. As the group moved in the direction of the parked cars, I hurried to get in behind the wheel. I thought if I already occupied the coveted seat, Dad would be more inclined to let me

drive home even though dusk was closing the day.

Sure enough, he gave me a knowing grin and started to climb in behind. As he bent to put his six-foot form in place, he wrapped his hand around the frame separating the front door from the back—just as I slammed my door shut. He moaned and I turned quickly to see what was the matter.

"Open your door," cried Mother.

He hardly looked at his fingers as he headed purposefully for the cool waters of the lake.

I danced foolish steps around him all the way, trying to get in front of him and see his face without impeding his stride. I kept pleading, "I'm sorry, Daddy; I didn't mean to."

It was so awful. Tears of pain streaked his cheeks from eyes that were always merry—eyes marked by permanent laugh creases. I had wounded my precious father. I had been impatient and careless, and shame washed over me.

He didn't say anything. No reproach. No denunciation. No blame.

At last he stood and allowed me to cradle his cool, wet hand and examine the swelling fingers and bruised nails he would later lose.

"I'm really sorry I hurt you, Daddy," I repeated, and he stretched out his arm to let me move in close.

Very quietly, gently, he said, "I know."

He had already forgiven me. I was absolved. Free.

He loved me. ■

Charlotte McClure is associate publisher for the Adventist Review.





ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY CREWS

You Say “Tomato” . . .

LESLIE KAY

. . . and I say succulent queen of the nightshades. You say “potato”—well, you get the idea. There’s more than one way to relate to a vegetable.

And more than one way to relate to a symphony. My husband, Don, has been known to shrug, “I guess that Beethoven guy wrote some decent stuff, but that fifth is too busy for me.” And I’ve been known to gasp in response, “‘Busy?’ Honey, that’s not busy—that’s passion, sensitivity, the agony and ecstasy of the human spirit! Complex, yes, but busy?”

We listen differently and hear differently. And not least, we remember differently—in that, generally speaking, Don doesn’t. If it isn’t engraved on the insides of his eyelids or grafted onto his body, my preoccupied husband will forget it. I, on the other hand, forget nothing, except those pesty, pervasive numbers—telephone, checking account, Social Security, and the quantity of zeroes attached to the ends of large figures.

A recent example: I pick up the phone one Friday in January and am greeted by that refrain whose appeal wanes with each passing year, “Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you . . .” My dad and stepmom, Jeanne, interrupt their duet to ask, “So does the birthday girl have anything special planned for today?”

“Special?” I stammer. “I haven’t really thought about it. I forgot it was my birthday.” I’m allowed to forget this.

“You forgot?” they echo in disbelief. “Hasn’t anyone reminded you yet?” It is now midmorning.

“No . . . I guess everyone else forgot too.” The phrase “everyone else” is delivered with the pained resignation and restrained sarcasm to which one so aggrieved is entitled—and refers, of course, to my husband, who is not allowed to forget.

It takes a few days, but we work out this minor wrinkle—just in time for our next ill-fated jaunt down Memory Lapse Lane.

As the four of us rattle off in our old flatbed truck to fetch some free lumber from my dad, I ask, “Did you remember to get gas in town today?” (“Town” means Kingman; we have no gas station in Chloride.)

Without consulting the gauge, which hasn’t worked since we’ve owned the truck, Don casually replies, “No,

but I think we’re all right.”

Filled with a sense of foreboding, I persist, “Don’t you think we should fill it up in Dolan Springs?”

“Oh, we could put a few gallons in,” he concedes. But two hours later, with our mission accomplished, neither of us

remembers the gas. Back down the highway we clatter, when suddenly there is a faint lurch, a sputter, and the sound of four wheels rolling quietly into the sunset.

“Oh, no,” groans Don. “We forgot to get gas.”

Silently I take exception to his use of the word “we.” He, after all, forgot the gas first.

“What about the gas can, Daddy?” pipes Becky. “Isn’t there any gas in it?”

“I don’t have the gas can,” answers Daddy.

“Where is it?” asks Jenny.

“Somebody stole it,” Daddy replies,

with a faintly haunted look.

“What’s the rest of the story?” goads Mom.

“Somebody did steal it from Isaac’s transmission shop,” asserts Dad—“where I forgot it.”

So we start the long hike home, and we’re soon helped by a kind Samaritan who crams us into his Toyota pickup and blasts us to our doorstep at 80 miles per hour. While our new friend assures my husband of the many advantages of becoming an Amway distributor, I march into the house and inflict my frustrations on the dirty dishes.

Somewhere into the Tupperware I’m surprised by the faintest giggle roaming around my insides. By the time I get to the silverware I’m shaking with laughter. What a life! What a husband! But he’s mine—my own absentminded, sweet-natured gift from God. And I am his, prissy self-righteousness and all.

Different, flawed, one in Christ. We repent and forgive, accept one another in the Beloved, and face the world together.



Leslie Kay lives with her family on an inactive mining claim near Chloride, Arizona.



Heaven's Gate or Hell's Detour?

BY CALEB ROSADO

ON SATURDAY, JUNE 11, 1994, I responded to a posted announcement about a meeting concerning "UFOs, space aliens, and their final fight for earth's spoils." With me was my son, Drew, and his close friend Karl Newman, a senior at Walla Walla College.

As the three of us entered the conference room at the Woodley Island Marina, in Eureka, California, I noticed some 25 to 30 other persons present. I wasn't sure what to expect, but as a sociologist who studies why people convert to new religious groups, I found this group intriguing. Their posted ad talked about "Luciferians"—space aliens who abduct humans for genetic experimentation. It said there is a true Kingdom of God, the true Evolutionary Level Above the Human, that exists in a literal heaven. And in order to get there humans have to divest themselves of their human "containers"—their earthly bodies—in order to be transported to heaven by spacecrafts or UFOs.

It all sounded far-fetched, but consistent with much New Age thinking I had been studying. I'd taken Drew and Karl along so they could get a sense of what's out there trying to deceive college-age youth in search of meaning in their lives. I also wanted them to

understand the importance of having strong spiritual anchors in times of social and spiritual upheaval.

How It Went

The meeting did not disappoint us. The five members of the Next Level Crew, as they called themselves, expounded deeper into their basic beliefs of the importance of leaving this earth and taking on new forms (or bodies) in the Level Above the Human. They emphasized that the time was short and that the world as we know it would soon come to an end. They were traveling the country warning people of events about to take place—such as the recycling of Planet Earth and the arrival of a spacecraft to pick up those who are ready. Their message was a melding of Christianity and *Star Trek* lingo. Judging from the nature of their questions, most people did not buy what the speakers were saying.

Those present represented a broad mix of persons. I recognized some students from Humboldt State University, where I was currently teaching. Most attendees were middle-aged, some working class, others of the middle class. After talking with some of them, inquiring more into their beliefs, we left.

When the Chickens Came Home to Roost

Two years passed, then the tragedy broke. It was an eerie feeling that came over me when, on seeing the March 26 and 27, 1997, television reports of the mass suicide of 39 Heaven's Gate members, I recognized three of the persons I'd spoken with two years before. A flood of questions immediately crossed my mind: *How could people be so easily duped? Who would follow such teachings? What leads people to such extremes of behavior? Was anybody in the audience that day in Eureka among the dead?*

One week after that June 11 meeting a woman had called me up, frantically seeking my help. Her middle-aged sister had been at the meeting and had decided to leave everything and follow this wandering band of "next level" representatives. What

could she do to get her back? Not much, I told her, if her sister's decision was a voluntary one. (And from all indications it was. The group was not pressuring people to join them. In fact, they had refused to call their meeting a "recruiting" meeting.) Was that woman's sister among the dead? I don't know.

Beneath the Surface

What does the sociology of new religious groups reveal to us in answer to the many questions currently being raised? This is a major purpose of this short article. All of us may be susceptible to "new light." And from all indications, we are going to see more and more of these deviant fringe groups emerge the closer we get to the year 2000.

Why? Because times of social upheaval and rapid change leave people unsure of where they stand in the great drama of life. We're all searching for meaning in our lives.

And what is meaning? As I told the various newspaper reporters and the local ABC affiliate that interviewed me the week the Heaven's Gate tragedy broke, "meaning is the 'why' behind the 'what.'" "You, the media, give people the 'what' every day of the week. You give them the events that take place in the world. But you cannot give them the 'why,' the answers to the questions of ultimate meaning behind the events. That's the realm of religion, not science."

But not everyone buys into what the various organized forms of religion give as the reasons for the meaning to life. When someone such as a Jim Jones, a David Koresh, or a Marshall Applewhite comes along and, with passion and apparent credibility, gives people answers to their deepest questions, some will accept and follow—especially those with weak affiliations and who are spiritually hungry because of crises they're undergoing.

There is much misinformation about cults in today's media. And cult deprogramming is becoming a growth industry in society in view of the times. Yet many of the so-called deprogrammers are shys-



Previous page: San Diego and Los Angeles County Medical Examiner personnel place some of the 39 victims of the Heaven's Gate mass suicide onto a truck for transport to the morgue Thursday, March 27, 1997. (AP Photo / Mark J. Terrill)

Above: An internet web site alleged to have been prepared by the group describing their desire to leave Earth and rendezvous with a spaceship behind the Hale-Bopp comet. (AP Photo)

ters and charlatans, out for fast bucks and headline grabbing. The word "cult" is "culture writ small." It refers to "culturally innovative new groups" that deviate by their teachings and practices from the conventional religious culture in society.¹

Converts to cults come primarily from the ranks of those who are religiously inactive, most of whom are middle class and quite educated. Cults tend to flourish in environments that have a high degree of moral disintegration. Where traditional religion is weak, cults, as novel religious movements, will tend to emerge.²

All the sociological research indicates that the persons most susceptible to cults are college students. "Persons most likely to join a cult would be those in need of a connection, people who have recently been cut loose from their psychological moorings. The classic

example is a college student away from home for the first time. Or it might be someone who has just been divorced, who has lost a job, or who has undergone a crisis of faith. The more alienated people are, the more likely they are to join a radical fringe group led by an alienated, marginal figure.”³

The facts are that the majority of those who died in the Heaven’s Gate tragedy were in their late teens and early 20s when they joined the group. Most of them joined while they were in college, while in the midst of a spiritual quest, or following graduation from college. One person was a National Merit scholar; another went through Berkeley in three years, graduating with a triple major in math, German, and computer science. One of the persons I’d interviewed attended Oregon State University and was the son of the former chair and CEO of the nation’s oldest local telephone company, Southern New England Telephone Company. These were not dummies.

Lessons to Learn

What are the implications of these events to the church? Obviously the traditional message that many religious groups (including Adventists) preach is not reaching many today who are searching for the sacred. It should come as no surprise, then, that with so much of organized religion focused on self-preservation and on in-house squabbles, most thinking people on the cutting edge of global understanding don’t even consider it to be a serious option in their life anymore. That same group, however, is very open to spirituality—to the idea of an interconnectedness to an “Other.” People want to experience a connection to something or Someone bigger than themselves. Are we giving that to them, or are we connecting them to earthly structures? There are lessons to be learned from this tragedy—among them the following:

1. True spirituality is found in a Person—Jesus Christ—not in some earthly movement or person(s).
2. Unless our spirit is anchored in this Person, within the context of a

moral, redemptive community—the church—dissatisfaction with our life experiences can lead us searching down blind alleys and dead ends, including cyberspace.

3. Watch out for “new light.” Make sure that it does not deviate from established truth and the received spiritual wisdom of the ages.

4. The primary basis of conversion is attachments, those social bonds that give people security, dignity, and self-worth. Thus we need to be careful with whom and to what we attach ourselves. “Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help. When their breath departs, they return to the earth; on that very day their plans perish” (Ps. 146:3, 4, NRSV).

5. We need to rethink the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church for the twenty-first century. Adventism needs to move from the sidelines of religious marginality in the twentieth century so as to be the central spiritual force to be reckoned with in the

twenty-first, in preparation for the soon return of Christ in glory.

6. Our entire message needs to be reframed in language and concepts that speak to the social and spiritual needs of a diverse society in the third millennium.

7. Our walk must model our talk.

These seven lessons may go a long way in keeping many from taking a detour to hell, when their real desire is to reach heaven’s gate. ■

¹ William Sims Bainbridge, *The Sociology of Religious Movements* (1997).

² Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *Religion, Deviance, and Social Control* (1997).

³ Cari H. Haus and Madlyn L. Hamblin, *In the Wake of Waco* (1993).

Caleb Rosado was a visiting professor of sociology at Walla Walla College when he wrote this article.



Super Seniors: Beyond the Age Barrier

BY CARROLL GRADY, WRITES FROM SNOHOMISH, WASHINGTON

Many people think of retirement as the time when you're put upon the shelf, taking life easy, relegated to the rocking chair. However, the seniors of the Washington Conference are living proof that this is just a myth.

Many Washington Conference seniors are established Seniors in Action for God With Excellence (SAGE). Although retirement can mean a shrinking world focused on aches, pains, and problems, SAGE's goal is to expand seniors' horizons and focus outward on the joie de vivre found in helping and fellowshiping with others.

These seniors have been given a new lease on life, retreaded for service. All their wisdom, experience, dedication, and discretionary time are definitely not going to waste.

The Washington Conference rec-

ognizes that seniors are chronologically gifted. As Job 12:12 says: "Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?" (NIV). SAGE seniors realize that they have an obligation to show the generations following them how to be happy, live abundantly, and enjoy the life God has given them. They consider old age to be the dessert at the end of the trip.

Thirty-one SAGE members, ranging in age from 56 to 80, traveled to Battle Creek, Michigan, this past fall to tackle a restoration project at the developing Adventist Historic Village. They dismantled, moved, and rebuilt a 140-year-old log cabin that will represent the home of David Hewitt, the first Adventist in Battle Creek.

For two weeks they put in nine-hour days of vigorous physical labor, ending with dinner, worship, Advil, and a hot shower. Most of them were enjoying the sleep of exhaustion by 8:00 or 9:00 p.m. In addition to restoring the two-story log cabin, the group painted a replica of Battle Creek's second Adventist church, just completed by a team of volunteers from Maranatha Volunteers International. The seniors also laid sod around the church and cabin and cleared brush and rubbish from a number of properties purchased for this project.

"It was a privilege to be part of this exciting project," says Virginia Fuchs, of Marysville, Washington. "It has the potential of being a powerful



BLESSED BE THE TIE THAT BINDS: SAGE volunteers dedicate a log cabin they restored at the Adventist Historic Village in Battle Creek, Michigan.

evangelistic outreach for our church."

This was just the latest of many service opportunities for Washington seniors. Organized five years ago, SAGE has provided volunteers to help with the various church- and school-building projects throughout the Washington Conference, as well as improvements at Sunset Lake Camp and Auburn Academy. Every year they adopt an overseas Maranatha project and have built churches in Panama and Mexico, as well as an orphanage dormitory in El Salvador.

New friendships are forged on these trips and on the other outings. The annual SAGE convention packs a lodge at Hope, British Columbia, and draws seniors from California, Oregon, eastern Washington, Idaho, and even as far away as Tennessee.

"The work of God needs our seniors as well as our youth," says Bob Grady, Washington Conference senior ministries director. "These two groups can work together and complement each other."



BRICK BY BRICK: Just kidding. There're no bricks in this log cabin. However, the two-story structure had to be taken apart at its original site, moved to the village, and reassembled.

Human Rights Celebration Marks a New Beginning in Israel

BY RICHARD ELOFER, ISRAEL FIELD PRESIDENT

To celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA) hosted a public celebration in Jerusalem. The celebration was organized by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Israel.

While framed in secular language, the UDHR is based on biblical principles and is an expression of Adventist beliefs regarding freedom of conscience. It was particularly appropriate that this anniversary was celebrated in Israel, because Israel gave the world the earliest human rights legislation.

Furthermore, Jewish individuals played prominent roles in formulating the declaration 50 years ago. Like the state of Israel, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was born in the wake of Nazi genocide.

The organizers invited representatives of the three major religions in Israel to speak on human rights from the perspective of their respective faith communities. Charles Kopp, chair of the United Christian Council in Israel, spoke on behalf of the Christian community. Mustafa Abu Sway, lecturer in philosophy at Al-Quds University in Jerusalem, spoke on behalf of the

Islamic community. Nahum Rakover, deputy attorney general of Israel, represented the Jewish community.

The remarks of the three representatives underscored the conceptual differences regarding religious liberty by major faith groups.

John Graz, general secretary of the IRLA, headquartered in Washington, D.C., reported on the activities of the IRLA around the globe. IRLA is a leading nongovernmental agency providing expert advice to legislators drafting religious liberty legislation. Graz's survey disclosed a global upsurge in governmental policies restricting religious liberty. He emphasized that during this period of rapid legislative change in many countries in accordance with the shifting political climate, the international instruments must be the constant point of reference.

Through the celebration, IRLA has made a favorable beginning in Israel.

N E W S B R E A K

Attacks on Adventist and Other Christian Churches Continue in India

After a wave of violence that began December 25, attacks by Hindu extremists on Christians continue in central India.

Australian Graham Stewart Staines of the Baptist Church and his two young sons were attacked and killed on January 23 in Orissa state as they slept in their vehicle. The vehicle was set on fire, and would-be rescuers were beaten, according to press reports.

Twenty-two churches were burned or destroyed, with another 12 damaged in the ongoing anti-Christian violence. Four Seventh-day Adventist "jungle chapels" were attacked. Two were burned and two badly damaged, according to reports from G. E. Sharon, Gujarat Conference president.

"In every village where our people live, they have been receiving warnings and threats to stop worship or face severe consequences," says Sharon. "Several of our members have been beaten up."

As a result, the Adventist Church is urging caution by expatriates visiting the area and advising members to avoid for the present time any activities that may call attention to the church.

"We cannot rule out the continuance of these well-planned violent attacks from reaching our people again," says Dittu Abraham, communication director for the Adventist Church in India.

At the church's world headquarters in Maryland, John Graz, director of the church's Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department, says, "We are alarmed and appalled at these violent and murderous attacks. We call on all authorities to guarantee the human rights and religious liberty of all, especially religious minorities who, as in this case, are being targeted by elements of a religious majority."

On behalf of the Adventist Church, Graz sent a letter to Denton Lotz, secretary general of the Baptist World Alliance, to express condolences and mutual concerns. — *Adventist News Network*.

Survey: Germans Consider Few of Ten Commandments Important

Few of the Ten Commandments are important to most Germans, according to a survey published by *Der Spiegel* magazine.

The commandment "I am the Lord your God; you shall have no other gods before me" was found to be the least important one, with only 33 percent of those surveyed

Fresh Start

BY SHELLEY NOLAN, EDITOR OF THE CANADIAN ADVENTIST MESSENGER

A group of 30 Canadian churches has launched a national campaign calling for the cancellation of the debts of the world's 50 poorest countries by the year 2000. The Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative is part of an international effort to convince governments and world banks to practice the Leviticus 25 notion of "the year of jubilee" when all debts of the poor were canceled every 50 years.

The total debt of the world's poorest countries was estimated by the World Bank to be more than US\$150 billion in

NEWS COMMENTARY

1996. Politicians have tried various rescue plans over the years. However, countries that qualified found that servicing debt repayment took priority over spending on health, clean water, sanitation, and education, and their people's plight worsened, says Njongonkulu Ndungane, the Anglican archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa.

For the past decade, the Canadian government has been quietly canceling portions of the Can\$1.2 billion debt owed

by developing countries to Canada, and next year's foreign aid budget has been increased. However, a concerted international effort is needed to make a significant difference.

"It may sound quixotic," writes the *Toronto Star* editorial page editor, "but so did the campaign to ban land mines when it began. So did the prospect of ending apartheid."

The Jubilee group admits that its plan raises concerns about corrupt governments, and that an effective mechanism must be in place to ensure that the benefits reach the most needy. However, it feels that that must not deter concerned citizens and leaders from their goal.

Just as God intervened in Leviticus to demand that things be set right again, so today can citizens of privileged, comfortable societies share the responsibility of assisting their less fortunate neighbors. Will it take a miracle? Possibly. But demonstrating Christian charity should be our normal mode of operation, not headline-making bursts of goodwill.

NEWS BREAK

considering it important. "Only four of Christianity's Ten Commandments are viewed as significant by almost all German men and women," the magazine said.

Ninety-seven percent of those surveyed said they accepted the commandment "You shall not kill." Other commandments that most accepted were those that addressed honoring parents and not stealing. But there was less agreement on sexual morality: 75 percent said it was important to condemn adultery.

The magazine also said few people accepted the commandment "You shall remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

"Only 18 percent of Catholics and 5 percent of Protestants regularly attend worship," said Holger Teubert, spokesman for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Germany. "It is therefore not surprising that the observance of the day of rest in this country today has only little importance."

Ekkehardt Mueller, associate director of the Adventist Church's Biblical Research Institute, said he found the survey results "distressing."

"God gave us the commandments to help guide us, and if we disregard them, it will be our loss," he said.

The Hamburg-based magazine, which means "The Mirror," published the results of a survey by the Emnid-Institute in Bielefeld, Germany.

Peru Police Chief Patrols World Headquarters

Rojas Chavez, chief of Peru's national police force and a Seventh-day Adventist lay member, recently visited world leaders at the Adventist Church's world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Rojas was instrumental in organizing small group meetings within Peru's police force that led more than 1,000 persons to join the Adventist Church within the past year. Rojas visited North America at the invitation of *La Voz de la Esperanza* television ministry, which featured his testimony on the broadcast. As a result of his outreach activities, there is a 500-seat church under construction to house a congregation of Adventist police workers.



Rojas Chavez

Shady Grove Hospital's First President Dies

The first president of Shady Grove Adventist Hospital in Rockville, Maryland, ended his long struggle with hepatitis C, passing away on February 12.

Charley O. Eldridge, 67, died at Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, D.C., the *Gazette Community News* reports.

Religion in the News

Gospel Music Industry Sees Gains in Album, Video Sales

The gospel music industry saw a slight increase in album sales and a big jump in video sales in 1998. Contemporary Christian and gospel music sales rose by 1.4 percent, from 43.9 million units sold in 1997 to 44.6 million units sold in 1998, based on sales reported by SoundScan, a computerized network that collects sales data from cash registers in thousands of retail stores.

The sales increase is much smaller than record sales increases of 32 percent in 1997 and 30 percent in 1996. The significant drop in the increase in record sales was not surprising to industry officials.

"We really don't want a boom, but a slow, steady growth," said Frank Breeden, president of the Gospel Music Association and executive director of the Christian Music Trade Association. "This appears to have delivered to us a modest plateau from which we can build."

Christian music videos, on the other hand, showed a growth of 68.1 percent in 1998, an increase from 281,800 units sold in 1997 to 473,700 units sold in 1998.—*Religion News Service*.

Historical Note

145 Years Ago . . . Leader Warns of Threat to Freedom

Almost a decade before the Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized, Sabbathkeeping Adventist leaders were already warning about the role Bible prophecy predicted for the United States government in curtailing religious liberty.

In a biting article titled "The Two-Horned Beast," in the March 21, 1854, edition of the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (now the *Adventist Review*), J. N. Loughborough's study of Revelation 13 and 14 highlighted the federal government's legal toleration of slavery as proof of its lack of seriousness about the fundamental human rights enshrined in its first statement of principles, the Declaration of Independence.

"That very national executive body," Loughborough wrote, "who have before them this Declaration of Independence, and profess to be carrying out its principles, can pass laws by which 3,500,000 slaves can be held in bondage."

Any government that so ignored its pledge to protect physical freedom would have no compunctions about restricting religious freedom, Loughborough argued, even as he provided examples of Sabbathkeepers and others who were being jailed for working or traveling on Sunday.

N E W S B R E A K

Born in Battle Creek, Michigan, Eldridge worked in the Adventist Health System for 36 years. He began his career at Glendale Adventist Hospital in California in 1953. Later he moved to Boulder Memorial Hospital in Colorado and then became administrator of Hadley Memorial Hospital in Washington, D.C., in 1967.



Charley O.
Eldridge

In 1975 Eldridge became the first president of Washington Adventist Hospital. In this position he was directly involved in the development of the new Shady Grove hospital, the *Gazette* reports.

In the late 1970s Eldridge became Shady Grove's first president and a regional vice president of the Mid-Atlantic region for Adventist Health System/Eastern and Middle America. He retired in 1989 as president of Leland Memorial Hospital in Maryland.

News Notes

✓ **Walk Together With Our Creator** is the theme for the 1999 Native Youth Congress, which will be held June 6-12 at the Wewoka Woods Adventist Center, about 90 minutes southwest of Oklahoma City.

The week of spiritual emphasis includes seminars, general meetings, and music programs. Outreach ministries will give participants opportunities to share their faith while learning about their culture, says Robert Burnette, North American Multilingual Ministries director.

For more information call Oklahoma Conference youth director Jack Francisco at (405) 721-6110, or write him at P.O. Box 32098, Oklahoma City, OK 73132.

✓ **B. Lyn Behrens**, president of Loma Linda University and the Adventist Health Sciences Center, recently assumed an additional responsibility as interim president of Loma Linda University Medical Center in California until a new president is selected this year.

Behrens replaces David Moorhead, who took a leave of absence to serve as executive director of medical and clinical operations at the King Faisal Hospital in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

What's Upcoming

Mar. 20-27	Youth Week of Prayer
Mar. 27	Thirteenth Sabbath Offering for the Northern Asia-Pacific Division
Apr. 3	Missionary Magazine Emphasis
Apr. 10	Youth Spiritual Commitment Celebration
Apr. 17	Literature Evangelism Rally

When People Hurt

*I could sense the pain; I could almost feel the hurt.
Something bad had happened, and she was angry.*

BY ROY ADAMS

IT WAS SABBATH AFTERNOON, AND I'D JUST finished speaking at a local church in Sydney, Australia. As many came forward to shake hands, to extend greetings, to chat, one couple waited silently. They needed a little more time.

When we finally sat down together, the wife opened up the issue they wanted to discuss. In my talk I'd dwelt at considerable length on God's love, God's mercy, God's forgiving tenderness. My emphasis had impressed her, but in a way I'd not expected.

"I was abused as a child," she said, "in every way you can imagine."

In cases like that, I never press for details—too painful for them, too embarrassing for me. But it was clear from the tone of her remarks that her dad had been the culprit. And now, as is common in cases of this kind, she found herself facing a crisis of confidence in God as a loving heavenly Father. "Sometimes I blame God for allowing these things to happen to me," she said. "I say to Him, 'How could You, a loving Father, have stood there and let it happen? Could it be You just don't care?'"

Strong words, she herself admitted. "One moment I blurt out words of anger," she said, "the next moment I'm scared. Is that blasphemy?" she asked me. "Is it a sin to think this way? Will God forgive me?"

With today's media saturated with reports on this subject, it's virtually impossible to be unaware of its existence. For many of us, however, that knowledge is purely theoretical. But those who have to deal

with this problem in counseling situations know that no press accounts can have the impact of facing the resurgent anger and utter brokenness in the face of a live person sitting in front of you. It's a nightmare that can't get much worse.

You come away from a conversation like that wondering whom you can trust. And while we cannot afford to become paranoid on this point, it ought to make us less naive than we have probably been—especially in those areas of church life in which adults must necessarily come into contact with young children. The Pathfinder Club, for example, with all its varied opportunities for physical contact; overnight trips; outings; pajama parties; etc. The list is long.

But in such cases as this woman's there seems so little the church or anyone else can do. Here are innocent little children getting hurt behind closed doors *in their own homes!* And often in the end, as in this woman's case, God picks up the blame. "Could it be You just don't care?" she asked Him.

"If such emotions are genuinely in our hearts," I told her, "then God wants us to come to Him with them—however raw, however pointed, however negative. Go back and read the Psalms again," I said.

"Yes, yes!" she responded in excited agreement, as if I'd touched on something she'd always known but temporarily had forgotten.

The Psalms, indeed, have been a source of comfort to millions through the centuries, in large part because they're so honest. Hear the pathos in the following lines:

"O Jehovah, why have you thrown my life away? Why are you turning your face from me, and looking the other way? . . . I



stand helpless before your terrors. Your fierce wrath has overwhelmed me. Your terrors have cut me off. . . . Lover, friend, acquaintance—all are gone. There is only darkness everywhere” (Ps. 88:14-18, TLB). The sacred writer is confronting God—no mincing of words here.

Other biblical writers are equally direct. “I loathe my life,” Job moaned in the midst of personal tragedy. “I will

give free utterance to my complaint; I will speak of the bitterness of my soul. I will say to God, Do not condemn me; let me know why you contend against me. Does it seem good to you to oppress, to despise the work of your hands?” (Job 10:1-3, NRSV).

And Jeremiah, in the midst of his distress, did not hold back much: “You deceived me,” he said to God (Jer.

20:7, NIV). Imagine the deep hurt that would wring from the lips of a reverent prophet such biting words!

And why did Jeremiah feel he’d been deceived? At his call, you see, he’d been given some mighty strong promises. “Today I have made you a fortified city,” God had told him, “an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land. . . . They will

fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you" (Jer. 1:18, 19, NIV).

Now with his back blistered from beatings and with the shameful humiliation of the stocks fresh in his mind, Jeremiah descended into a state of utter brokenness and depression. "Cursed be the day I was born!" he groaned. "Cursed be the man who brought my father the news, who made him very glad, saying, 'A child is born to you—a son!' May that man be like the towns the Lord overthrew without pity. . . . For he did not kill me in the womb, with my mother as my grave. . . . Why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame?" (Jer. 20:14-18, NIV).

Suffering. Affliction. Pain. These words describe the human story from start to end, our own times being right up there with the worst of times. Think of Bosnia, Rwanda, Cosovo, Cambodia, Angola, Northern Ireland, Colombia, Sri Lanka, Algeria, Iraq. And think of Sudan—I single it out as one of the bloodiest examples of contemporary tragedy, a country in which (according to recent news reports) even slavery is rampant. And remember that in all these catastrophes there are rational, sensitive, individual human beings involved. Think of the hurt, the pain, the disillusionment of millions whose poignant cry for help attracts no human ear, whose unspeakable agony invites no supernatural rescue. A violent century is ending true to form—in blood. And tough questions ascend to God from millions around the world every passing day.

But standing out in my mind this Easter is the memory of that Sabbath afternoon conversation in a Sydney church, and the pain in the eyes of that hurting woman. It's downright scary to watch the long-term effect of sexual abuse on its victims. Those of us who have been spared such trauma may have difficulty grasping the enormity of such horrendous tragedy. Sometimes I've been tempted to say to the

victims of this crime: "Look, as bad as the offense might have been, why have you permitted it to plague you all these years?" Fortunately, however, something—the Lord, I believe—has always kept me from succumbing to such monstrous insensitivity. For truly this kind of experience scars people for the rest of their lives. And I think there's got to be a special place in hell for adults who cause such deep hurt to the most helpless and innocent among us.

His suffering was to radically affect forever the suffering of the ages.

"If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me," Jesus said in response to a much milder infraction, "it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt. 18:6, NRSV). Just imagine what He would say to the perpetrators of the hideous crime in question!

Only God knows the full measure of the human tragedy. And standing at the very center of it all is the figure that came to end it all. "He was despised and rejected by men," Isaiah wrote of Him, "a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering" (Isa. 53:3, NIV).

Jesus is the answer to human pain. In the midst of abject poverty we can look to Him, for He was poor. In the midst of ridicule we can turn to Him, for He was insulted. And in the midst of the most agonizing tragedy we can lean to Him, "because he poured out his life unto death" (verse 12, NIV). "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a

lamb to the slaughter" (verse 7, NIV).

But His suffering was not simply to console those who suffer by showing that He is a fellow sufferer—indeed, the Prince of suffers. Rather it was to radically affect forever the suffering of the ages.

We get a sense of this in the poignant encounter between Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch mulling over the words of Isaiah 53 on a dusty Gaza road down from Jerusalem (see Acts 8:26-40). How could I possibly understand these things, the eunuch said to Philip, unless someone should unlock their secret? About whom was the prophet talking? Himself? Someone else?

He was referring to Messiah, Philip said. He was talking about the Prophet of Nazareth. And beginning at that very scripture, Phillip preached to him Jesus. "*He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed*" (Isa. 53:5, NRSV).

His was the suffering to end all suffering. He suffered as a human being, for He was human. But He suffered too as Deity, for He was God—and that we cannot fathom. The psalmists might feel forlorn; Jeremiah might feel abandoned; and that woman in a Sydney church might feel the pain of personal violation. But they suffered for themselves—each one. Nor could all their misery put together equal the anguish that wrung from the Saviour's lips the heartrending cry: "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*"—which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" (Matt. 27:46, NIV).

He suffered to end our pain. He died so we might live. And when all the facts are in, the whole universe, including that dear young woman who encountered me in a Sydney church a year ago, will shout together: "Just and true are your ways, King of the ages" (Rev. 15:3, NIV). It will be a new world order. No more pain. No more hurt. ■

Roy Adams is an associate editor of the Adventist Review.



On “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”

*Let us go then, you and I
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherised upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent. . . .*

With these odd but enduring images T. S. Eliot began one of the century's most urbane literary creations, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.”

Published in 1917, the poem is a dramatic monologue of one Mr. Prufrock, a balding middle-aged man who struggles with the painful realization of how futile and unimportant is his existence.

Though set against a grimy, depressing background of city life—a “yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes/. . . [and] Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains”—Eliot's love song centers around Prufrock's internal angst over life's emptiness. “I have measured out my life,” says Prufrock, “with coffee spoons.” He struggles too with the specter of his mortality.

“Though I have seen my head [grown slightly bald]
brought in upon a platter,
I am no prophet—and here's no great matter;
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat,
and snicker,
And in short, I was afraid.”

Prufrock understands the caprice of existence, of how little whatever he does counts when anything and everything can be changed in an instant. “Do I dare,” he asks, “disturb the universe?/ In a minute there is time/ For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.”

In some of the most powerful imagery of the poem, Prufrock acknowledges how others view him.

“And I have known the eyes already, known them all—
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,

And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?”

Prufrock is a twentieth-century Ecclesiastes. Just as Solomon lamented the futility of it all (“Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.” “I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit” [Eccl. 1:2, 14], J. Alfred does the same. The crucial difference is that while Solomon, toward the end of his monologue, does inject a modicum of the divine (“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments” [Eccl. 12:13]),

J. Alfred never does. The love song is a manifesto of secular emptiness.

With rich and beautiful images of rhythm and rhyme, T. S. Eliot constructed an edifice to human hollowness and despair. For those who have been Christians for most of their lives, for those who have Christ and

*“Do I dare disturb
the universe?”*

the promise of something far beyond what this sin-laden existence offers, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” stands as a powerful reminder: behind the hormonal lure of the horizontal there are only the hollowed-out souls of burned-out men and women trying to derive meaning and purpose from things that in and of themselves, no matter how greatly multiplied or often repeated, are without purpose or meaning. Zero multiplied a thousand times remains zero; lives without Christ are crammed full with emptiness.

Though probably not his intention, in this poem Eliot shows Christians who struggle with faith what their options are: we live with Christ now, and one day God's voice awakens us to eternal glory; or, as Prufrock expresses it at the end of his song:

“We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.”

Clifford Goldstein is the newly appointed editor of the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide.



Metamorphosis



tomb. When they looked inside, they saw an angel. “He is not here,” the angel told them. “He has risen from death as he said he would” (Matthew 28:6, ICB).

The cloth is empty. The tomb is empty. Jesus is alive. Because Jesus died, we are saved from sin. Because Jesus lives, good triumphs over evil, life triumphs over death, and love conquers all.

Think of the cloth that was wrapped around Jesus; imagine that it is our cocoon. Because Jesus lives, we can experience metamorphosis. We can leave behind our destructive, hungry selves. We can emerge, useful and lovely, into a new life with Jesus.

ROSY TETZ

Have you ever seen a cocoon? Cocoons are camouflaged and not easy to discover, but someday you might find one on a leaf or twig. Maybe the butterfly will still be inside, and you can keep watch and even see the butterfly when it climbs out of its cocoon. Or maybe the butterfly will already be gone, and you can take the empty cocoon for your collection of nature stuff.

Butterflies are fascinating. They go through so many changes. We call it a life cycle: first an egg, then a caterpillar, then a cocoon, then a butterfly.

But the most amazing is the cocoon. Do you know what happens inside that cocoon? The caterpillar changes into a butterfly. Those words make it sound simple, but it's not—it's very complicated. The whole body is reorganized. All the caterpillar muscles, nerves, and other structures dissolve, and new ones form. Isn't that incredible?

The scientific word for this is “metamorphosis.” It means a change in form and appearance. Butterflies aren't the only creatures who have a life cycle that involves metamorphosis. Many insects do: bees, ants, and beetles, for instance. And so do frogs.

But it seems that the butterfly metamorphosis is the most dramatic. Caterpillars (and some people may disagree with me on this) are kind of creepy. They destroy plants with their continual munching. But after the magic of the cocoon, they turn into butterflies. What a change! They flit from flower to flower, sipping nectar and spreading pollen. And many butterflies are so beautiful that when you see them, you stop and watch.

What a difference that cocoon makes!

When Jesus died, His friends wrapped His body in cloth. Then they put Him in a tomb that had been cut out of a wall of rock. Early on Easter morning some women went to the



PHOTO © PHOTODISC

Jesus and Journalists

R. LYNN SAULS

Shortly after I began teaching journalism at Andrews University, my wife, Helen, handed me an article from a *Good Housekeeping* magazine. "Look at this," she said. It was an article based on the answers Lawrence Eisenberg received when he asked well-known TV journalists whom they would most like to interview—living or dead—and what they would like to ask.*

Eisenberg asked the question to such journalists as Walter Cronkite, Barbara Walters, Dan Rather, Maria Shriver, and Tom Brokaw. They gave such answers as Gandhi, Moses, Robert E. Lee ("His decision to leave the union, and looking back, whether he thought the great destruction of the Civil War was, in fact, worth it," said Roger Mudd), Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis ("Because she gives no interviews," said Barbara Walters), Mother Teresa, Thomas Jefferson, Napoleon, Pope John Paul II.

But the name given most frequently was Jesus.

Joan Lunden said, "I'd like to ask Jesus Christ, 'How are we all doing?'"

Maria Shriver said, "I'd like to ask Jesus Christ how He managed to keep His faith in the face of such adversity."

Tom Brokaw's answer was short: "Jesus Christ—for all the obvious reasons."

Journalists, for the most part, are a skeptical bunch. They are skeptical of the supernatural and of organized religion. And yet 2,000 years after Jesus appeared in history, He is the one they most want to interview.

There's a reason, it seems to me, that He is the most newsworthy person to step across the pages of history. Not *Time's* Man of the Year. Not the most influential person of the century or the millennium. But *Time's* Man of All Time.

The message of Jesus Christ is called the gospel, or the good news. But the word "news" occurs only once in the Bible: "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country" (Prov. 25:25). This text is a summary of the whole Bible. It is a summary of Jesus' mission. Heaven is the far country. Jesus is the good news from that far country. His Word is the newspaper, the newscast, the newsmagazine.

It is in the very nature of humans to thirst for news. When

we see someone we haven't seen for a while, we ask, "What's new?" We watch *CNN Headline News* again and again and ask ourselves, "Why am I still watching this? It's almost a

complete repetition of the last half hour." The satisfaction of receiving earthly news is short lived. God made us this way for a reason. Our thirst for news will draw us to Him. Our deepest need can be satisfied only as we accept the news from a far country and allow Jesus to quench our soul's thirst.

The most newsworthy event in all history, it seems to me, is the resur-

rection of Jesus. The most dramatic moment of that event was captured by journalist John Mark, who interviewed the women who had come to the empty tomb. The angel they met at the tomb had said to them, "He is risen; he is not here" (Mark 16:6). I don't believe Jesus would be the person most journalists would want to interview if He had not risen. He would have been merely one among thousands of religious teachers. His followers would not have turned the world upside down during the first century without the certainty of the Resurrection. Nor would His followers today continue to carry with power the everlasting gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people without that certainty.

Every Christian is a journalist with a special privilege, it seems to me. Jesus has granted each of us an interview. He wants us to interview Him every day. We can interview Him when we have devotions. The answers to our most important questions are in His Word. We can interview Him at any moment of the day. If we listen, He will speak to us through His still small voice. As journalists we can then report to others the good news from a far country.

So it seems to me.

* "Who Would You Most Like to Interview—And What Would You Ask?" *Good Housekeeping*, October 1986, pp. 56-58.

*Every Christian is
a journalist.*

R. Lynn Sauls taught English and journalism on the college and university level before his retirement. He and his wife live in Naples, Florida.





Adventist Volunteer Service

The following persons left their homes in 1998 to volunteer their time to assist in mission work in other countries for short-term service.

James Carl Barrett, to serve as teacher, Bangkok Adventist Church, Bangkok, Thailand, of College Place, Washington, left August 12, 1998.

Kim and William Bowlby, to serve as teachers, Bangkok Adventist Church School, Prakanong, Bangkok, Thailand, of Oroville, California, left

August 19, 1998.

Ann-Marie Buchanan, to serve as English-Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Orlando, Florida, left August 19, 1998.

David Andrew George Gay, to serve as acting business manager, Adventist International, Philippines, and **Phyllis Joyce Gay**, of Meridian, Idaho, left November 1, 1998.

Ronald Fordham Hann, to serve as physician/family practice, Guam SDA Clinic, Tamuning, Guam, of Washougal, Washington, left January 9, 1998.

They Still Go

The following persons have left their homes to work in other countries or to return to missionary service. Please remember them in your prayers.

Regular Missionary Service

Lauriellen Stankovich, to serve as assistant professor in English Department, Central American Adventist University, Alajuela, Costa Rica, of Weimar, California, left Houston August 9, 1998.

Jeannette Francina Storey, returning to serve as optometrist, Guam SDA Clinic, Tamuning, Guam, and **Donald Storey** left Los Angeles August 16, 1998.

John Wesley Taylor, returning to serve as theology teacher, Venezuelan Adventist University, Nirgua, Yaracuy,Codigo, Venezuela, and **Jessie Fay Taylor** left Miami July 30, 1998.

Dale Ray Tunnell, to serve as pastor-administrator, SDA Church, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, **Cheryl Marie Tunnell**, and two children, of Calhoun, Georgia, left San Francisco April 7, 1998.

Philip Wayne Van Lanen, returning to serve as dental lab technician, Saipan SDA Clinic, Saipan, **Sandra Kay Lanen**, and one child left Los Angeles August 16, 1998.

Elvin Robert Vence, returning to serve as chief engineer/site manager, AWR-Asia, Agat, Guam, and **Betty Carol Vence** left San Francisco June 22, 1998.

Gary Ver Steeg, returning to serve as boys' dean/business teacher, Maxwell Adventist Academy, Nairobi, Kenya, East Africa, **Medianita Ver Steeg**, and one child left Minneapolis August 9, 1998.

Loron Talbott Wade, returning to serve as theology professor, Montemorelos University, Montemorelos, Mexico, and **Ruth Ann Wade** left McAllen, Texas, June 17, 1998.

Barry White, returning to serve as dental lab technician, Blantyre Adventist Hospital, Blantyre, Malawi, Africa, and **Breta White** left Washington, D.C., August 24, 1998.

Albert Williams, returning to serve as pastor/music teacher, Maxwell Adventist Academy, Nairobi, Kenya, East Africa, **Donna Mae Williams**, and one child left New York August 17, 1998.

And Noah Found Grace

BY ANN BURKE

We all know the story of how God told Noah to build a boat because of a coming flood. We know that he measured and hammered and smeared pitch, and that he preached for a very long time.

Customarily we explain Noah to the current generation of Sabbath school children in five minutes or less (not counting all the little songs). Whenever we reflect on him ourselves, we spend about the same length of time. (The animals lost their charm once we became juniors, and we're confident there won't be another Flood.)

But what if the account went something like this?

In a faraway place where people lived in towers and estates, or under bridges and on the streets—in a spouse-beating, child-molesting, gang- and greed-infested time—a man named Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

And one Lord's Day as Noah sat thinking on a hill overlooking the country of Havilah, a shadow passed over the landscape, causing him to look up.

To his astonishment, plain as the Pishon River glinting below, Noah saw an *angel* flying in the midst of heaven! As his shadow moved over the country estate and riverfront villa, the angel cried in a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of the judgment has come."*

Noah watched speechless. He saw the angel approach the towers of Greater Havilah, where management convened in posh committee rooms and the homeless huddled under the bridge.

"And worship Him who made heaven and earth," the call wafted back to Noah, "the sea and springs of water!" He strained his eyes to follow the form growing small in the distance, but dazzling blue enveloped it. It was gone.

If Noah thought he had witnessed marvel enough for a lifetime, he was wrong. For as he still peered into the sky, shading his eyes against the sun, another angel followed, this one hovering briefly over a hilltop altar fashioned of hewed and polished stone.

"Popular religion is fallen, is fallen!" the angel intoned as Noah held his breath. There was a fanning of air and a whirring of wings over the altar. Then with the grace and precision of a comet, the second angel fol-

lowed the first, and was lost from view.

Scarcely had Noah composed himself after that strange vision when a third angel followed with a call that drained the color from the good man's face. "If anyone identifies with the hewed-stone altar"—the words of the third angel rang with certainty—"they shall be tormented with wave and rising water in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of God.

"And the sound of their cries shall ascend forever and ever," the angel went on, swooping low over the villas, trumpeting over the tall towers. "And they shall find no dry land day or night who love the alternative altar or for any reason what-

ever choose to worship before it."

The cry of the third angel ended abruptly. As abruptly, the messenger lifted and took to the sky beyond Havilah. Where he had swooped and where he had lifted, he left no trace.

"My Father," said Noah when at last he could speak, "that was a frightful message!"

"A solemn message," came a still small voice.

"Have all the people heard?" asked Noah shakily.

"Not yet."

Noah sat with his head in his hands.

"My Father," he ventured again, "what about *the people*—those in the towers, on the estates, and living under the bridge?"

"My feelings precisely," came the voice.

And what if that is how it happened that Noah sounded judgment warning to anyone who would listen, and the people from far and near had one more chance?

That would have been, of course, what God wanted more than anything.

Because He delights in mercy.

Because He is rich in grace.

* Passages in narrative taken from Revelation 14:6-11.

Ann Burke is a freelance writer and poet who lives in Yucaipa, California.

