

Adventist Review

December 23, 2010

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Amazed at Bethlehem

A STORY OF GRACE,
FAITH, AND SUBMISSION





As we join Christians around the world in remembering Christ's first advent, we wish you God's richest blessings as we await His second advent.—Adventist Review staff.

FRONT (from left):

Kimberly Luste Maran, Marvene Thorpe-Baptiste, Alfredo Garcia-Marenko, Sandra Blackmer, Rachel Child, Judy Thomsen, Merle Poirier

MIDDLE:

Ed Zinke, Carlos Medley, Stephen Chavez, Bill Knott, Claude Richli, Mark Kellner

REAR:

Wilona Karimabadi, Gerald Klingbeil, Gina Wahlen

NOT PICTURED:

Mark A. Finley

Adventist Review

"Behold, I come quickly . . ."

Our mission is to uplift Jesus Christ by presenting 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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History still divides itself into B.C. and A.D. Illustration © Nathan Greene/hartclassics.com. Other examples of Nathan Greene's art can be seen at NathanGreene.com.

NEXT WEEK IN ADVENTIST WORLD

God's Promised Gift
God wants to pour out His Spirit on old and young, male and female. So what's stopping Him?

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Support of Leadership

» Thank you so much for the article on Lisa Beardsley, “Adventist Education Leader Up to the Challenges,” by Mark A. Kellner with Ansel Oliver (Nov. 18, 2010). I am sitting in an empty compound on Sabbath morning (because for security someone has to be here 24/7) and enjoyed so much the thoughts and insights in this article.

Take courage, knowing that we are reading from near and far, and that whatever challenges are faced in shouldering the ministry God has given, you have already been a blessing.

PAUL OPP
Iquitos, Peru

Appreciation

» Thanks for the attractive, dynamic, colorful design layout of the November 18 *Review*. I’m a missionary’s kid, and enjoyed the rendition of the Seventh-day Adventist name in 20 languages on page 7.

CHARLES R. TAYLOR
Collegedale, Tennessee

PHOTO COURTESY OF ALASKA CONFERENCE



Supporting the Small

» Thanks to Roy Adams for his excellent coverage of difficult, modern topics that are overlooked by others. His writing has made me laugh, pause for thought, and give a high-five. I hope he doesn’t desert us totally. I attend a small company with between three and a staggering 12 attending on the very best days; and I encourage adventurous readers who feel comfortable in their ample congregations to visit smaller ones some Sabbaths.

As Warren Downs, my husband’s nephew and a missionary in Selawik, Alaska, said, in the article “Abandoned Churches in Alaska Home Again to Adventist Ministry,” by Ansel Oliver (Nov. 18, 2010), “church is ‘low key,’” but your visiting presence will be a blessing.

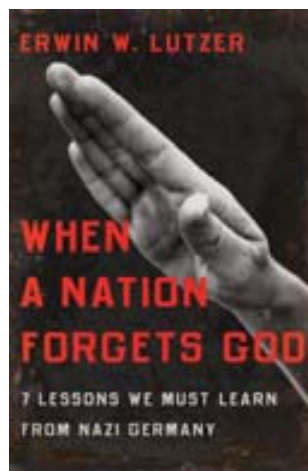
Finally, the *Adventist Review* was spot on again with Susan Baker’s insightful, sensitive article “Vanished Without a Trace” (Nov. 11, 2010), about ambiguous loss. Our small congregation is not immune to this formerly nameless loss, and I’ll be sharing the article and passing on our copy of *Adventist Review*. Thank you, editors,

for feeding our isolated community. We are fortunate to have such an excellent journal.

TABITHA ABEL
Chiloquin, Oregon

Lessons From the Past

» Regarding the editorial “When a Nation Forgets God,” by Mark Kellner (Nov. 11, 2010): Not only had the German nation in the time of the National Socialism forgotten its God-centered roots and the civic rights derived from it, but apparently also had many Christians. Only a few opposed Hitler and his regime; large parts of the religiously inclined nobility and middle classes—even the leaderships of the great churches—welcomed Hitler’s seizure of power as the “God-sent leader.” Christian political parties paved the way for the Nazis. And Christian churches—regrettably, including some Seventh-day Adventists—were guilty in multiple ways by approval, collaboration, or simply looking away. Our church in Germany and Austria (as recently as 2004) issued a confession of guilt concerning this injustice in their midst.



Atheistic Russians and secular Americans were those who defeated the National Socialism government—with heavy losses. In contrast, the readiness of Christians who gave themselves the appearance of believing to oppose the regime (even to a martyr’s death), was a rare exception.

I wonder: What do we believers learn from it today? At least this: What looks like Christianity is often far from real Christianity! And what seems to us to be secular and distant from God may be a guarantor of our freedom—and thereby a door opener for our preaching.

THOMAS LOBITZ
Lueneburg, Germany



My Take

» In light of our country’s recent polarizing election and our General Conference (GC) worldwide elections, “Term Limits” was such a timely and superbly written article by Roy Adams (Oct. 21, 2010). It is not often that someone can so clearly articulate both sides of an argument so convincingly. I particularly appreciated Ellen White’s comments on the topic, and the historical background from Annual Council and GC deliberations from the 1930s.

Adams has a gift very evident in this article for mixing interviews with [former GC president] Neal Wilson, quotes from Tennyson, and

important material from sources as diverse as the *Washington Post*, the 1931 GC Committee minutes, and *Gospel Workers* into an arresting narrative I couldn't put down.

Although I often think of writing a comment, this is my first because I want to pay tribute to a journalistic giant—a “Renaissance man” whose intellect, literary knowledge, curiosity, integrity, and love for God and the church were infused throughout his editorials and articles, which never failed to inspire or provoke me to search further.

REBEKAH WANG-CHENG
SCRIVEN
Dayton, Ohio

Term Limits— Another Idea

» Former associate editor Roy Adams will be greatly missed. His incisive thinking made the *Review* a better journal. If you can talk him into it, please ask him to keep writing. We need more thinkers like him. Not that I always agreed with everything he said, but I appreciated being pushed to think things through for myself.

I totally agree with Adams' last article, “Term Limits” (Oct. 21, 2010). The setting of term limits allows for new ideas to be brought forward, new initiatives to be launched, and experience to be shared. I would go so far as to recommend that conference officers at all levels be required to serve as a pastor for a few years before going back into the conference office. If we truly believe that the action is at the local church level, it makes sense to have our best and bright-

est return to where the action is.

CLARENCE SMALL
Peoria, Illinois



Hope Found in Church

» When I received my new *Review* today (Nov. 25) and saw the beautiful cover, I was moved to tears of joy.

I am a senior citizen living in Tennessee, but I was born in New York (Long Island), and dedicated in the New York City Temple church. After my parents moved, we often visited the Washington Avenue church in Brooklyn, where we had relatives. How I loved the stained-glass windows and the pipe organ in the balcony, and listening to the pastor, who was William Fagal at that time. Even though I was just a little girl, I loved his sermons and his precious wife.

I still miss New York City and have often wished and prayed for something big to happen there to let those dear people know about our church and what it has to offer those without hope. Mark Kellner's article about the Church of the Advent Hope, “Hope in Manhattan,” is a wonderful start in that direction. I wish them God's abundant blessings in spreading the Word in this awesome, mixed-multitude city, where people are starving for a better way.

PAULINE N. PIERSON
Collegedale, Tennessee

Then again . . .

» One church in Manhattan has been highlighted in “Hope in Manhattan,” by Mark Kellner. I understand that you cannot cover all the Seventh-day Adventist churches in the North American Division. However, Kellner mentions the following at the end of the article: “Can anything good come from a city as large, impersonal, and imposing as New York? If it's the Church of the Advent Hope and its outreach to young professionals who could otherwise end up estranged from Adventism, the answer seems to be a resounding ‘yes.’” That is in and of itself an exclusion of all other churches.

The moment you highlight a church in a certain location, you turn the eyes of members elsewhere in another direction—maybe outside their church. If I was a young adult and visited a church in Manhattan, then I heard about Advent Hope, the first thought that would come to my mind would be, “Hey, why not try that for a while?” If you have a pastor working in that same location, struggling to retain his membership to accomplish a certain ministry task, you hurt his ministry by an article promoting another church.

JOHN FARAH
Via E-mail

Politics and the Paper

» I read and enjoy the *Review* regularly, but the column “The Sherrod Affair,” by Fredrick Russell (Oct. 14, 2010), needs a bold response. To put an article of this nature in our church paper just two weeks before a very important election is not right. This article is

pure politics and has no place in our church paper. To berate the tea party in over half of the article seems a little strange. That Russell presents the piece under the heading “Kingdom Business” is surprising. Our business is to take the message of salvation to all the world. I don't think we should feature political subjects; but if we do, we need to hear both sides of the issue.

ROBERT PAULSEN
Milton, Washington

» I am writing in response to “The Sherrod Affair,” by Fredrick A. Russell. I am very disappointed that the *Adventist Review* would publish such a critical article about racism and politics.

Whether or not we agree with Russell is not the point. I feel it is wrong for a church leader to express a political position, in writing, in an official church publication.

The *Adventist Review* should not be anyone's platform for this personal and political opinion. This is not the mission of the church!

MARILEE MCNEILUS
Dodge Center, Minnesota

We welcome your letters, noting, as always, that inclusion of a letter in this section does not imply that the ideas expressed are endorsed by either the editors of the *Adventist Review* or the General Conference. Short, specific, timely letters have the best chance at being published (please include your complete address and phone number—even with e-mail messages). Letters will be edited for space and clarity only. Send correspondence to Letters to the Editor, *Adventist Review*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; Internet: letters@adventistreview.org.



Bill
Knott

*Christmas, then,
ought to be the
most Adventist
of holidays.*

The Holy and the Holly

AN ADVENTIST CHRISTMAS.

The phrase challenges the imagination, testing possibilities. The pairing of such a distinctive adjective with the calendar's most sense-laden and commercial holiday at first seems jarring, even ill-advised. The faith we practice the rest of the year—a call to standards and sobriety, to truths well-lived against a flood of worldliness—grows silent and uncomfortable among the Clausen, crèches, and candy canes. We are not sure the words “Adventist” and “Christmas” belong together, as though we have uncovered one of those tonic dissonances that make the bones tremble.

Like centuries of Protestants before us, Adventists have officially been cautious about the celebration of Christmas, whatever our private practices may be. Though some large congregations will light ranks of candles and trim sanctuary trees, in many Adventist churches there will be scant mention of the celebration of Christ's birth, as though turning our collective backs on the excesses of the holiday will somehow make them go away. Yes, we'll sing a carol or three—but chances are the Sabbath sermon nearest the holiday will more likely be about stewardship or self-denial than the mystery of the Incarnation. Concerned that we may be mistaken for those who sanctify the traditions of men, we back away from what we can't control.

And yet, and yet . . .

The doctrine captured in our very name—“Adventist”—proclaims to the world our unshakable faith in the Bible teaching that the Lord who once invaded history will yet do so again to ransom captive Israel: the Christ who came once as a defenseless baby will soon come again as our omnipotent Savior. Believing in the Second Coming only makes sense in the presence of an equally vigorous embrace of the truth of the First Coming: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).^{*} Adventism, at its core, proclaims—and celebrates—both comings, reminding a thoughtless world that what began in Bethlehem will yet come to full expression only when we ourselves have found a room at an inn of the New Jerusalem.

Christmas, then, ought to be the most Adventist of holidays, an unparalleled opportunity for us to announce our faithfulness to the Bible's complete teaching about the comings of Christ. Rather than surrender to the culture's celebration, or worse yet, ignore it altogether, this is our season for announcing the best of the good news.

Yes, tell me the story of Jesus this Christmas, but don't leave Him helpless in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes. Make certain I also hear about the stone of Daniel 2, “cut out of the mountain without hands,” who promises to bring all this world's kingdoms crashing down.

Yes, tell me again about the angels and the shepherds, but don't let me miss the truth about the Great Shepherd whose sheep still know His voice and follow Him when He says, “Come out of her, my people” (Rev. 18:4).

Come, let us adore Him. Be sure to tell me that even if I don't choose Him as my Savior, a day is coming very soon when “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10, 11).

And when you tell me that the wise men offered their gifts and bowed low, make certain that you invite me to “fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (Rev. 14:7).

This year, be a joyful witness to both of the Lord's comings. Go out, then, and in His name, enjoy a thoroughly Adventist Christmas.

^{*} Bible texts in this editorial are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Resident Alien

I AM A RESIDENT ALIEN HERE IN THE U.S.A.

I must confess that the phrase still makes me look cautiously over my shoulder. It just sounds too strange. In case you have forgotten, a resident alien is a foreigner who is a permanent resident of a given country.

Read the Christmas story with this concept in the back of your mind. Joseph and Mary arrive in Bethlehem—they are not from Judea, but from notorious Galilee. They are outsiders and get treated that way. The Wise Men from the East are foreigners, looking in a strange place for an unheard-of event. A king is to be born—not in Jerusalem’s palaces, but in a cave or a shed where animals are kept.

When the angel tells Joseph about the imminent danger to the baby, the family escapes to Egypt, on a journey none of them had anticipated. They are refugees, trying to survive on the precious gifts that God had supplied through the goodness of the foreign Wise Men. Imagine Joseph (who most likely traveled without the tools of his trade) trying to make ends meet in a country where Aramaic (or Hebrew) was not understood. Imagine Mary trying to shop in the open market, not understanding much of the whirlwind negotiations.

Life is not always easy for a foreigner living in a new (and often strange) culture. Matter of fact, life is often very tough. The refugee, the guestworker (as they have been called in Germany), the foreigner, the stranger, the alien—they *speak* differently, they *eat* differently, they *dress* differently, and they often *think* differently. Jesus became a resident alien—Immanuel, God with us—so that anybody, including you and this resident alien, would be able to find an eternal home where there will be no more “aliens.”



Gerald A.
Klingbeil



Christmas Culture Nativity scenes depict the birth of Jesus. While many of the same ideas are there—Mary, Joseph, shepherds, angels, and Wise Men—different societies may add their own bit of culture. Here are seven examples. Can you match the origin with the Nativity scene?



- ___ Ecuador
- ___ Madagascar
- ___ Alaska
- ___ China
- ___ Cameroon
- ___ Indonesia
- ___ Italy





UNITED KINGDOM

Myklebust Named Interim Head at Newbold College

*Jane Sabes resigns after
two years in role*

By **MIROSLAV PUJIC**, *Trans-European Division, with Adventist Review staff*

SVEIN MYKLEBUST, who retired in 2008 as head of the Adventist Church's Middle East University in Beirut, Lebanon, is returning to denominational service as interim principal, or head, at Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England. He was a former academic dean at Newbold.

Myklebust follows Jane Sabes, whose resignation as principal was announced November 12. Sabes, a former professor of political science at Andrews University and a former state of Wyoming health director, became Newbold's chief executive in August 2008.

The college's board, which met in Montenegro on November 14 during year-end executive committee meetings of the Trans-European Division of Seventh-day Adventists (TED), also appointed a search committee to begin the process of looking for a new principal.

Bertil Wiklander, Newbold College board chair and TED president, thanked Sabes for her contribution to the college during her two-year tenure and wished her well for the future. He emphasized Sabes had executed her duties with energy and drive, focusing on the needs of many students, student recruitment, as well as updating many policies and making board routines efficient.

In a report for its 2010 annual general meeting, Newbold said it had a total of 266 students for the 2009-2010 academic year, an approximately 16 percent increase over the previous academic



FILE PHOTO COURTESY MEU

INTERIM CHIEF: Svein Myklebust, who retired in 2008 as head of the Adventist Church's Middle East University in Beirut, Lebanon, is returning to denominational service as interim principal, or head, at Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England. He is shown with his wife, Randi.

year's 229 students. The school has had its challenges, however. According to the report, "budgetary limitations have, for the past several years, prevented the college from providing the pay increases, social recreation, and retreats essential to motivate staff, to team-build, and [to] vision the future."

After the appointment of Myklebust as

acting principal, Wiklander expressed his satisfaction that the transition in leadership is working well: "Dr. Myklebust is an experienced administrator of Adventist higher education and has served several years as academic dean at Newbold College itself. He is familiar with the great assets that Newbold College has and its great importance for the development of church life in the Trans-European Division."

Regarding the search committee for a permanent principal, Wiklander said this work would be prioritized and conducted with openness and determination. He added that "leading Newbold College today offers opportunities of creatively changing the way in which Adventist education interacts with and builds up the church by equipping not only church workers but also members whom Christ has called to be ministers." The financial support from church organizations in the TED toward Newbold College is in a process of significant increase that will reach its peak in 2013, officials said. ■



ANDREWS UNIVERSITY PHOTO

RESIGNED: Jane Sabes, a former state of Wyoming health director and longtime professor at Andrews University, resigned as Newbold's principal in November 2010.



FOR HEALTH: United States first lady Michelle Obama participates in a Let's Move! Faith and Communities conference call with faith leaders in the first lady's East Wing office at the White House on November 29.

including balanced nutrition; exercise; drinking enough water; adequate sunlight; abstaining from alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs; fresh air; appropriate rest; and trust in divine power.

"The Seventh-day Adventist Church will do its part to fulfill God's wish found in 3 John 2, which indicates that God wants us to be in physical and spiritual health," Wilson said.

Katia Reinert, health ministries director for the church's North American Division, said members would be encouraged to:

- Walk 1 million miles through InStep for Life and other exercise initiatives. Health ministries will aim to motivate members of 100 churches walking 10,000 miles a year and at least 10 people per church walking 2.5 miles a day.
- Engage youth at churches and schools to establish vegetable gardens in the community, with the goal of one garden in each local conference.
- Encourage youth to receive the Presidential Active Lifestyle awards (at least one award per Adventist school in North America).
- Establish summer feeding programs through Vacation Bible School, summer camps, and community service outreach initiatives.

"I think more than ever the time has come for God's message of healing and restoration to be heard," Reinert later said in a statement. "This is a wonderful opportunity to engage our churches and schools to make a positive impact for Christ in our communities on a national level."

For more information, resources, and an initiative tool kit, visit www.letsmove.gov. ■

—with additional reporting by George Johnson, Jr., North American Division communication director

■ NORTH AMERICA

Obama's Anti-Child Obesity Initiative Receives Faith, Community Support

At White House, Wilson pledges support for "Let's Move" goals

By **ANSEL OLIVER**, assistant director for news, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

THE SEVENTH-DAY Adventist Church joined some 50 other faith and community organizations November 30 in supporting a national initiative of United States first lady Michelle Obama to fight the epidemic of childhood obesity.

The initiative, "Let's Move! Faith and Communities," seeks pledges from organizations to promote exercise, the planting of community gardens to provide fresh food, and other activities contributing to healthful living.

About one third of children in the U.S. are overweight or obese, Obama told faith and community leaders gathered at the White House in Washington, D.C., about 16 miles south of the General Conference.

"It's clear that when it comes to ensuring our children's health and well-being, when it comes to tackling childhood obesity, our faith-based and community organizations have a very critical role to play," Mrs. Obama said.

She said this new phase of the previously established Let's Move initiative would work to support existing programs. "Many of you have been leading the way on this issue for so long," Mrs. Obama said, referring to faith-based health ministries, exercise clubs, and edu-

cation in "Saturday and Sunday schools."

The new initiative is comprised of four goals for next year:

- Community and faith-based members walking a total of 3 million miles.
- Completing 500,000 Presidential Active Lifestyle awards or establishing exercise programs.
- Hosting 10,000 community gardens or farmer's markets nationally.
- Beginning 1,000 new summer feeding sites nationally.

Several leaders of prominent faith groups expressed support for the goals during the meeting, including Pastor Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, who said he "[resonated] with the issue personally." Wilson holds a master's degree in public health from the church's Loma Linda University.

"The Let's Move initiative is consistent with our church's approach to ministering to people physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually," Wilson said. "It has been shown that Seventh-day Adventists live longer because of their healthy lifestyle."

He added, "Seventh-day Adventists have extensive educational and health systems in which we promote better health through practical, healthy lifestyles,

■ INTER-AMERICA

Antillean Adventist Hospital Resumes Services After Flood Damage

By **LIBNA STEVENS**, *Inter-American Division, reporting from Curaçao*

NEARLY A month after Hurricane Tomas dumped torrential rains on the island of Curaçao in the southern Caribbean Sea, Antillean Adventist Hospital is still assessing the damage caused by waist-high floodwaters throughout the one-story facility on November 1. The rains overflowed a dam and caused heavy flooding over low-lying areas. Nearly everything inside the hospital was destroyed, including its state-of-the-art Imaging Department equipment.

meter over the entire hospital, and all our machines in radiology, laboratory, operating room, nurses' station, kitchen, and the rest were under water," she explained. In addition, all computers, furniture, medical supplies, and medicines were destroyed or severely damaged, she said.

At the time of the flooding 19 patients and a baby were in the hospital. They were transported immediately to nearby St. Elisabeth Hospital, said Panneflek, who has been the hos-

Since that night, staff, even patients, have worked to clean up the facility.

So far, the building has been cleaned and disinfected several times, and sample cultures taken from the premises have come out clear of contamination, according to Panneflek. In addition, the public health inspector has visited the hospital and a special building assessor from California-based Adventist Health International submitted his recommendations to resume services.

"After all the assessing and cleaning and culturing we are finally ready to resume operations again," said Panneflek. "However, because of the lack of machines and equipment, we will have to start little by little as new machines and equipment are replaced.

"Our main challenge at this time is to get the large machines for radiology, operating room, and laboratory back, retain employees by guaranteeing their salaries, and replace furniture for the nurses' station and the delivery room," added Panneflek. Antillean Adventist Hospital has 120 employees, four medical doctors, as well as dozens of doctors in private practice who use the facility for their medical services.

Elie S. Honore, president for Adventist Health International Services-Inter-America (AHIS-IA), visited the hospital with executive board officers and met with hospital staff last week.

Adventist Health International Services (AHIS), a management organization at Loma Linda University in California, partners with Adventist health-care services in developing countries to strengthen management and mobilize personnel and resources to promote quality health care.

"We are happy that our association with AHIS will help restore and replace



CLEANUP: Antillean Adventist Hospital staff clean up a day after waist-high flooding damaged nearly all imaging equipment, as well as computers, furniture, medical supplies, and more.

"We have been serving the community for more than 40 years and had never seen anything like this before," said Cenaida Panneflek, the hospital's administrator.

"We have lost everything," said Panneflek. "The water rose to about a

meter over the entire hospital, and all our machines in radiology, laboratory, operating room, nurses' station, kitchen, and the rest were under water," she explained. In addition, all computers, furniture, medical supplies, and medicines were destroyed or severely damaged, she said.

"I am very happy that God spared the lives of all nurses on duty and the maintenance man that night," said Panneflek.

equipment for our hospital,” said Honore. “We cannot afford to remain closed any longer. Our hospital there has three state-of-the-art operating rooms for eye, general, and orthopedic surgeries. Our need for this equipment is very urgent, and the plans are to have the hospital resume at least 50 percent of its services section by section by the beginning of the new year.”

Honore said that AHIS is working with some other partners to transport a mammography machine, large X-ray machines, and another CT scanner within the next few weeks.

So far, Antillean Adventist Hospital has an agreement with St. Elisabeth Hospital for surgical cases and follow-up until those services resume, Honore added.

According to Pannefleke, plans are under way to offer echo sonograms, some laboratory services, eye and minor surgeries, as well as other medical services starting December 6.

An average of 2,080 outpatients and 225 inpatients are seen each month in the 47-bed facility. Antillean Adventist Hospital was built in 1970. ■

■ WORLD CHURCH

Ministry Editor Satelmajer Retires, Completing 40 Years of Service

Former pastor, administrator noted for many accomplishments

NIKOLAUS SATELMAJER, a veteran Seventh-day Adventist pastor, administrator, and communicator, retired at the end of November, completing 40 years of denominational service, the last five as editor of *Ministry* magazine.

A man of many interests and talents, Satelmajer is a recognized scholar and researcher with a particular interest in the Sabbath, both in terms of its history and its application. He wrote several popular and scholarly articles about Theophilus Brabourne, an Anglican clergyman from the 1600s who wrote eight books affirming the seventh-day Sabbath. Satelmajer was instrumental in leading the Seventh-day Adventist Church in establishing a “Creation Sabbath” in 2009, to emphasize the relationship between the biblical account of Creation and the seventh-day Sabbath.

He said he is pleased to have brought “more international writers and a peer review system” to *Ministry*, a monthly magazine for Adventist pastors that for six issues a year is distributed free to ministers in other churches. With readers in 190 countries, Satelmajer said subscriptions

were up 30 percent during his tenure as editor.

Before taking the reins at the magazine, Satelmajer was in charge of the General Conference Ministerial Association’s PREACH seminar series, which annually brings a group of renowned pastors together for instructional talks about homiletics. These events are seen globally via satellite television broadcast and the Internet and have reached thousands of clergy.

“I appreciate his administrative abilities, I appreciate his financial acumen, and I appreciate his heart for our pastors and for clergy of other denominations,” said Jerry Page, Ministerial Association secretary, who noted that Satelmajer helped manage financial matters for the group after the November 2009 death of then-secretary James A. Cress.

Satelmajer’s educational background is varied: after attending elementary school in the former Yugoslavia and in Germany, he graduated from Highland Springs High School near Richmond, Virginia. Satelmajer then attended Hunter College of the City University of New York, Colgate Rochester Divinity



PHOTO FROM ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK

RETIRING EDITOR: Nikolaus Satelmajer, editor of *Ministry* magazine since 2005, retired after 40 years of service in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

School, Union Theological Seminary, and Andrews University. He received his B.A., M.Div., and D.Min. degrees from Andrews. He is currently working on an S.T.M., or Master’s of Sacred Theology, concentrating in church history, at Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia.

Satelmajer, who lives with his wife, Ruth, in the Silver Spring, Maryland, area, said he is planning to work on “several major research projects” in his retirement. ■

—By Adventist Review staff.



PHOTO: DUSTIN ISENINGER

THE WELCOME TABLE: Walla Walla University students and members of the University church meet over lunch at a community event.



PHOTO: BRIAN HERNANDEZ

HUGE SETUP: It took two hours and 20 minutes to set up for “The Longest Table” event at Walla Walla University.

NORTH AMERICA

Reaching Out, Walla Walla Students, University Church Members Set “The Longest Table”

Fellowship, new relationships was goal

By **BECKY ST. CLAIR**, news and information coordinator, Walla Walla University

“**THIS IS** every college boy’s dream,” exclaimed Chad Angasan, senior theology major at Walla Walla University (WWU). He was speaking of “The Longest Table,” an event coordinated by the Walla Walla University church, a Seventh-day Adventist congregation that includes students, faculty, and area residents in its ranks, on Sabbath, October 2.

At 6:00 that morning Fourth Street in College Place was just a street. A few cars were parked along the curb, squirrels scurried across the grass hunting for their winter store, and an early-morning walker led a dog down the sidewalk.

Then came the troops.

A team of 18 people formed an assembly line down the street. The first crew followed a truck, unloading folding tables and setting them up. They were followed by additional small groups that covered the tables with plastic tablecloths, put numbers and eight place settings on each table, and set up chairs.

“The team blew my expectations in terms of setup time,” says University church pastor Henning Guldhammer. “With all those willing hands, we got the entire thing set up in only two hours and 20 minutes.”

After the second service at the University church, a flood of people exited the

building and filled Fourth Street, friends calling out to friends as the aroma of home-cooked food filled the air.

In total, there were 176 tables stretching the two blocks, seating 1,408 people. More than that ate, however; additional tables piled high with plates and baskets of forks were made available to those who came late and couldn’t find a chair. Some stood, some sat in the shade on the grass, and others dined on office steps.

“We wanted a big blowout event that would give the university students a chance to meet church members,” explains Guldhammer. “We couldn’t have asked for a better day; the weather was beautiful, and we fed everyone.”

Food was provided by University church members. Approximately 145 people and families signed up to sponsor a table; some covering one table, others two, and one family sponsored six tables.

The food was as varied as the attendees. One table enjoyed lasagna, salad, green beans, corn, and apples. Another served vegetarian meatloaf, a potato dish, and tomatoes with basil. Some tables served water, others punch, some sparkling cider, and others juice. Desserts ranged from cookies to lemon cake to nectarine cobbler.

“I like to cook and I enjoy meeting new

people, so this event was right up my alley,” says Suzan Logan, a church member who sponsored a table with fellow member Gary Reiber. “I’d definitely do it again.”

Church members and university students weren’t the only ones who benefited from this event, however. The soccer team from Trinity Lutheran College (TLC) in Everett, Washington, scheduled to play the WWU Wolves that evening, came early to have lunch. Though they arrived after many tables had been cleared, team members were handed plates and forks and sent to the tables that still had food. They were not disappointed.

“The food was awesome,” said Aldin Tirak, a soccer team member from TLC. “I didn’t know what I wanted; there was so much of it.”

Many expressed interest in doing “The Longest Table” again next year, making it even bigger.

“It’s a lot of fun, but we need more tables,” said freshman international communications major Kindra Moore.

Guldhammer says it’s still undecided as to whether or not “The Longest Table” will happen in 2011, but he’s hopeful. “This is how we envisioned it,” he says. “What a beautiful way to start the school year.” ■



AS THE YEAR CLOSES

We express our deepest gratitude to our readers who graciously send their input and submissions for the Give & Take section of the *Adventist Review*. Your kind and timely contributions keep this segment one of the most popular in the magazine. Let's praise God together for His wonderful blessings upon the Adventist family during the year 2010. Join the excitement as we ponder some of the following comments sent in by you, dear readers!

- "Thank you for the interesting and enjoyable Give & Take page in the *Adventist Review*. After looking at the cover page, we turn to Give & Take!"

—**IONE RICHARDSON, GRESHAM, OREGON**

- "I have attached a couple of anecdotes which may be appropriate for Give & Take. This section of the *Adventist Review* is one of my favorites—I usually turn to it first."

—**DEE HALL, NIPOMO, CALIFORNIA**

- "Thank you for all the interesting things you put in the Give & Take column. You have accepted several of my submissions, and I have more to share."

—**SHARON FOLLETT, DUNLAP, TENNESSEE**

- "Thank you for the Give & Take page—the lighter side of my favorite journal, the *Adventist Review*! Blessings!"

—**LORRAINE HIRSCH OLSON, LOMA LINDA, CALIFORNIA**

SOUND BITE

"Adventists are not *fortunetellers*, but *foretellers* of the coming judgment and Christ's soon return."

—**PASTOR TOM KOPKO, IN A SERMON AT THE WEST SACRAMENTO SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN CALIFORNIA.**

POEM

The Gift

On that long ago eve in Bethlehem
Who knew what the night would bring?
But shepherds out upon the hills
Heard herald angels sing,
And Wise Men from the fabled East,
Who had seen the guiding star,
Followed it to Bethlehem,
Bringing treasures from afar.

And Mary birthed a Child that night,
He in a manger lay
Among the lowly animals
In the stable where they stayed,
With Joseph there beside her
To give them both his care,
While angels unseen hovered 'round
In answer to his prayer.

The Magi found Him lying there
Just where the star had told,
And brought their gifts of frankincense,
Of myrrh, and even gold.
And yet one wonders if they knew
The truth of what they saw
As they bowed low before the Babe
With reverence and awe.

Their gifts of gold, myrrh, frankincense
Brought to that lowly stall,
Were offered to a newborn King,
The Greatest Gift of all!

—**BRENT BALMER**

LAMAR, COLORADO



Biblical Studies

Focused and Un






BY MARCOS PASEGGI

Just imagine, for one moment, that somewhere up in the universe a reenactment of the great convention described in Job 1:6-12 is taking place. This time, however, every son of God appearing before the Lord is supposed to present a paper on a successful method or experience as seen in the lives of God's faithful followers on earth. Once more, Satan also comes along. He has not been invited, but somehow has managed to make it into the program as a last-minute addition. And he has his paper ready. Its title?

divided: A Success Story



LOOKING
PAST THE
DISTRACTIONS
TOWARD
THE **GOAL**

"Distraction by Default: A Success Story." The title is inviting, and the sons of God—though fully aware of his real intentions—decide that they will listen to what he has to say. Finally the moment arrives. Satan steps up, grinning confidently. There is many a thing the sons of God could say about him, but one thing they must concede: he knows what he is talking about.

Of Traction and *Distraction*

Among the incredible number of words English "inherited" from Latin we find the term *tract*. This word denotes, among other things, "extension or system that acts together to perform some function" and "the action of drawing, pulling." The first meaning has given rise to such terms as *digestive tract*; the second one, several related words to be used in contexts as diverse as car features (*traction*), the moon properties or human behavior (*attraction*), politics or journalism (*retraction*), and economy or chiropractic (*contraction*). It has also given us the word *distraction*; that is to say, anything that diverts our attention. The word is even used to describe a state of mental turmoil or emotional disturbance.

Yes, Satan knows very well what he is talking about. Knowing what we know, we may infer that by "distraction by default," he is referring not only to those of us who may somehow be wandering off track, but also to those who may be not even aware of it (*default* meaning "failure to comply" and "automatically made selection without proper consideration due to the lack or ignorance of a viable alternative").

Yes, we guess Satan is not talking about the wrongdoers, those recalcitrant sinners who are intent on being God's enemies here on earth. He may be talking about those forever-entry-level merry-go-round Christians, who happen to be in church, in some church institution, or even in the mission field without fully understanding what it is all about. They may be calling sinners to repentance, attending and chairing committees, or saving lives in the surgical ward, but their hearts are not in it. But for the comfort or the perks, they would rather be in some other place doing something else. And yes, we must concede that there is a fair chance that—in his carefully crafted paper—an accusing Satan may have mentioned us by name.

Christian Late Bloomers

Satan, however, is not the only one acquainted with this kind of Christian. The author of Hebrews already addressed their dilemma many centuries ago:

“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food” (Heb. 5:12).¹ Do we feel somehow included in his definition? We stay in primary school forever; we never get to college. But we feel comfortable. We are in, but not quite; we are

or perhaps we just do not care.

However, thank God, there is *Someone* who got it right.

No Sidetracking Allowed

From early childhood, Jesus understood very well His purpose and mission on earth. Ellen White says that “from His earliest years He was pos-

contemptible dreams,

Now I wash the gum from your eyes,
You must habit yourself to the dazzle of the light. . . .

Long have you timidly waded holding a plank by the shore,

Now I will you to be a bold swimmer,
To jump off in the midst of the sea.”⁵

I do not know about you, but sometimes I feel I put too much value on those decaying planks off some capsized ship that wash out along the shores of life. Though I well know that the inviting lights beyond the dark waves point to the long-desired destination I was meant and created for, I would rather stick to my rotten plank, even when I am fully aware that it is useless.

The Bible tells us that it is high time to stop thinking of that plank as a lifesaver. Take it for what it is—garbage—and put to better use those rusty biblical “swimming lessons.” It tells us that it is high time to stop window-shopping and get the real thing instead. It is high time to “lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us,” and “run with endurance that race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1).

The prize is the same for everyone, but there is one for every single man, woman, or child who goes out boldly to finish the race focused and committed, “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (verse 2). It is a prize we cannot underestimate. It is a goal we cannot afford to get distracted from. And it is the great success story that God is yearning to write for the entire universe to see. I have already made up my mind. Are you coming?

¹ Biblical quotations in this article have been taken from the New King James Version (NKJV). Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved..

² Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1898), p. 70.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 415, 416.

⁵ “Song of Myself,” section 46, from *Leaves of Grass* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1892), p. 74.

NO OTHER HUMAN BEING ON EARTH WAS SO OFTEN TEMPTED TO GET SIDETRACKED FROM HIS MISSION AS WAS JESUS DURING THE THREE AND A HALF YEARS OF HIS EARTHLY MINISTRY.

almost there, but never actually make it. There is always a *distraction*, something that gets our attention off the narrow way. As regards God’s will and ways, we suffer from spiritual ADD, though we comfort ourselves by giving it some other fancy name.

As lukewarm members of God’s army, we have unknowingly reinterpreted some of Jesus’ parables by becoming a whole new category: In the parable of the two sons (Matt. 21:28-32), we are like a hypothetical third son who willingly goes to work in the vineyard, but once he gets there decides just to sit comfortably and start plucking the grapes for his own consumption; and in the parable of the two builders (Matt. 7:24-27) we are like a hypothetical third builder who takes great pains to build on the rock just to end up fooling around in the sand before ever spending one night under his roof.

Do not get me wrong: It is not intrinsically wrong to eat some grapes or play around in the sand from time to time. As fully undivided attention and focus is humanly impossible, we need sometimes to unwind, “to come aside . . . and rest a while” (Mark 6:31). Calm and comfort are not essentially evil. But we are not supposed to ask for a week off the day before the King’s inauguration. As exhausted as we may feel because of our long-overdue redeployment against the powers of darkness, we should not ask for a much-needed vacation on the eve of the final battle. Or perhaps we are distracted by default and the fact that there is a war going on has escaped us;

sessed of one purpose; He lived to bless others.”² Moreover, by the time of His first Passover at the Temple He already knew (and reminded His parents) that He must be about His Father’s business (Luke 2:49).³

No other human being on earth was so often tempted to get sidetracked from His mission as was Jesus during the three and a half years of His earthly ministry. Call it what you will: craftily devised temptations, tricky snares, well-minded “advisors”—all of them were often a means in Satan’s hands to try to push Him off the appointed path.

On at least one occasion Satan used even one of His most beloved disciples to try to discourage and turn Him from His mission (Matt. 16:22, 23).⁴ But nothing could divert Jesus’ attention from God’s self-appointed path to the cross and the final glorification. While we often keep asking Him permission to “go and bury” our dead (Luke 9:59, 60), Jesus had always an undivided heart for His mission, namely, to bear witness to the truth by revealing the true character of God and, in so doing, saving a disgraced race for His kingdom (John 18:37). We can be thankful that He never got distracted from His purpose, not even in the heart-wrenching hours of Gethsemane or in His final hour hanging on the cross.

Plank Holders or Bold Swimmers?

The great American poet Walt Whitman penned these famous words: “Long enough have you dream’d



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“J” and “B”

IF TODAY’S MEDIA EXISTED 21 CENTURIES AGO, ALL NEWS NETWORKS WOULD

have been concentrated on the exploits of the powerful and profligate Roman Empire. It was as vast as it was vicious. The attention of the entire world was riveted on the city of seven hills as its leaders swept across nations and nobility like the ashes of recent volcanoes. Its political intrigue, racial tensions, immorality, cruelty, and military exploits occupied everyone’s conversation, much as the United States’ does today. Palestine existed under the crush of Rome’s heavy boot during the reign of Augustus, its cynical Caesar, who demanded a census to determine how much he could increase its taxes (Luke 2:1-7).

No one seemed interested in a motley crew of Jews making an 80-mile trek from Nazareth to the city of David called Bethlehem. Few, if any, cared about a man and a very pregnant peasant girl riding on a donkey. Rome was busy making history; Judeans were hustling to their city of origin when God was born in a barn to save humanity. Only angels seemed aware of it (Luke 2:8-15).

Tune to any radio station today and you’ll learn who saw mommy kissing Santa Claus last night. You’ll discover when Santa’s coming to town with Rudolf the red-nosed reindeer, past the homes of children who were naughty, to the chimneys of the nice. But there’s little mention of the birth of Mary’s Boy Child. Kris Kringel might perform a miracle on 34th Street in digitally improved old movies, but you’ll find few facts in today’s media about the incredible event when God became human and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.

Even before Thanksgiving, we were being bombarded with Christmas songs, the most persistent of which was “Jingle Bells.” A creative DJ introduced it as the “J” and “B” song. If we really want our bells to jingle this Christmas, we must remember that “J” and “B” can stand for something else—such as “Jesus” and His “blood.” While we are buying and wrapping gifts, decorating trees, and baking cakes to prepare for this very special holiday, we mustn’t forget “J” and “B.”

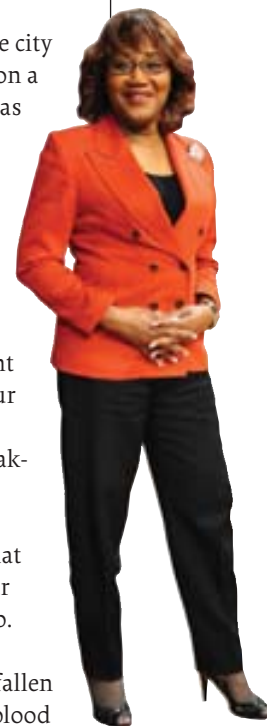
If you feel compelled to correct others who celebrate December 25 as the birth of Jesus because you know for a fact that He was actually born in the spring (March to April, 4 B.C.), don’t forget that the reason for the season is “J” and “B.” If you are distraught about Christmas trees in some of our sanctuaries, remember that Ellen White recommended this use of them (see *The Adventist Home*, pp. 482, 483). Just don’t forget: it’s all about “J” and “B.”

God became the Man Jesus to fulfill a powerful promise to save the world. He took the form of fallen humanity to enter into the bloody battle for our souls against the wiles of the devil. He shed His blood on Calvary’s tree to rescue and redeem us. So don’t forget “J” and “B.”

“J” and “B” can also stand for “Jesus” and His “Book.” The Bible is the gift that keeps giving messages of hope and answers to a planet spinning out of control. A recent Gallup poll reports that 90 percent of the homes in the United States have a Bible, but in only 14 percent are they opened. When you open your gifts Christmas morning to the heartwarming sounds of “Jingle Bells,” don’t be like the rest of the nation and forget “J” and “B.” The good news is that in this Book the Holy Trinity is well pleased with us; so don’t forget “J” and “B.”

“J” and “B” could also stand for “Jesus” and His “birth.” God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that we might be redeemed, that we might receive the adoption of sons and daughters (see John 3:16 and Gal. 4:4, 5). This holiday season when you hear “Jingle Bells,” don’t forget we wouldn’t have this season if it weren’t for “J” and “B.” May God richly bless you!

Have a safe, awesome Christmas and new year!



Hyveth
Williams

HYVETH WILLIAMS IS A PROFESSOR OF HOMILETICS AT THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

BY MARK A. FINLEY

Have the words of a song ever lifted your heart and encouraged you to face your day with new courage?

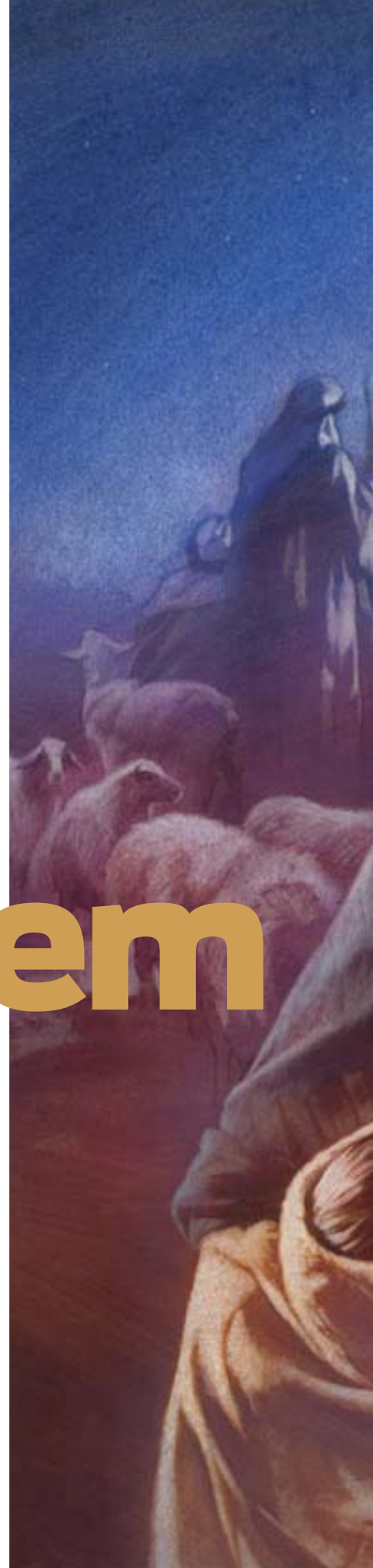
There are times God brings a song to my mind and I repeat a phrase over and over. The thoughts expressed in the music may lead me down undiscovered pathways of divine truth.

Recently Shawn Craig's song "Your Grace Still Amazes Me" sent me on a journey of discovery into the wonder of God's grace and the majesty of His love. The line in the song that so vividly impressed me is "Each time I come into Your presence, I stand in wonder once again. Your grace still amazes me."¹

I have preached messages on the wonder of Jesus' love for more than 40 years to hundreds of thousands of people internationally, yet I'm still amazed at His grace. The teachings of Jesus are amazing. His parables are amazing. His miracles are amazing.

Amazed at Bethlehem

AN EVENT THAT
SPLIT HISTORY
STILL ASTONISHES.





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When Mary and Joseph found Jesus teaching about the wonders of grace in the Temple at only the age of 12, Luke's Gospel records: "Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers" (Luke 2:47). As the disciples traveled with their Master down the dusty roads of Galilee and the cobblestoned streets of Jerusalem, they continually discovered something new and wonderful about His grace. They were amazed when Jesus delivered the demon-possessed, blind, mute beggar. Scripture records: "All the people were amazed" (Matt. 12:23, KJV). When Jesus came from the presence of God on the Mount of Transfiguration radiantly reflecting His Father's glory, "the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed" (Mark 9:15, KJV). When Jesus healed the paralytic in Capernaum, the record states: "This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this!'" (Mark 2:12).

Some of the most incredible events in Jesus' life surrounded His birth. Matthew's genealogy of Jesus, Joseph's faith, Mary's submission, and Christ's incarnation are simply amazing. Bethlehem reveals significant spiritual insights; depths of truth to mine; practical lessons of faith to learn.

Amazed at Jesus' Genealogy

Genealogies aren't usually the most interesting part of the Bible. We tend to skip over them quickly. The long lists of names about "who begat whom" can seem either daunting or downright boring. But before we pass over Jesus' genealogy too quickly, here are a few thoughts to keep in mind:

Matthew's Gospel was written to a Jewish audience to present indisputable evidence that Jesus was the Messiah. Every Jew was interested in his or her pedigree. A person's genealogy was an essential part of his or her life. The Jews placed extreme importance on the purity of one's lineage. The Sanhedrin kept impeccably accurate records of each Jewish leader's genealogy.

Jesus' genealogy ends with these

significant words: “Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile in Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ” (Matt. 1:17). Christ’s genealogy summarizes three great stages of Jewish history.

The first 14 generations lead us from Abraham through the rise of Israel to the nation’s greatest king, David. These are Israel’s glory days. The pinnacle of Israel’s history was David’s reign. The next 14 generations take us from David through Israel’s shame and defeat to the Babylonian Captivity. This is the period of bondage. The last 14 generations guide us to Israel’s Messiah or Deliverer, Jesus Christ. This is the time of liberation.

Matthew’s genealogy is really the story of the plan of salvation in three stages. The human race was created in the “image of God,” destined for greatness. We are not now what we were created to be. Through our own free choice we have rebelled against our Maker. The Fall brought guilt, shame, and condemnation. It resulted in disease, disaster, and death.

Even then God didn’t abandon us. He didn’t leave us to our own folly; He provided a way of escape. Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, was born as a babe in Bethlehem’s manger; He entered this pit of a world filled with selfishness and greed and revealed the Father’s heart. He is our liberator. He sets the captives free. Commentator William Barclay explains the genealogy of Jesus in these words: “In his genealogy Matthew shows us the royalty of kingship gained; the tragedy of freedom lost; the glory of liberty restored. And that, in the mercy of God, is the story of [humankind], and of each individual [man and woman].”²

Matthew then did the unthinkable in Jesus’ amazing genealogy: He included four women. It’s unusual to find women’s names recorded in Jewish lines of lineage. And look at the women Matthew included:

There’s Tamar, Judah’s daughter-in-law, the widow who pretended to be a harlot, seduced Judah, and bore twins by him.



IN BETHLEHEM WE DISCOVER THAT THE ESSENCE OF LIFE IS **GIVING**, NOT GETTING.

There’s Rahab, the harlot of Jericho, who delivered the spies in the days of Joshua.

Add to this Ruth, the Moabite. She wasn’t even a Jew. She belonged to a foreign and hated people. How could she possibly be included in the genealogy of Jesus?

Last, there’s Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, the object of David’s adultery. Together David and Bathsheba bore Solomon.

This is no list of respected women from well-known Jewish families who were paragons of virtue. What is Matthew’s intention? The Gospel writer is speaking of the wonder of grace. God’s love revealed in Bethlehem’s manger includes us all—male and female, Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, well known and unknown. Here gathered around the cradle of the Messiah at the birth of Christ we find enough grace for us all.

That’s pretty amazing; but it’s just the beginning of the story. We must further consider the three central figures in the story: Joseph, Mary, and the Christ child.

Amazed at Joseph’s Faith

Think of the thoughts that must have raced through Joseph’s mind when he discovered that Mary was pregnant. He must have been astonished, confused, and bewildered. The Scripture declares that “Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph” (Matt. 1:18).

What exactly does this mean? In those days in Jewish society there were actually three steps to consummate a marriage. First, there was engagement. Typically parents chose the marriage partner for their son or daughter. Parental parties would agree that their children would one day marry. This contract between the two families when the boy and girl were young was termed engagement. The engagement could be broken if the girl eventually refused to marry.

The engagement was followed by a betrothal. The couple now formally accepted the engagement and entered into one year of betrothal. During this year the couple was committed to marriage. In a sense they functioned as husband and wife, although they did not yet enter into the privileges of a married couple. If the betrothal bond was broken, the couple had to file for a legal divorce.

After the one-year betrothal the man and woman sealed their love and commitment in the wedding ceremony. Now they were free to enter into the privileges of marriage as they consummated their relationship on their wedding night. It was a great embarrassment for the family if a woman became pregnant during the betrothal period. It was a shame both for the family and for the couple.

That’s precisely why Joseph was quietly seeking the necessary legal divorce, or way out of the marriage contract, when the angel appeared and explained, “Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (verses 20, 21).

Joseph's response is amazing. "When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife" (verse 24). Joseph trusted God and did exactly what God asked him to do.

That's precisely what faith is all about. Faith is trusting God and doing what He says. It's not based on some sentimental, emotional feeling; it's grounded in His Word. Faith is based on evidence, but that evidence always leaves room for doubt. If there was no room for doubt, there would be no need for faith. C. S. Lewis put it this way: "The grounds for belief and disbelief are the same today as they were two thousand . . . years ago. If . . . Joseph had lacked faith to trust God or humility to perceive the holiness of his spouse, he could have disbelieved in the miraculous origin of her Son as easily as any modern man; and any modern man who believes in God can accept the miracle as easily as Joseph did."³

As in our minds we come to Bethlehem to view the Christ child the words of the angel to Joseph speak to our hearts: "You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." By faith we grasp the reality of Christ's grace. By faith we understand the majesty of His love. By faith we accept the purpose of His mission. By faith, in His presence, we realize that our hopes and dreams are fulfilled in Him and we stand amazed.

Amazed at Mary's Submission

If Joseph was perplexed at the angel's announcement, Mary must have been absolutely astonished when the angel appeared to her and declared, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you" (Luke 1:28). The record affirms that she was "greatly troubled," (verse 29).

The angel continued, "You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his

kingdom will never end" (verses 31-33).

Imagine Mary's thoughts. *Could this really be happening? How could I become pregnant with the Messiah? I've never known a man. How will I explain this to my parents? I'll be a laughingstock in Nazareth.*

The angel continued: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God" (verse 35).

Mary's response is classic. It echoes through the centuries and speaks to us today. "'I am the Lord's servant,'" Mary answered. 'May it be to me as you have said'" (verse 38).

Essentially Mary responded, *Lord, I don't understand all of this. I am confused. I don't have all the answers. I don't even understand what questions to ask. But if this is Your will, I accept it.*

Mary's submission is an amazing thing. She said, "Whatever God says, I will do." As William Barclay described it, "Mary had learned to forget the world's commonest prayer—'Thy will be *changed*'—and to pray the world's greatest prayer—'Thy will be *done*.'"⁴

At Bethlehem's manger we stand amazed at a teenage girl, Mary, totally committed to doing God's will, whatever it took. Our faith is increased, and in our imagination we have to kneel on the straw in submission.

Amazed at Jesus' Incarnation

The most amazing fact about Bethlehem is the Baby in the manger. God chose to reveal Himself among the animals in a stable. God chose to speak to the human race in the innocence, gentleness, and helplessness of a baby. The Creator of the universe identifies with His creation. The King of kings dwells in human flesh and is born in a stinky, smelly stable. He comes to reveal the Father's love. He comes to face the temptations of Satan head-on. He comes to live and die for us. He comes to bear the condemnation and guilt of our sins. He comes to die the death that is ours so that we can live the life that is His. He comes to hang on the cross in shame so that we can sit with Him upon

His throne in glory. Love knows no other way.

Ellen White wrote: "The King of glory stooped low to take humanity. Rude and forbidding were His earthly surroundings. His glory was veiled, that the majesty of His outward form might not become an object of attraction. He shunned all outward display. Riches, worldly honor, and human greatness can never save a soul from death; Jesus purposed that no attraction of an earthly nature should call men to His side. Only the beauty of heavenly truth must draw those who would follow Him."⁵

There in Bethlehem, in that baby lying in the straw, we too discover that the essence of life is giving, not getting. Life takes on new meaning as our hands are unselfishly open to give, not selfishly reaching out to grasp for more.

"The story of Bethlehem is an exhaustless theme," wrote Ellen White. "In it is hidden 'the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God,' Rom. 11:33. We marvel at the Savior's sacrifice in exchanging the throne of heaven for the manger, and the companionship of adoring angels for the beasts of the stall. Human pride and self-sufficiency stand rebuked in His presence."⁶

At Bethlehem we fall on our knees to worship our Savior once again. Like Joseph we kneel in faith, believing. Like Mary we kneel in submission, surrendering. With millions from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people we kneel in adoration, amazed.

¹ By Connie Harrington and Shawn Craig © 2001, Ariose Music/PraiseSong Press/BMG Songs.

² William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of Matthew*, (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), vol. 1, p. 14.

³ C. S. Lewis, *Miracles* (London & Glasgow: Collins/Fontana, 1947, revised 1960), pp. 76, 77.

⁴ William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of Luke* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), vol. 1, p. 7.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif., Pacific Press, 1898), p. 43.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 48, 49.



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What Can We Give to Jesus?



MOSAIC IN THE BASILICA OF SANT'APOLLINARE. PHOTO BY NINA ALDIN THUNE

BY ELLEN G. WHITE

The Lord Jesus Christ came to our world as a helpless babe. He was born in Bethlehem, and the angel announced to the shepherds as they watched over their flocks by night, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly

host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

The Redeemer of the world might have come attended by ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of angels; but instead of this He clothed His divinity with humanity, made Himself of no reputation, took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. . . .

He Became Poor So We Can Be Rich

Jesus, the world's Redeemer, submitted to humiliation that we might have hope. For our sake He became poor, that through His merits we might be entitled to imperishable riches. . . .

Let us look upon the Majesty of heaven as He shrouded His glory in the form of a child, and was cradled in a manger. But though He was so lowly born, so humbly circumstanced, angels bowed in adoration before the Babe of Bethlehem, without forfeiting their place in the courts of God or marring their allegiance to the Deity.

The Babe of Bethlehem, though the King of glory, was not entrusted to wealthy parents. His was a lowly lot. When presented in the Temple, His parents could not offer anything but the offering of the poor,—a pair of turtle doves or young pigeons. This offering was made in behalf of the child Jesus; yet when Simeon took Him in his arms,

the Holy Spirit fell upon him, and he knew the Lord's Anointed, and he blessed God. . . .

Story of Jesus Never Old

The story of the birth and childhood of Jesus never loses its fragrance and interest, and it should be often repeated to the children and youth. . . . The Lord will give to the praying mother the wisdom and grace she needs to instruct and interest her little ones in the precious old story of the babe born in Bethlehem, who is indeed the hope of the world. . . .

It is the first duty of parents to make the precious truths of salvation very plain and simple and attractive to their children. They should ever seek for the best way in which to lead their children to trust in Jesus as their personal Savior, to love Him, to deny self for His sake, and to do good to those around them in His name. The first precept from their earliest years should be, Give your heart to Jesus; live to please Him. Do not live simply to amuse and gratify yourself; but live to honor Jesus, who has loved you, and given Himself for you. . . .

Bring Gifts to Jesus

We should bring gifts to Jesus, as did the wise men when they found the Lord of glory. They had been studying the prophecies, and they knew that the time was fulfilled, and that Jesus had come to be the Savior of men. Guided by a star, they journeyed to Jerusalem, and all along the way they were inquiring, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."

The wise men have left us an example of what we should do. Jesus should be the object of our adoration, the recipient of our gifts. It is not man, but our Redeemer, that should be honored. To Him we should offer our praise and

gifts and treasures; but instead of this, the world sets its treasures flowing in the channel of self-gratification, and to the honor of men. Christmas gifts are bestowed on our children, on our friends and relatives, and few think of what they can do to show their love and gratitude to God for His great love and compassion upon them.

In celebrating Christmas, fathers, mothers, children, and friends are diverted from the great object to which

"JESUS SHOULD BE THE RECIPIENT OF OUR GIFTS."

the custom is attributed. They give their whole attention to the bestowal of gifts upon one another, and their minds are turned away from the contemplation of the Source of all their blessings both spiritual and temporal. In their attention to gifts and honors bestowed upon themselves or their friends, Jesus is unhonored and forgotten. Parents should seek to teach their children to honor Jesus. They should be instructed how He came to the world to bring light, to shine amid the moral darkness of the world. They should be impressed with the fact that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Show Him Honor

We are dependent upon Christ for both spiritual and temporal blessings; we should especially remember the world's Redeemer on those days in which others forget Him in pleasing one another, in festivity and careless mirth. We should show special honor to Him in whom our hope of eternal life is centered. Through all the year parents should be educating their children as to how they may honor Jesus in their gifts. They should instruct them that Christ came to the world to save perishing sinners, and that instead of spending money for needless ornaments, for can-

dies and knickknacks to gratify the taste, they should deny themselves for Christ's sake, that they may offer to Him an expression of their love. The theme of Christ's amazing love can be so presented to your children that the little ones will be lost in wonder and love, and their hearts will be melted at the story of Calvary. Tell the children and youth that Jesus died to save them, that He wants them to give to Him their young lives that they may be His obedient children, and be saved from ruin.

Christ will be pleased to see that the children and the youth, whom He loves, also love Him, and He will accept their gifts and offerings to be used in His cause. From the denial of self in children and youth, many little streams may flow into the treasury of the Lord, and missionaries may be sent out through their gifts to bring light to the heathen, who bow down to gods of wood and stone. Home missionaries also may be assisted, and there are poor who are suffering and needy, who may be blessed with the gifts of the children. Christ identifies His interest with that of His children. He says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Brethren and sisters, what are you going to bring to Jesus as an offering of love? What will you render unto the Lord for all His benefits? Will you show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light, or will you devote your time and money to self and to pleasure seeking, as though self were the great object of attraction? O, may the coming Christmas be the best one you have ever enjoyed, because you have brought gifts to Jesus, and given yourselves and your all without reservation to Him who has given all for you.



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ADVENTISTS BELIEVE THAT **ELLEN G. WHITE** (1827-1915) EXERCISED THE BIBLICAL GIFT OF PROPHECY DURING MORE THAN 70 YEARS OF PUBLIC MINISTRY.



BY LOWELL C. COOPER

Someone Else's Child

A UNIQUE LOOK
AT JOSEPH

This article was first presented as a worship talk at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists on December 22, 2009.—Editors.

Misfortune fell on Miss B. This elegant, educated, and erudite young woman had just finished her elementary education degree at the city college. Through the luck of the sponsorship lottery she landed a job teaching a class of third and fourth graders in a one-store, three-grain-elevator, no-barbershop town on the prairies of western Canada. It was not the preferred environment for someone accustomed to art and literature and music. Her classroom was filled with 28 “country bumpkins”—hayseed in their hair, dirt in their fingernails, and the smell of barnyard on their boots.

So one can imagine it was with a bit of apprehension that she agreed to the school principal's request for her class to participate in the annual school Christmas program. They were to reenact scenes from the Christmas story.

The cast of characters in the Christmas story must be a producer's dream. There's room for every talent and idiosyncrasy from the wise and the simple to the cunning and the crafty to the wanderers and the wonderers.

Miss B chose Marjorie* to play the part of Mary—petite Marjorie, who was quiet and shy, with a countenance of innocence in the classroom but a rather different character on the playground.

When Miss B asked who wanted to be the Wise Men, every boy put up his hand. Few had distinguished themselves in this classification, so she

just selected at random: Warren, Matt, Raymond.

Then there were shepherds and a chorus of angels—all girls, of course. Wayne became the innkeeper; Arlene was a shining star; Larry, who couldn't remember his lines, acted the role of Herod; Leslie, who had not yet built a secure foundation as a scholar, was the donkey. The rest of the class became sheep.

In rechecking her list, Miss B discovered that no one had been selected for the part of Joseph. The arms of a kid at the back of the room flailed wildly to grab her attention. She asked, “Lowell, would you be willing to play the part of Joseph?” With those words she rescued him from being a sheep.

The role of Joseph actually is not difficult. There are no speeches to make, no songs to sing, no lines to memorize. It's basically a supporting role. Joseph is close to Mary but never in the spotlight; instead, he hangs around its edge.

The hardest part for Joseph in Miss B's class pageant was to hold Mary's hand. The polarization of the genders is at its most extreme for people in grades 3 and 4. It's generally a passing thing—well-nigh extinct by grade 6. But in grades 3 and 4 the entire atmosphere is fully charged with repulsion. Thus, when Miss B asked Joseph to take Mary by the hand, the Wise Men broke out into raucous laughter. Apart from this great indignity, however, the role of Joseph is rather benign. Basically, it involves being there and looking a bit overwhelmed by all else that happens.

Only many years later it began to dawn on me that the real Joseph didn't have it quite so easy. Contrasted with the role of Joseph I played as a



youth in that pageant, the real Joseph was involuntarily sucked up, so to speak, into the vortex of cosmic history. Great events that form the watershed of time took place in his day, in his home, and with his family.

Joseph as Mentor and Model

Maybe it's the experience of being an adult and a parent or just the fruit of reflection that lifts Joseph from relative obscurity to a mentor and model for life's journey even today. Four ways stand out in which this man sets an enduring example:

1 Joseph made a marriage out of what looked like a mess. He protected Mary, who was the most vulnerable in the situation, and in doing so he took upon himself the ridicule and suspicion of a skeptical crowd. People then, as now, observed no limits to their gossip. One can easily imagine how, for the sake of laughter, they distorted Joseph and Mary's explanation of her pregnancy. People hung in little groups on the street corners. When they saw Joseph coming, they would whisper to each other, "Here comes the holy ghost." Loud guffaws broke out within his hearing. Joseph endured the pain and rejection so that the vulnerability of Mary could not be exploited. What an example for today!

2 Following Jesus' birth, Joseph obeyed God by going to Egypt even though he didn't understand the big picture. The record seems to imply that he didn't take the time to reason this out for himself; he simply got up and obeyed (see Matt. 2). How does one come to know the voice of God so well that it's recognized and obeyed, even when it goes counter to human intuition and logic? Does it not seem to us here and now that when people speak about the call of God in their lives, it's virtually always a call that's aligned fully with their intuitions, inclinations, and ambitions? Who can recognize the voice of God when it's entirely contrary to human rationalizations? Joseph did. How I wish I could. We speak of the dignity and depth of Abraham's response to

God. It seems that Joseph's response is similar. Abraham is called to give up a son. Joseph is called to accept a Son who is not his own—and this Son is the reason for so many changes in Joseph's life.

3 Joseph performed a father's role for a Son who was not his own. He passed on to "Someone else's Child" the traditions and trade of his time. Though the biblical record is relatively silent, we must not conclude that life at home had no huge impact on young Jesus. Today we hear of so many children who reach adulthood with the imprint and impact of their fathers. Often these people carry the baggage of faulty father images and try to navigate through life with a disfigured self-image.

The physical shape of the body, the color of the eyes, the slant of the nose, the curls or wiry hair, are all factors of heredity—the imprint in our DNA of characteristics from our ancestors. But families create heredity also. It's passed on (sometimes subconsciously) through routines repeated again and again. The way we celebrate special occasions, our attitudes toward others, our favorite foods—these are usually rooted in family customs. In the course of growing up, a daughter learns to speak just like her mother, a son walks and laughs like his father. Family values are communicable. Family environments have a huge role in shaping the trajectory of our lives. Sam Levinson (1911-1980), an American humorist, television host, and journalist, surely in jest claimed that even insanity is hereditary: you can get it from your children.

Joseph saw in Jesus "Someone else's Child." How would our families, our communities, our churches be different today if we all could see one another as "Someone else's child"? What does it mean to see your children, your own flesh and blood, as children of God? To see your neighbor, your colleague, or your adversary in this light?

4 Joseph gave to Jesus the best he could and then released Him to a higher calling. From Joseph (as well as from Mary) Jesus learned to recognize the voice of God. This is perhaps the most delicate

duty of parents—to let their children develop their own identity in response to God. Perhaps it's not so strong a tradition today as in Joseph's day—but we still see plenty of evidence of parents who strive to make their children into little images of Mom and Dad. How did Jesus navigate the rebellious phase of adolescence when individuals see their identity more often in contrast to their parents rather than in sync with them?

Might it be that Joseph recognized that Jesus was not his to restrain, but his to release to a life uniquely His own? He gave Jesus what he could—an example of humble integrity, a trade with which to make His way in the world, and an appetite to hear and follow the voice of God. Could Joseph be a role model for fathers today?

Time Again for the Christmas Story

The Christmas story is told and retold each time this season of the year rolls round. There's a danger that it might become common and ordinary—an aesthetic backdrop to the busyness of our lives and the incessant demands of so many things that command and demand our time and attention.

But if we will listen intentionally to every fresh telling of the story, we'll find a mystery and a majesty to enlighten our pathway. And even those who serve as "supporting cast members" in the grand narrative of God can show us timeless virtue and saintly character.

* Names in this article have been changed to protect identities.



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Breaking the Huddle

“MAX! YOU’RE STARTING QUARTERBACK; YOU’RE NOT SUPPOSED TO BE late!” Coach Osborne says emphatically. “You know the drill, son. That’ll be 100 push-ups.”

Each Monday Coach Osborne meets with his football team to review its previous game and game plan for the next team on the schedule. The get-togethers aren’t too long—usually about two hours—but, needless to say, Coach puts a strong emphasis on punctuality.

During the first hour of the meeting the team breaks into position groups with the assistant coaches. Linebackers, quarterbacks, and wide receivers—each unit splits off to review its past performance and work on improving going forward. For the team this is the time it focuses on refining the individual skills that will help it function better as a collective unit.

The last hour of the meeting is typically a presentation by Coach Osborne, although one of the assistant coaches sometimes fills in. During this time Coach addresses the team on a particular topic of importance, ranging from ball security to the fundamentals of tackling (sometimes this section of the meeting goes long; and though the team complains a little among themselves, they realize Coach has their best interests at heart).

Though Monday’s team meetings set the tone for the week, the onus is on the players themselves to continually review their plays, eat nutritiously, and stay in game shape over the course of the next six days. Some of the players work in small groups during the week—holding each other accountable as they prepare for the next challenge.

Finally it’s here—game day. The fanfare is majestic: cheerleaders have the team’s logo painted on their blush-colored cheeks, while 85,000 zealous fans pack the stadium and cover their bodies with Eagles paraphernalia. When the team walks onto the field, it seems as if the whole universe is watching; and thanks to satellite dishes, that’s not far from the truth.

The Eagles get the ball first on the 20-yard line. The quarterback, a six-foot-five-inch natural with a cannon for an arm, leads the offense onto the field. Looking over to the sideline, he interprets the hand signals from the coaching staff and calls the first play of the game. “67 fake, zip post.”

The play comes as no surprise to the team—it’s been practicing it all week. As the clock winds down, the crowd anticipates the action. Yet, as if paused by a remote control, the team stays in its circular formation.

The other team is ready; in fact, they can’t wait to engage the offense. But the Eagles just stand there, trapped inside the huddle. Not even an energized stadium of their most enthusiastic fans can encourage the team to leave the safety of their own company.

In But Not Of

Absurd, right? To think of a football team standing still in their huddle for four quarters—unwilling to face the other team and put into action the plays it’s spent so much time learning.

But aren’t we sometimes guilty of doing the exact same thing?

Oh, we practice; we practice a lot. We have church, Sabbath school, prayer meetings, camp meetings, board meetings—pretty much every kind of meeting. But how often do we implement the things in practice we have learned in theory?

I’m part of a Bible study group that’s been meeting on Monday nights for the past two years. We have a great time reading God’s Word and sharing our struggles in a safe environment. However, lately we’ve realized we’re missing half the equation. Now, each Tuesday night our group participates in a food distribution program at the Bakersfield homeless shelter. We share food, time, and prayer with people in great need of each.

In my own life I’ve realized that I have a lot of theoretical knowledge that isn’t being used to impact others.

It’s time to change that. It’s time to break the huddle.

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**Jimmy
Phillips**

BY MAYWALD JESUDASS

THE MORE
IT'S USED,
THE MORE
PRICELESS IT
BECOMES.

The Precious Gift

After being a pastor and teacher for 11 years, I decided to become a lay preacher. Interestingly, the country in which I found employment had stringent laws against proselytizing. In fact, giving away religious literature was prohibited. Fortunately, the practice of religion itself was protected by the government.

In the months that followed my relocation, I fell in love with the people of that gentle, peace-loving nation. I often thought that if only it embraced Jesus, this nation could be a catalyst for peace and prosperity in a volatile region of the world. I asked God to give me opportunities to represent Him and to present Jesus to the people I met.

The Gift That Keeps Giving

I felt someone standing beside me. I looked up and saw Zainab. She asked, “What are you reading? You seem so engrossed.”

I showed her the cover of my pocket-sized Bible. Her eyes brightened. She whispered, “Some of my friends have read the Bible; they say it’s a good book.”

“I draw daily strength from this Book,” I replied. “It’s filled with hope; it’s the best road map one can have.”

Our conversation was curtailed by the clock; it was time for the next period. Before we rushed off in different directions, Zainab asked, “Can I borrow your Bible sometime?”

Surprised, I asked if she wanted one of her own. She said, “Every time we have department parties and exchange gifts, I hoped I would get yours.” This came as an even bigger surprise; I hadn’t known anyone had thought that. “We all know you always give a Bible as a gift,” she said. “Unfortunately, I’ve never exchanged gifts with you.”

In that department there were 21 faculty members. Apart from two Christians and three Hindus, all the others were Muslim. One hundred percent of our 2,300 students were Muslim. During weekdays, for eight to 10 hours, my world was black and white—young women in long, black abayas and young men in white dishdashas.

Again I asked Zainab, “Would you like to own a Bible?”

She quickly answered, “I don’t mind paying for it.”

Two days later I gave Zainab the gift she wanted. She received it thankfully and held it with reverence. Afterward I sat in my office and prayed, “Father, thank You for giving me another opportunity to share Your Word. Let it touch Zainab for eternity.”

That day, the day after, weeks later, even after six months I saw her carefully leafing through the pages of the Scriptures to satisfy her spiritual hunger. Although I offered to help her understand the Bible better, she never came to me with queries. I’m sure the Holy Spirit befriended her and was guiding her into the truth.

A Little Step Forward

I returned from summer break to find the atmosphere in the faculty room electrifying. Older faculty conversed with renewed spirit; and newly recruited faculty eagerly sought to make connections.

Within 30 minutes Zainab came to my cubicle and excitedly reported, “This summer we went to Germany. One evening my husband and I walked past a church. I told him I had to go inside, just to see. Confused, my husband stood quietly outside while

friends who can give me the Book. If you don’t sell me one, where else can I get one?” Disappointment was written across his face when I came into sight.

I walked up to the tall young stranger and introduced myself. He extended his hand in friendship, but did not give me

“I HOPE YOUR ADOPTED FRIEND IS NOT AN INTELLIGENCE OFFICER.”

I tiptoed softly into the church.

“All my senses were alert as I inhaled the atmosphere of the architecture and the furnishings. It was a powerful, indescribable experience. I felt the presence of God. Someone seemed to speak to the storms in my life, and they were stilled. I was bubbling with joy and felt drawn to God’s embrace.”

That summer Zainab seemed to have grown in the knowledge of the Word. I’m positive that the One who began the good work in her will finish it.

An Opportunity, or a Trap?

Sabbath is truly a day of rest and rejoicing. Unfortunately, many believers are forced to work on Sabbath, as if it were any other day of the week.

One Sabbath between Sabbath school and the worship service, I went downstairs to the restroom. I heard two men talking. The conversation seemed intense.

“Brother, I’ll say it again,” said one voice. “The Bible Society strictly follows the laws of the nation. We can sell Bibles only to Christians. If you have Christian friends, ask them to give you a Bible.”

“I want to study the Bible,” said the other voice. “But I have no Christian

his name. This was unusual in a culture that asks about even the animals within your gates.

“Will you accept me as your friend?” I asked. “I want to give you a Bible.”

He hugged me and said, “Thank you, thank you. You are more than a friend; you are my brother.”

I asked the salesman to give my new-found brother the best, easiest-to-read Bible he had.

With gratitude and reverence the man accepted my gift and soon drove away.

About 10 minutes later I was called into the office of the Bible Society director. “Pastor, I understand your zeal to reach the locals,” she said. “Two months ago my husband was deported because he was carrying religious materials. I hope your adopted friend is not an intelligence officer.” Secret police often disguise themselves to investigate the violation of religious laws.

Was I in trouble? On my way home I submitted my fears to God. I was afraid of imprisonment, of deportation, of losing my employment, of being barred from reentering that country and working with those in the region, of jeopardizing our Adventist presence and our freedom of Christian worship. I wondered whether my “friend” was truly seeking the truth.

I prayed, “Father, even if he is an

agent, reveal Yourself to him. Show him that Jesus is his Savior, and that the Bible is the true Word of God. Pour upon him a desire to read the Scriptures. Let your Word lighten his path.” I didn’t want to be deported. So I told the Lord, “You asked me to give Scriptures. I’ll do it as long as You keep me in the country.”

The Lord kept His part of the deal. I stayed in that country for as long as I wanted, and God gave me many opportunities to give the good gift.

For all occasions, for any age group, across all religions and seasons, I recommend that good gift, so that His Word will go to many.



MAYWALD JESUDASS CONTINUES TO MAKE FRIENDS AND SHARE THE WORD SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

What Do You Think?

1. What is it about the Bible that leads some people to risk their lives to read it and to share it?
2. Is the Bible more lightly regarded where it is easily accessible? If so, why?
3. If you had to do without a Bible, what would you miss most?
4. What indicates how highly you regard the Bible? How many copies you have? How much you read it? How seriously you try to live by its values?

Tidings of Love and Support

CHRISTMAS BREAK, AND I WAS HOME FROM COLLEGE. I HAD ARRIVED THE

night before to a warm house, warm hugs, and a nice, warm, home-cooked meal. A mere 24 hours later had me searching for my scarf and gloves as my mom, brother, and I got ready to visit my uncle. Discovering the errant gloves, I joined the other two on the short walk to the Buick parked in the driveway. Once we'd reach our destination, the walk ahead of us would be long—and chilly.

Navigating her way into a dark lot littered with yesterday's news and bottles of broken dreams, my mom put the car in park. She turned the engine off. She bowed her head for a moment and sighed deeply. She flipped the key from the ignition, grabbed her purse, and exited the vehicle. My brother and I glanced at each other before we fumbled out to follow. My mom had been here before. Several times. He and I had not.

The three of us trudged down a mile-long sidewalk. Air puffed from our noses and mouths as we hoofed it toward the intensely illuminated brick building ahead. As we walked we passed similarly garbed figures standing statue-still on the flat, grassed "courtyard" area before the tall edifice. Occasionally the people spread there would twist and crank their hands in an odd form of sign language, communicating with their loved ones inside who were peering out of tiny windows.

The interior of the building was as bleak as the exterior. Gray-green walls, rows of plastic molded chairs, and about 40 other persons were our company as we checked in and waited for entrance.

A range of memories and feelings swarmed me as I perched on a seat. Sadness, resignation, anger, fear. I slanted my eyes toward my brother. *In junior high*, I thought with indignation, *and he's having to visit our uncle in prison!* I knew both of us felt that we should support our mother—and show love toward our incarcerated relative—but I was angry with my uncle for putting us in this position, in this place.

Sadness also warred within me as I remembered all the good times. Before. Then I remembered when he'd come home drunk or high. Or when he filched my mom's checkbook to support the addictive habits that had consumed him. I felt resigned to the fact that my mother needed us, tonight of all nights, the day before Christmas Eve. And I was afraid. What would he look like in his orange suit? Who would he be? How would it be to talk on the phone I thought I'd only ever see on TV?

My mom had explained how her brother had turned himself in years after a crime—once he'd gotten clean. He was convinced God was telling him to confess. The courts were not lenient, and this repentant man was tossed into a cell. A small room in which he read his Bible, wrote reams on theology, and preached to cellmates. My mom would visit him every couple of weeks. She'd lovingly mail him a few dollars too, on occasion, so he could buy pencils and cigarettes, which he used to barter for other things. I wondered: *How does she do it? How can she look at her brother like this, visit him here? How could she forgive him?* I didn't think I could do the same.

Our Christmas visit was brief. The three of us talked into the phone and exchanged pleasantries of a sort. To my relief, the kind brown eyes of my uncle peered at me through thick glass as I told him about school. Still a bit on edge, I told him I'd pray for him. We said goodbye. As we stood and were herded to the exit, coats zipped again, I saw my mom's wobbly smile. She whispered a thank-you to us. My brother and I looked at each other, at her, and shrugged our shoulders.

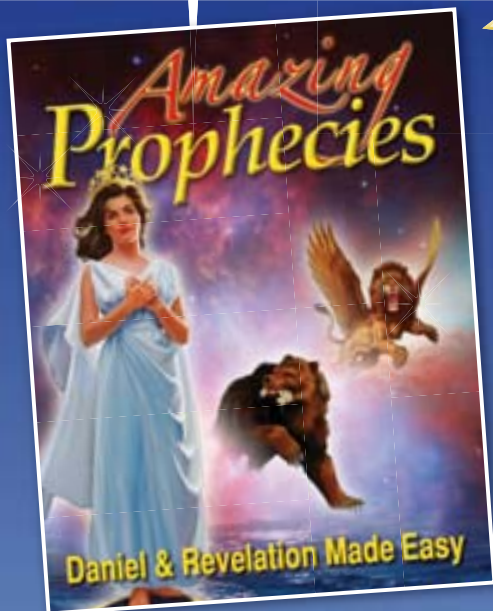
Pondering, I looked at my brother again. And knew that, yes, I would do the same.



KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN IS YOUNG ADULT EDITOR OF *ADVENTIST REVIEW*.

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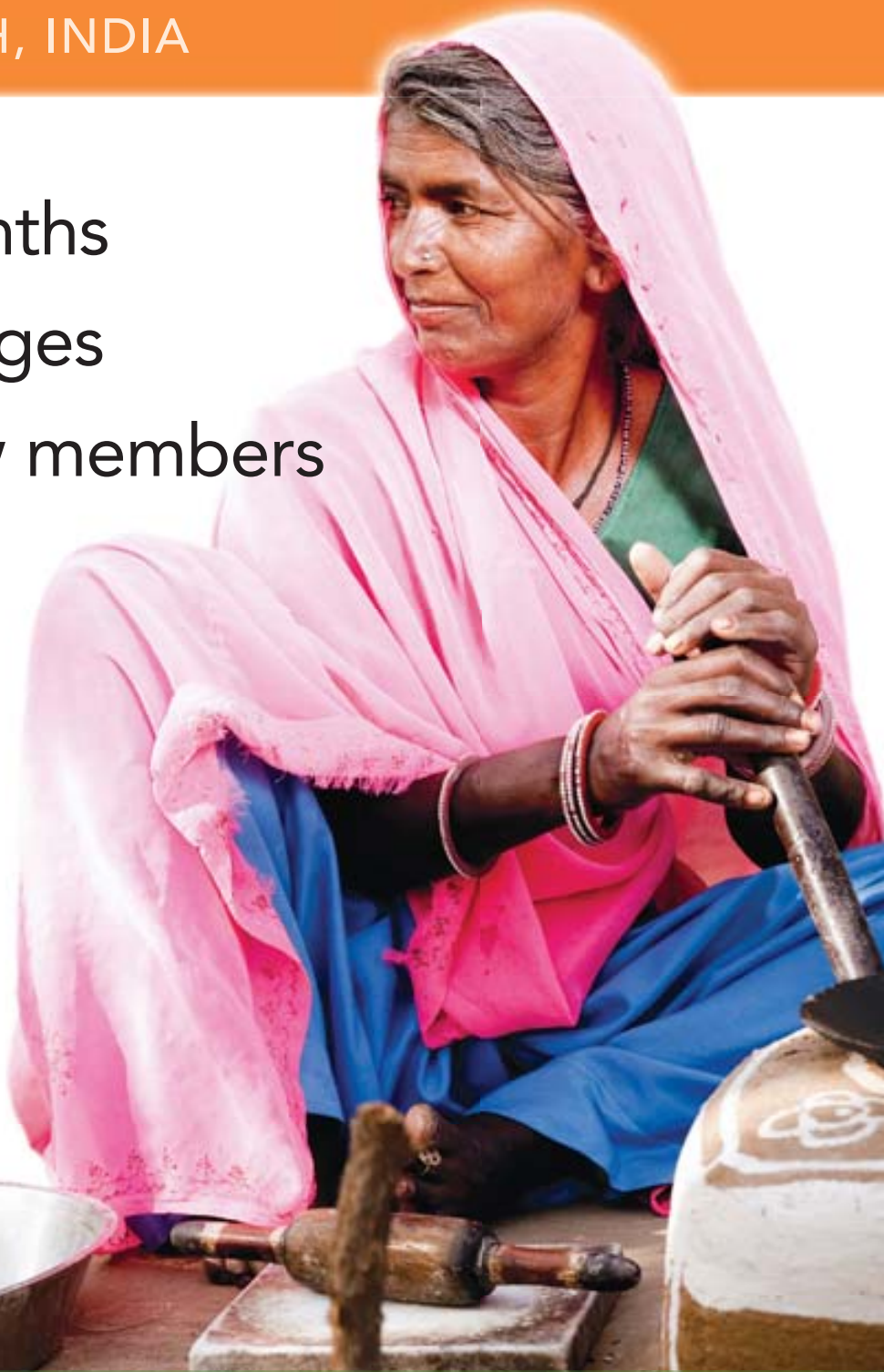
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