

February 2010

ADVENTIST WORLD



Connecting *With* JESUS



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WORLD VIEW

Staying Awake

The pillow on which I lay my head each night is a wonderful thing—generously long, pleasantly soft, and filled with a synthetic fiber that suitably imitates the feathers plumping my grandfather’s pillow. And while the press of work means that I sometimes don’t spend enough time with my head actually on it, it admirably performs its function, providing me with comfort and support for six or seven hours each night. I like my pillow: indeed, after experiencing the ones offered at some of the hotels I visit in my travels, I could even say I love my pillow.

But I don’t bring it to church with me.

That’s hardly surprising, given that the experience of worshipping with other believers ought to be one in which I find it hard to go to sleep. The environment of faith expects me to be fully and reverently alert. Paul reminds us, “And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed” (Rom. 13:11).

When I meet with other believers—to hear the Word preached, to study Scripture, to pray for revival, to plan for mission—comfort shouldn’t be the chief consideration. I

expect my pastor to remind me of the lateness of the hour, that my friends will invite me to stay awake with them and pray, that my heart will be challenged by a repeating call to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. I expect reminders to “be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

So it is that I applaud my church—the worldwide fellowship of Seventh-day Adventists—for the initiative called “Connecting With Jesus” featured in this month’s edition. Distributing the heaven-inspired messages found in the Spirit of Prophecy will ready this people for the unprecedented times of stress and difficulty that Scripture predicts will accompany the last days of human history. The ministry of Ellen White expressed in these volumes will call us back to Bible study, to repentance, to a deeper awareness of the power of the indwelling Christ, and to a special urgency in reaching those who haven’t yet connected with Jesus.

The greater comfort for God’s people will be found, not in sleep, but in knowing that they have placed themselves securely in the center of His will.

— BILL KNOTT

WORLD REPORT

North America Challenged to Plant as Many Churches as There Are McDonald’s

■ “We need many new church plants in our division to reach different types of people,” said Don Schneider in his opening comments to attendees of the North American Division Committee year-end meetings November 5. Schneider, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, shared inspiring stories of how evangelism, personal witnessing, and church plants are leading people to Jesus.

“It’s working,” said Schneider. “We’ve had more baptisms this year

than we’ve had in years. And more people like Jeannie Ramos are reaching out to their communities through the ministry of church planting.”

In 2003 Ramos helped start a church plant called FaithStep in Hagerstown, Maryland. “Our goal was to reach the down and out,” said Ramos. “Some of the people who attend are homeless, and many struggle with addictions.”

In an interview with Ramos, Schneider laughed as he recalled her being concerned about his visiting



PRAYING FOR POWER: After inviting NAD year-end meeting attendees to pray for the Holy Spirit’s power in opening new churches, division president Don Schneider prays with church planter Jeannie Ramos.

OFFICE OF ADVENTIST MISSION

WORLD REPORT

FaithStep dressed in a suit and tie. “The people we minister to dress very casually,” said Ramos. “When we started this church, we resolved to create an environment in which they’d feel comfortable.”

“When you ask people at FaithStep how they’re doing, no one says, ‘Oh, I’m fine,’” said Schneider. “They say, ‘I’ve been doing pretty good—I’ve been clean all week.’ Or, ‘I fell off the wagon last week but I’m back on now.’ FaithStep is a very real place.”

Marti Schneider, Schneider’s wife, shares his passion for church planting. Marti is director for programs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Office of Adventist Mission, which helps start new groups of believers in unentered areas around the world. She coordinates SEEDS and ChurchWorks conferences, challenging people to plant congregations and expand their horizons as they spread the gospel. “New churches aren’t simply new worship centers,” Marti said. “They are outreach centers, planted for the purpose of reaching new territories or new people groups for God.” (To learn more about SEEDS conferences, visit www.nadei.org.)

In closing, Don Schneider challenged attendees to make church plants a priority. “We start 100 churches every year,” said Schneider. “But we need more. Do you know where you can find a McDonald’s from here? Go out on the street and travel north, south, west, or east. You’ll find one. Then go another mile or two and you’ll find another. What if we had that many Seventh-day Adventist churches? We all need to be thinking about how to make this a reality.” —*Reported by Laurie Falvo, Office of Adventist Mission.*



HOUSE OF HOPE: Façade of new Seventh-day Adventist church in the historic Latin Quarter of the fifth district of Paris, France

EURO-AFRICA DIVISION

In France, Adventist “House of Hope” Opens

■ On the weekend of November 27, 28, 2009, the North France Conference of Seventh-day Adventists—numbering more than 8,000 church members—celebrated the official opening of the House of Hope, a spiritual and cultural center located in Paris.

Purchased in 2005, the House of Hope facility was reconstructed in order to comply with regulations for public buildings and allow access for people with disabilities. The costs for the purchase and reconstruction of the House of Hope totaled \$3 million. The money was supplied from the building funds of the North France Conference and a special offering given by 16 million Adventists around the world.

The House of Hope is a meeting place to promote cultural diversity and help people discover the ways of God and of other people. Every Sabbath morning,

four separate Adventist congregations share the facilities: the French-speaking Church of Hope, the Romanian church, the Portuguese church, and the Hispanic church. A Baptist congregation rents the facilities on Sunday mornings. Each of these congregations has 80 to 100 members. The building has room for more than 300 visitors. During the week the center offers a variety of biblical, social, educational, and health programs in collaboration with a variety of partners.

During the opening ceremony on November 27, the deputy mayor of Paris, Jean Tiberi, said, “It’s good that a church like yours is open to society. It’s a good thing to have created a cultural and spiritual center, and I am delighted that a house like yours is situated in the Latin Quarter of the fifth district of Paris.”

The minister of the Baptist community that will use the center, Roger

Abotsivia, expressed his hope that other similar “houses of hope” will be erected in France. He also thanked the center’s director, Philippe Leduc, for leading this initiative in the heart of Paris.

The president of the Adventist Church in the Euro-Africa region, Bruno Vertallier, stated, “We want to live together with Christian hope in the heart of the city, instead of the stress our society usually suffers.”

On Sabbath, November 28, Adventist pastors from the Paris region gathered at the center for a dedication ceremony. Officials from the Euro-Africa Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Franco-Belgian Union Conference, and North France Conference presented messages of exhortation and gratitude. The “Crescendo” choir and others performed musical selections.

—Reported by Jean-Paul Barquon, Euro-Africa Division.

Adventist World Adds Languages

■ *Adventist World*, the international paper for Seventh-day Adventists, is rapidly adding new languages in print and online to serve more and more of the 16 million baptized members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church around the world.



Six months after the online launch of a German-language edition, an estimated 25,000 Adventist Church members in Germany and Switzerland began receiving *Adventist World* monthly, in print, in their own language. The launch came in partnership with Advent-Verlag, a church-owned publishing house based in Lueneburg, near Hamburg, Germany, which is launching a new denominational magazine for its membership area at the same time.

Capitalizing on this development, the Austrian Union Conference plans to launch a new magazine, with *Adventist World* inserted, to be distributed throughout Austria.

These are important developments in the German-speaking territories. “We at Advent-Verlag are excited on behalf of our readers in the German-speaking territory,” said publishing house editor Eli Diez-Prida. “We have always published short news about the work in our magazine. But now the relationship and the identification with the world church will be promoted much more. A broadening of the national and even of the European horizon will be very beneficial to all of us.”

Among the countries of Germany, Switzerland, and Austria are about 45,000 German-speaking Seventh-day Adventist Church members.

Another important milestone was reached when the first online Vietnamese edition of *Adventist World* was launched in October 2009. The move comes about a year after the Seventh-day Adventist Church received official recognition by the government there.

This development opened up new perspectives for the 14,000 Vietnamese members in the country, who for several decades felt marginalized from the world church as very little material could reach them. In addition, according to govern-

ment sources, more than 300,000 Sabbathkeepers gather in home churches throughout the country. These believers will also benefit greatly from being able to better identify with the world church by having access to *Adventist World* in their language.

Two additional versions of *Adventist World* were introduced on the Web in January 2010. The new editions target Romania, with about 100,000 Seventh-day Adventist members, and Urdu, Pakistan’s dominant language, with about 12,000 Seventh-day Adventists. Although the latter group is comparatively small, “it is a group worth supporting,” according to Claude Richli, director of marketing and associate publisher of the magazine. “These people live in a strongly Muslim environment and need to be better connected with their brothers and sisters worldwide for support and encouragement. In addition, we know of non-Adventist Christian readers in Pakistan who long to strengthen their Christian faith and who would find our material of great interest to them if it were presented in their language.”

Together with these new developments, *Adventist World* will be published in seven languages in print editions and 11 different language editions on the Web, including Russian and Chinese. Online versions of the magazine can be accessed at www.adventistworld.com.

Launched in 2005 as an initiative of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Adventist World*’s mission is to “uplift Jesus Christ, uniting Seventh-day Adventists everywhere in beliefs, mission, life, and hope.” Editorial offices are located in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States, and in Seoul, Republic of Korea.

—Adventist World Staff.

WORLD REPORT

Korean Publishing House *Marks* *Adventists celebrate achievements* *in dynamic, growing ministry.* **CENTENNIAL**

The dynamic accomplishments of Seventh-day Adventism in Korea and the Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD) were displayed in 2009, as the Korean Publishing House noted 100 years of operation. Earlier, a group of Seventh-day Adventist leaders from the East-Central Africa Division received a firsthand look at how ministry and evangelism are done in this growing church region.

In October the Korean Publishing House celebrated the centennial of the Adventist publishing ministry in Korea. About 500 guests, including staff, colporteurs, and longtime subscribers, attended celebrations at Seoul Adventist Hospital Church on October 29.

Seventy special delegates—including Pardon Mwansa, a General Conference (GC) vice president; Matthew Bediako, GC executive secretary; and Rajmund Dabrowski, GC communication director; as well as officials and directors from other NSD territories—joined the celebrations.

“Korean Publishing House (KPH) plays an important role as a mission institute with its own tradition and history. We strive to go forward,” Kyu Chul Shin, president of the Korean Publishing House, said in his celebratory remarks. He also mentioned that the KPH provides printed materials to Tanzania, Zambia, South Africa, Singapore, and Sri Lanka as part of its mission work.

Jairyong Lee, NSD president, lauded the publishing house in his congratulatory message: “It is obviously an important part of mission work to convey the everlasting gospel to people through publications. Korean Publishing House



Left: PUBLISHING SYMPOSIUM: *Adventist World* editor and executive publisher Bill Knott (third from left) was among those presenting at a symposium during the Korean Publishing House centennial. **Right: LEADERS MEET:** Led by Northern Asia-Pacific Division president Jairyong Lee (left) and East-Central Africa Division president Geoffrey Mbwana (right), delegates from the two divisions exchanged ideas during a September 2009 visit.

NORTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION

has greatly contributed to the development of the Korean Adventist Church and its soul-winning work over the last 100 years. We hope it will continue until Jesus comes.”

On behalf of GC president Jan Paulsen, Bediako thanked KPH for its successful service not only in Korea but also in many other countries in the world.

A representative of the Review and Herald Publishing Association presented a special plaque of appreciation to KPH, which publishes and distributes the *Adventist World* magazine. KPH plans to establish a system of cooperation with sister publishing houses in other parts of the world and to continue to promote the “Fallen Leaves Project,” which provides free publications to the developing world.

Preceding the celebrations an international symposium on the publishing ministry, under the theme “Reflecting Upon the 100 Years of Korean Publishing House,” was held. Bill Knott, *Adventist Review/Adventist World* executive publisher; Daeguuk Nam, former Sahmyook University president; and other speakers illuminated the historical contribution of KPH on Korean society and the Adventist Church.

KPH is equipped with a high-tech publishing system and modernized production facilities, with 70 staff working for the development of the publishing ministry. It produces a range of publications, including electronic books and audiobooks combined with IT technology. —Reported by NSD Communication Department.

WINDOW

Into Togo

By HANS OLSON



JOSE A. WARLETTA

Rolling savanna grasslands interwoven with groves of small trees make up much of Togo's landscape. This narrow West African nation is squeezed between Ghana to the west, Benin to the east, Burkina Faso to the north, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south.

Togo's short 40-mile Atlantic Ocean coastline was once considered the center of the African slave trade. For nearly 200 years European traders raided this region in search of slaves. This practice effectively ended in 1854 when France declared Togo its sovereign protectorate. France lost control of Togo in 1905 to Germany, which colonized the country. German rule was short-lived as France, along with Great Britain, following retook control of the country, Germany's defeat in World War I. Togo was later divided between Britain taking the west and integrating it with present-day Ghana, and France creating the autonomous French Togoland.

In 1960 Sylvanus Olympio, Togo's prime minister under French governance, helped the country gain its independence and changed its name to Togo. He became Togo's first president the following year.

Adventists in Togo

The first known Adventist missionary in Togo was literature evangelist George Vaysse. Arriving in 1956, he sold French-language Adventist books and pamphlets for two years. As a result of Vaysse's work many people became interested in Adventism and started calling themselves Seventh-day Adventists. Four years later H. Kempf, a missionary in nearby Côte d'Ivoire, visited Togo to see what he could do to help organize the country's few members, but stayed only a short time. Four years later he returned, along with his family, as Togo's first church leader. Kempf spent the next six years officially organizing congregations and establishing schools.

Today Togo is one of the 11 countries that make up the Sahel Union Mission. The Sahel Union is located at the far western corner of the 10/40 Window, a region of the world

TOGO

Capital:	Lomé
Major Languages:	French (official), Ewe, Mina, Kabye, and Dagomba
Religion:	Christian, 29%; Muslim, 20%; indigenous beliefs, 51%
Population:	6.6 million*
Adventist membership:	10,272*
Adventist-to-population ratio:	641*

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

in the Eastern Hemisphere between 10 and 40 degrees north latitude. This region is home to more than two thirds of the earth's population, many of the world's major religions, the largest and fastest-growing cities, but few Christians. The Sahel Union in particular has some major challenges: poverty; a wide variety of different cultures, languages, and people groups; illiteracy; and a basic lack of Christian literature. To meet these challenges, Global Mission, in partnership with local Adventist churches, worked to plant a number of new congregations in the Sahel Union in the past decade. During that time the Adventist Church in the Sahel Union more than doubled.

This month the Sahel Union, part of the West-Central Africa Division, is hosting "Follow the Bible." Sponsored by Seventh-day Adventist churches around the world, "Follow the Bible" is an initiative meant to encourage Adventists to take a deeper interest in daily Bible reading. The Bible started its journey in the Philippines in October 2008 and will finish at the General Conference Session in Atlanta, Georgia, this June.

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

WORLD VISTA

CAPTURED: Pastor Jan Paulsen responds to questions from a young South African on YouTube.

When YouTube came online in 2005 few could have foreseen how it would transform Internet culture and ultimately cross over into so many other forms of media. Within just a few years this video-sharing Web site has become a vast, dynamic, largely uncensored melting pot of images and ideas—ranging from the profane to the serious, from amateur home videos to high-end professional productions. YouTube is constantly expanding and evolving, shaped by millions of anonymous Internet users in almost every part of the globe.

Is there a place for the Seventh-day Adventist Church on YouTube? Is this an environment in which we should even be present?

Adventist World talks to Pastor Jan Paulsen, president of the Adventist world church, about his new initiative that seeks to profile Adventist values and beliefs on YouTube.

The style of these YouTube clips is very different from the type of communication that usually comes from your office. And your messages are very short—each is less than a couple of minutes in length. You’re not making a complete statement on any of these topics. Is this a limitation of YouTube?

I see it instead as one of the beauties of the medium. Conversation shouldn’t be just affirmation; it should also be provocative. It should make one stop and listen and think, and then perhaps come back to explore further. I had a teacher many years ago who used to say, “God speaks only when He provokes.” It’s an interesting thought—and one I may not fully agree with. But when



Sharing Our Message *on* YouTube



all is said and done, God *does* provoke me, and in provoking me He engages me. He stops me in my tracks and draws my attention to that which is important.

I also see value in this medium because it reaches those who are younger. Now, I pray it will reach the 70-year-olds as well! But I know it has a greater chance of reaching those in their teens, twenties, and thirties. I want to talk with them in a dialogue that’s open-ended—that may not result in a neatly packaged solution to every issue. For me, it’s OK to come away from a conversation and not be sure that you’ve solved everything. Succeeding in simply talking with each other, *that* to me is important.

And YouTube does allow immediate feedback—unlike most forms of mass communication.

Exactly. What did God mean when He said, “Come, let us reason together?” Isn’t that an invitation? He’s saying: “Come, sit down, let’s talk!” Communication is about dialogue. It must flow both ways, and if it doesn’t, you could easily be just talking to yourself.

How did you choose those first three topics—“Faith v.s. Science,” “Freedom,” and “Integrity”—which launched the channel last year? Why not start with something more squarely focused on Adventist doctrine?

I think the answer to that takes us back

to the question, “Why are we doing this, really?” Evangelism will always be at the top of the mission agenda of our church. Evangelism doesn’t have to be defended. God says, “Go into all the world. Go and teach and preach and baptize.” So that’s our first priority.

But we have to remember that there are some people, perhaps many, whom we’re not going to reach if we don’t try some other methods of communication. Is broadcasting on YouTube evangelism? Maybe not, primarily. For effective evangelism you need space and time to lay out, build, and justify your points. With YouTube, you have time only to deliver a punch line, not write a book.

If we can simply touch a chord in people’s minds; cause them to wonder “Hey, is he talking to me?”; and stimulate interest in exploring the topic further—that’s what this YouTube effort is about.

So I’m choosing topics because they’re relevant. They touch on real-life issues. They don’t need lengthy explanations or introductions. And I’ve chosen them because ultimately they all deal with values that are foundational to our church’s identity and mission.

Your faith and science YouTube video came out at a time when this topic was being widely discussed among Adventists—in publications and online. Do you plan to use this medium to “jump into the fray” and become involved in current discussions?

The YouTube medium is well-suited to calling attention to a number of key issues—in the sense of making a concise value statement and saying, “This is important to me as a Seventh-day Adventist.” And so yes, I believe at times we can and should do that.

The comments people are leaving on the “About Life” Web site are overwhelmingly positive, but there are one or two negative remarks, as well. One person suggests that you’re using a medium and a style that’s too closely aligned with “the world,” that we’re tainting our message with the method we’re using to convey it. Is this a danger?

No, it’s not. Look, this is the world where God has placed us; this is where we live and breathe. We Skype. We Twitter. We use communication technology in so many different ways. The

important issue is not the particular means of communication we use. The more significant questions are: “What are we communicating? Do we do it effectively? Are we current? Do we make the best use of that which will reach the most people? Is the communication of a kind that serves our objective and furthers our mission?”

The scope of our mission responsibility embraces the *whole* world—and to me, that means the “online world,” as well.

So you’re saying we have to go to where people actually are, rather than expecting them to make the effort to come to us?

Yes, precisely. The God we serve is a constantly searching God. He doesn’t passively sit back. He goes out looking and calling for the one that is lost. He reaches out to us, again and again. And I think the church—and I, as a church leader—must try to do the same. We must constantly ask ourselves: How can I reach out? How can I establish contact? Where do I need to go to touch the one who is lost? And that, really, is the driving force behind this YouTube project. ●



“Learning About Life”

“Is this important? It is to me, as a Seventh-day Adventist.”

These words have become Pastor Jan Paulsen’s signature sign-off in the series of video messages he has produced for the new YouTube channel, “About Life,” which launched in October 2009.

Among the topics he addresses are integrity, race relations, the Sabbath, poverty, and the second coming of Christ. His comments are personal, and

the videos are fast-paced and tightly produced.

“The world of science and the world of faith—they’re two seemingly separate worlds,” says Paulsen in one clip that wades into the debate about the role of faith versus that of science. “Are these worlds on a collision course? Or do they run parallel to each other?”

You can view the About Life series at www.youtube.com/adventistsaboutlife.



Benefits of Breastfeeding

By ALLAN R. HANDYSIDES
and PETER N. LANDLESS

My daughter is pregnant, and she announced that she won't be breastfeeding. When I told her I was surprised, she just shrugged me off. How can I influence her to breastfeed?

In the shortest answer, just two words: "Back off." It seems, reading between the lines, that your daughter may be asserting her independence, and direct pressure will tend to backfire. She will have to be allowed to make her own choices, and likely will be influenced more by her health care provider and support group over this issue than by your protestations.

Breastfeeding is a most important way of caring for the newborn. In places such as rural Africa this practice is so important that in some regions four out of five infants who are not breastfed do not survive past their first birthday. Infants fed a cow's milk formula also face a small, but real, increased risk of developing type I diabetes, otitis media, gastrointestinal illness, as well as pneumonia and

obesity as they grow older, even in Western society.

Mothers who don't breastfeed also face increased health risks. These are not enormous risks, but they are statistically significant and may influence a woman to choose appropriately.

Mothers who do not breastfeed face a greater risk of diabetes themselves. High blood pressure is also seen more frequently in those women who have not breastfed. The risk here is about 10 percent higher than in those who breastfed for at least one year. It has been known for some time that the risk for breast cancer is reduced in mothers who breastfeed, as is the risk of ovarian cancer.

There is evidence beginning to accumulate that women who did not breastfeed have a higher incidence of the metabolic syndrome that is a predisposing condition to type II diabetes and heart attack.

Women in the U.S. Nurses' Health Study who had never breastfed had a 1.3 increased relative risk of heart attack.

Why these differences should attend those who do and don't breastfeed is not clear. It's been suggested that breastfeeding helps lose the accumulated fat of pregnancy with positive benefits for the mother. Others have suggested that oxytocin released during breastfeeding slows the heart rate and lowers blood pressure, and that other hormonal adjustments may be beneficial.

Of course, some of these factors might relate to lifestyle choices made by nonbreastfeeding women. Women who choose to avoid breastfeeding tend to be less educated and of lower socioeconomic status. They are more likely, as a group, to have an increased number of smokers in their ranks. These factors could well explain some of the differences between the two groups of women.

It is very important that doctors and nurses promote breastfeeding and support mothers in making their decisions.

The prevalence of HIV infection in Africa, however, has led to serious questions about breastfeeding when a mother is infected; though the availability of highly active antiretroviral therapy has changed the situation enormously.

In the Western world lactation consultants have become available. These are usually nurses who have studied the nuances, problems, and possible difficulties a new mother may encounter with breastfeeding. They can advise, demonstrate, and generally facilitate in the process of breastfeeding.

In my experience, the relaxed, natural approach to breastfeeding seen in many developing countries would be a great advantage to our nervous and tense Western society.

In the case of your daughter, if she is receiving competent care, I am sure she will be advised of these factors to help her make a decision. ●



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Peter N. Landless, M.B., B.Ch., M.Med., F.C.P.(SA), F.A.C.C., is ICPA executive director and associate

director of the General Conference Health Ministries Department.



By
WILLIAM G. JOHNSON

ADVENTISTS and Muslims: FIVE CONVICTIONS

How to build on what we have in common



Three years ago General Conference president Jan Paulsen asked me to work on developing interfaith relations with leaders of the world's religions. With Adventists numbering some 17 million in more than 200 countries, it makes sense—indeed, our mission demands—that we make efforts to understand people of other faiths, so that we may share with them our values and hope in the return of Jesus.

During these three years I have focused on making contacts with leaders of Islam. Slowly, steadily, several convictions have taken deep root in my psyche.

Building Blocks

First, the Lord is preparing the Muslim world for His second coming.

Several months ago I received a message totally outside my previous frame of reference: a spiritual leader of many thousands of Muslims in several countries, a sheikh, stated that God had given him a vision about Adventists. He had made contact with lay Adventists; now he was asking to meet with leaders from the General Conference. What to make of such a request?

After consultation with Pastor Paulsen and others it was decided that a few of us from headquarters should follow up, with a view to entering into serious discussions if they should seem warranted. In preparation for this meeting, I made an advance trip to get acquainted with the sheikh. The nine hours I spent with him, spread over two days, were, to say the least, memorable.

For our initial time together the sheikh invited me to his home. From the first moments we established an easy, friendly relationship. With just the two of us sitting together

in his sitting room, almost immediately he put a question to me point-blank:

“Do you believe in the second coming of Jesus?”

“Yes,” I replied.

“When do you think Jesus will come?”

“Soon.”

“Yes, but how soon?”

“Soon. We Adventists do not try to set a date for the Second Coming, but we think it will be soon.”

“Do you think Jesus will come during this century?”

“I don't know. Jesus may come much sooner than many people, Adventists included, expect.”

“I believe that Jesus will come during this century,” he said. “In the holy writings I find a series of signs that indicate when He is to come, and almost all the signs have been fulfilled already.”

Then for a couple hours we sat and talked about the return of Jesus. Here was someone who not only believes in the Second Coming, but believes with a passion. The sheikh views the world today to be in a terrible mess and getting worse; only the return of Jesus can make matters right.

The following day the sheikh and I met to consider what topic should form the basis for the discussions with the larger group. Almost immediately we settled on the Second Coming. We decided to ask each side to prepare short



William G. Johnson is assistant to the General Conference president for interfaith relations.

papers on the general topic of Jesus' return, on the signs of the Second Coming, and on the antichrist. Then came the moment I had been waiting for. "Sir," I asked, "is it true that you received a vision about Seventh-day Adventists?"

"Not one, but three," he replied. "All three had the same message: Seventh-day Adventists are the true People of the Book [a term from the Koran, designating followers of Allah who are not Muslims]. Adventists already are God's people, so do not try to convert them. Instead, work with them."

Several weeks later the larger meeting convened. Once again the sheikh opened his home for our initial time together. The hospitality and friendliness were unsurpassed as we partook of a lavish banquet. When we turned to the papers that had been prepared, the level of interest was intense, the Muslims hanging on every word from their Adventist guests. The eagerness and sense of expectancy were palpable through that evening and again the following day.

Several months have passed since we met with the Muslims. I am still processing the event, trying to figure out what it means, what the Lord may have in mind for His church. It was an extraordinary happening. The eagerness to learn more, the fervent belief that Jesus is coming again soon—I could only wish to find such a spirit among my Adventist brothers and sisters.

Yes, there are major differences in understanding concerning the return of Jesus. But the basic, essential fact remains: large numbers of Muslims are looking for Jesus to come—and soon.

Muslims quickly size up a person. If they find that

What We Have in Common

I turn now to a second conviction: Seventh-day Adventists are uniquely positioned to bring the gospel to Muslims.

Adventists have the following advantages over other Christians in taking the good news to Muslims:

The place of the Scriptures. We base our practices and beliefs on the Bible and the Bible alone. This devotion and loyalty to the revealed Word impresses Muslims, who look to the Koran as God's revelation.

Lifestyle. Our abstinence from pork and alcohol comes as a welcome surprise to Muslims, who are not used to associating Christians with these practices. This means that Adventists and Muslims can enjoy table fellowship without apprehension—an important factor in establishing basic relationships. Beyond these practices, the Adventist emphasis on simplicity and modesty resonates with sincere Muslims, whose religion is a 24/7 matter.

Concern with the last days. The ideas of the last judgment, the second coming of Jesus, and the resurrection play a prominent role in Islamic thought. For serious Muslims all of life is lived with a view to one's standing in the final judgment. Their teachings differ from ours in

important respects, but the key ideas in common present an opportunity for Adventists to present instruction that will enlighten their understanding.

The Sabbath. The Koran mentions the Sabbath, and in a positive light; it makes no mention of the first day of the week as a day of worship. Our observance of the Sabbath, enshrined in our very name, sets us apart as a people obedient to divine revelation.

Cosmic conflict. Muslims understand events on this earth against the backdrop of a cosmic struggle between good and evil, in which Iblis—Satan—and evil beings play a major role. This broad framework has obvious parallels—along with significant differences—with the Adventist understanding of the great controversy between Christ and Satan.

Creation. Both Muslims and Adventists believe in the doctrine of creation and reject the theory of evolution.

Health. Muslims have a keen interest in health and healthful living. Adventists and Muslims enter into easy partnerships to improve the quality of life. In the Middle East, Adventists operated a series of hospitals and clinics in Muslim countries, while Loma Linda University and Medical Center has an ongoing relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan.

Relation to Israel. The fact that as a church Adventists refuse to be identified with any geopolitical lobby is a huge plus in the Muslim world. We are not part of a pro-Israel lobby: we believe in justice for all peoples, Israelis and Palestinians alike.

A reform movement. We understand our message to be not a new one but a return to the teachings of the Bible. We are completing the partially realized reformation begun by Luther, Calvin, and the other stalwarts of yesteryear. Muslims also consider themselves to be part of a work of reformation.

These nine features uniquely position Adventists to establish relations with Muslims at all levels and to advance our divinely appointed mission of taking the gospel to the whole world. But we are not well known in the Islamic world; indeed, we are hardly known at all. When Muslims hear of Christians, they immediately think of pork-eating, alcohol-imbibing, loose-living men and women who side with Israel.

A major task with which we must grapple is to educate Muslims as to who we are and what we stand for. When that is done, attitudes change from disbelief to amazement, to appreciation, to warm acceptance.

In meeting Muslim leaders, I emphasize from the outset that I prefer to be known as an Adventist rather than as a Christian. For Muslims the name "Christian" carries such negative associations—associations that do not belong with Seventh-day Adventists—that I would rather avoid

the term. And “Adventist” captures well the driving pulse of who we are—our hope in Jesus’ return and sense of divine calling to tell it to the world.

The Role of Prophecy

The third conviction arises directly out of the second conviction: prophecy can be a valuable approach to arouse the interest of Muslims.

This has been the case with the sheikh and his colleagues. While the first contact with the Muslims came about through a spontaneous act of kindness by an Adventist lay member, the subsequent interest developed as that individual shared Bible prophecies, first in the home of the Muslims he had helped, and later—at the sheikh’s invitation—in the mosque.

In the mosque the first night, the Adventist stressed the importance of prophecy for all the world, including Islam. He explained why we Seventh-day Adventists have an understanding that the rest of the world does not. As he shared prophecies of the Bible that first night, the Muslims responded without reservation. In subsequent presentations he followed the conventional path, starting with Daniel 2 and eventually working through that book and into Revelation.

Prophecy is important in Muslim conversations because it brings credibility to the Bible. Although the Koran points to the Bible, mainstream Islam holds that it is corrupted and largely ignores it.

showed that 93 percent of Muslims reject violence.

“Allah” is the name of a pagan deity. This myth is quickly disproved by a study of etymology. “Allah” is simply the Arabic term for God, was so used by Arab Christians before Muhammad, and is still so used. Because Islam arose among Arabs and the Koran is written in Arabic, inevitably the name “Allah” was adopted to designate God.

Because of their high birthrates, Muslims soon will outnumber Christians, becoming the majority religion in several countries of Europe. A DVD circulating widely has scared some Adventists, who have accepted its ideas uncritically. In effect, the DVD portrays a nonviolent takeover of the West by Muslims whose large families before long overwhelm the culture. Despite the graphic presentation, the argument is flawed. It cherry-picks the data; it makes unwarranted assumptions; it ignores evidence that runs counter to its thesis.

Ready for Renewal

The final conviction is perhaps the most surprising of all: taking seriously the mission to Islam has the potential to renew and reform the Adventist Church.

I am still haunted by the sheikh’s passion concerning the Second Coming and his sense of its imminence. I wonder: Is God sending a wake-up call to His Adventist people?

Adventist outreach to Muslims will come about only when we humble ourselves, allowing the Lord to soften our hearts and break down prejudices. The Lord must put

he or she is honest and genuine, they respond in kind.

Beware Prejudice

A fourth conviction concerns changes that need to be made among Adventists: while the Lord has entrusted us with a message and lifestyle that have great appeal to Muslims, we ourselves must undergo significant renewal in our attitudes and spiritual lives if the Lord is to use us as He intends.

Muslims in the West suffer widespread prejudice. Adventists inevitably are affected by the prevailing sentiments and an all-pervasive media. The result is that pastors and members in general feel no burden to work for Muslims; furthermore, Adventist congregations are not ready to welcome Muslims into their midst. Indeed, some Adventists have prepared books and DVDs that paint Islam in strongly negative strokes.

Among the negative stereotypes and myths about Muslims to which our people are subject are the following:

Islam is a violent religion, and most Muslims are therefore prone to violence. Islam has a violent element, just as can be found in other faiths. This element, however, represents only a small percentage of Muslims. The Gallup organization conducted a massive worldwide survey of Muslims, interviewing some 30,000 people. The results

within us a deep love for Muslims and a burning desire to see them join us on the road to the kingdom. He must make our churches warm, open, and accepting of Muslims. Only He can do that. Such changes will mean an Adventist Church revived and reformed.

My experience with Muslims is short, but already I have witnessed the transforming power of love. The encounter with the sheikh that has progressed at such a surprising pace was rooted in a generous act by an Adventist who transparently reflects love and goodwill. I have observed that Muslims quickly size up a person, and if they find that he or she is honest and genuine, they respond in kind.

In recent months I have become acquainted with an Adventist businesswoman who bears a burden for work with Muslims. This was not always the case; in fact, she grew up disliking Muslims, but the Lord changed her heart. She confided to me that previously she wore expensive jewelry, but as she began to be involved with Muslims, with their emphasis on modesty, she felt she must remove the jewelry, eventually disposing of it.

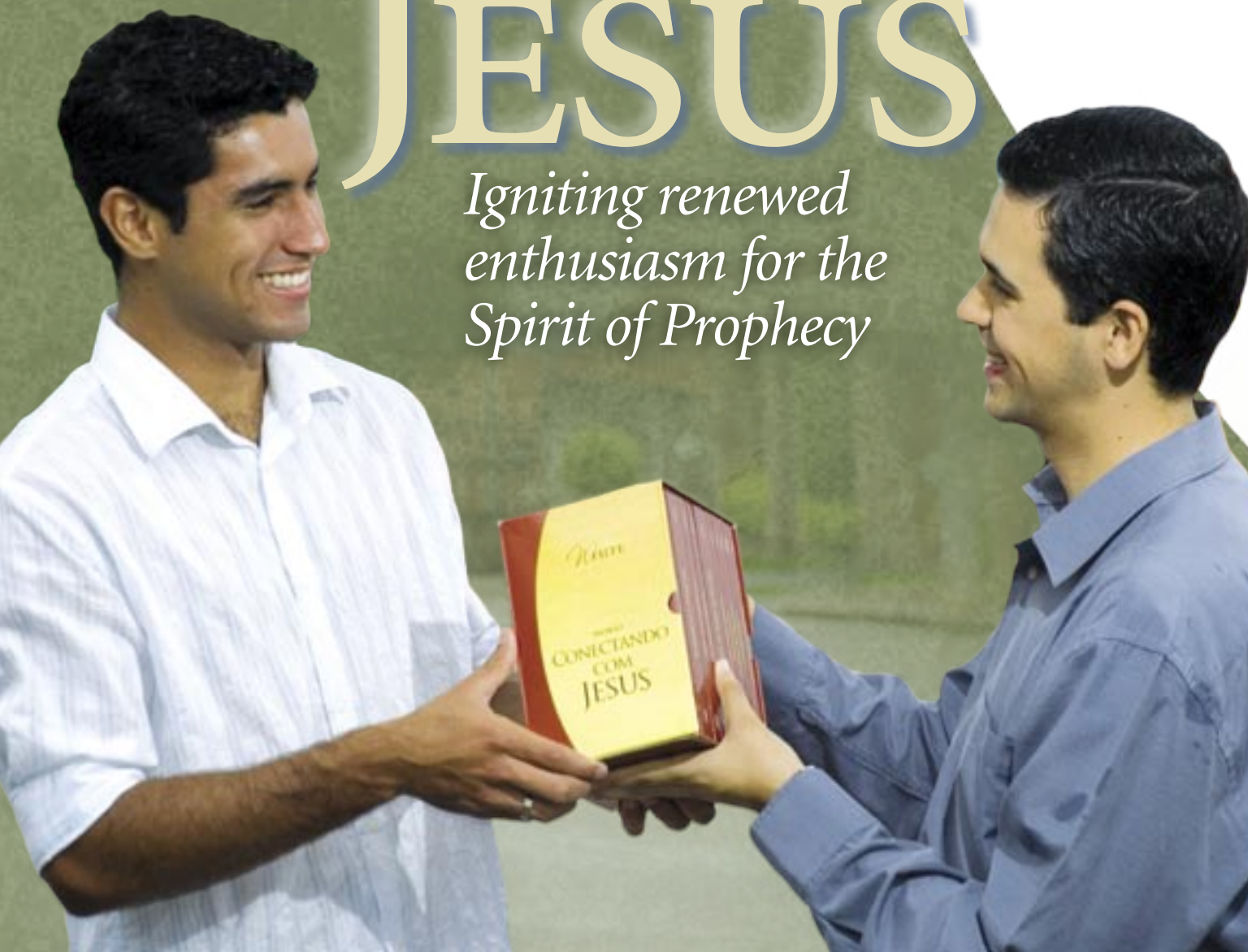
Here, perhaps, is a parable of what could happen on a large scale as Adventists reach out to Muslims. ●



By
SANDRA
BLACKMER

Connecting With JESUS

*Igniting renewed
enthusiasm for the
Spirit of Prophecy*



We are living in the most solemn period of this world's history. The destiny of earth's teeming multitudes is about to be decided. Our own future well-being and also the salvation of other souls depend upon the course which we now pursue. We need to be guided by the Spirit of truth.... We should now seek a deep and living experience in the things of God. We have not a moment to lose.—ELLEN G. WHITE, *The Great Controversy*, p. 601.

It was a Sabbath afternoon in Florida, January 2003. General Conference (GC) church leaders, including White Estate board members, had been meeting together for two days, seeking the blessing and guidance of the Holy Spirit as they discussed ways to advance the mission of the Adventist Church. Three attendees—GC vice president Ted Wilson, Adventist Global Mission director Mike Ryan (now a GC vice president), and White Estate director James Nix—were brainstorming ways to answer a question raised in an earlier meeting: “How can we make available the writings of Ellen G. White to new church members worldwide in a language they can read and at a price they can afford?” The result was the launching of a project called Connecting With Jesus.

“With church membership exploding around the world it’s crucial that we make these materials available,” Nix told *Adventist World*. “If new members are not oriented as to why we’re Seventh-day

Adventists and what motivates us as a church, if they don’t understand the great controversy theme, if they don’t see the emphasis that God has given us through the writings of Ellen White—then we’re going to have a lot of people who don’t totally understand why they’re Seventh-day Adventists and who may not be fully prepared to stand true to God in the last days.”

Statistical projections indicate that by the year 2020 only about 12 percent of the church’s membership worldwide will have been members for 20 years or more. It will be a “new church,” Wilson says. “The immediate and urgent challenge facing the church,” he notes, “is that many of these new members live in parts of the world where books are very expensive—relative to the local economy—or where Ellen White’s books generally have not been translated into the local languages.”

A recent trip to Moscow underscored the situation for Ryan. While presenting the Sabbath message to a congregation of some 6,500 Adventists, Ryan asked all those who had been baptized within the last 10 years to stand. He says, “About 6,000 people stood to their feet.”

Project Details

Connecting With Jesus (CWJ) is part of the GC’s overall quinquennial evangelistic plan, “Tell the World.” The project’s objective is to print and distribute 2 million sets of 10 Spirit of Prophecy books (see sidebar) in major world languages at a price affordable to Adventists—particularly new members—in every division. Study guides and a Bible reading plan are included with each set of books.

In spite of anticipated church growth, which projects some 50 million members within a decade, recent surveys indicate a decline in the reading of Ellen White’s writings. They also demonstrate, however, that most church

members believe the Spirit of Prophecy is “an authority for the Adventist Church today” and that there’s a relationship between a strong spiritual life/mission emphasis and members regularly reading White’s writings. Officially adopted by the 2005 General Conference Session in St. Louis, Missouri (USA), CWJ is challenging members globally to recapture both a personal and a corporate vision to fulfill their prophetic mission.

“The church urgently needs to implement creative ways to encourage members once again to read and study not only the Bible but Ellen White’s writings, as well,” Wilson says. “We must provide the next generation of members with a continued vision of our distinctive Adventist mission: pointing people to Christ’s soon return.... They must have access to [Ellen White books] in a language they can utilize and at a cost that’s commensurate with their income.”

History confirms, Wilson says, that Ellen White’s writings are “one of the great unifiers” of the Adventist Church, organizationally and theologically, and that they enhance evangelism.

Division Buy-in

Church leaders worldwide apparently agree with Wilson’s assessment. Twelve of the 13 regional divisions are participating in the project, although approaches—and enthusiasm—vary. One region that readily embraced the concept is South America, printing and distributing some 300,000 sets of the 10 books—plus one additional book, *Colporteur Ministry*—in Spanish and Portuguese.



Sandra Blackmer is an assistant editor of *Adventist World*.

“We have only 10,000 sets left to sell,” says Erton C. Köhler, president of the church in South America.

Köhler sees a more deeply spiritual life and an intensified mission emphasis resulting from the project because the members in his region “are reading the books. They’re reading them during worship services, prayer meetings, Bible studies. Families and friends are reading them together,” he says. “We’re actively promoting these books.”

South America project coordinator Alberto R. Timm agrees that support has been high, generating “a greater enthusiasm than we could ever have imagined. It has even helped increase administrative credibility,” he notes. “Many members have said that church administrators usually are asking for money, but this time they’re giving back by providing church members with more accessible materials.”

The usual cost of one set of the books in that region is about US\$150.00. Members can purchase a CWJ soft-cover set for about US\$10.00.

Timm’s greatest fear was that the books would “end up being just another souvenir from a major church project,” but feedback indicates that they are indeed being read.

If he could change something about the project, Timm says he would replace the current study guides with “dynamic PowerPoint presentations.” He adds, however, that he’s seeing very encouraging results.

Ryan feels church leaders are espousing this project because they believe “Ellen White played a large role in establishing much of the distinctiveness that marks Adventism, in that she unwrapped Scripture and left the Adventist Church with a certain view of the future.” He says that distinctiveness is lost if a large percentage of our members are not reading her books or if we don’t prepare these books in their languages so they can read them.

But finding the money needed to accomplish the CWJ objectives is still a concern. Although some donors have given substantial contributions, Nix says, “I wish we could find many more contributors who would give donations both large and small, because my big burden is that we haven’t supplied the books to those who need them the most—those living in areas where the church is exploding not only in

the number of members but also in multiple language groups.”

Who’s Paying the Bill?

GC funds earmarked for Spirit of Prophecy promotion are subsidizing much of the cost of CWJ. Donor contributions, some quite substantial, are adding to the total. The divisions are paying part of the expenses, as well. Conferences and missions are not being asked to contribute money, but are responsible for delivering the materials to the churches and training pastors and other local leaders to conduct the studies.

The total cost of the project? “About \$10 million,” Wilson says, adding that it’s “well worth the money.”

“The messages penned by Ellen White were not manufactured by someone who simply wanted to influence people,” Wilson says. “These are messages given by the Lord to point us to Jesus and salvation; to His Word, the Bible; and to amplify many of the principles that you find in the Bible. These principles never get old.”

What’s Happening in Other Divisions?

Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD) president Jairyong Lee describes members in his region as “hungry for books, especially Ellen White books.”

Books to Be Distributed

The 10 Ellen G. White books included in the Connecting With Jesus initiative are:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. <i>The Acts of the Apostles</i> | 6. <i>The Great Controversy</i> |
| 2. <i>Christian Service</i> | 7. <i>The Ministry of Healing</i> |
| 3. <i>Counsels for the Church</i> | 8. <i>Patriarchs and Prophets</i> |
| 4. <i>Counsels on Stewardship</i> | 9. <i>Prophets and Kings</i> |
| 5. <i>The Desire of Ages</i> | 10. <i>Steps to Christ</i> |





SANJA GUENERO

“As a teenager, I read the book *Steps to Christ*, and it was a turning point in my spiritual life. Its message was simple, yet filled with such strength and beauty. For me, it drew Christ into focus in a way that was utterly compelling.

In the ministry of Ellen White generations of Seventh-day Adventists have found a priceless gift. Her words draw us toward the Savior. They focus our attention on the values and beliefs that identify Adventists around the world as a spiritual family, united in faith and mission.

The Connecting With Jesus initiative has tremendous potential to open up this rich spiritual resource to millions of church members, especially new believers. And I pray that, like me, they will be led to see their Lord more clearly.

—JAN PAULSEN,
General Conference President

Lee is particularly grateful that they're now available in Chinese.

“We've printed 100,000 sets,” Lee says, “about 40,000 in Chinese. Eventually, we hope to print many more, because we have about 400,000 church members in China now.”

CWJ has also been eagerly accepted in Japan, Taiwan, Korea, and Mongolia, “where our people are now paying more attention to studying and reading the Spirit of Prophecy books,” Lee notes. “They're also using these books for outreach, sharing them with their neighbors.”

Wilson describes NSD as “the star initiator of all this. They just grabbed it and ran with it,” he says.

Members in the Euro-Asia Division (ESD) can choose between the 10 Spirit of Prophecy books bound together in one volume or in audio format on DVD.

“Our goal is to give these books to every newly baptized family,” ESD president Artur A. Stele says. “The books are very treasured, because in

Soviet times people could not have them. They were reproduced with typewriters, and sometimes our people—especially younger people—would get only the tenth copy, which almost wasn't readable. People copied by hand—word by word—many books of Ellen White. Now they have all of them, and it's a great joy.”

Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID) president Paul S. Ratsara says his region has printed 100,000 sets and is promoting CWJ “very strongly. It is a gift from God,” he says. Ratsara sees Ellen White's writings as very relevant today because “if someone is really reading the Spirit of Prophecy books—not just hearing about them but reading and internalizing them—you see change. That's the strongest proof of the relevancy of the Spirit of Prophecy—a changed life.”

A Different Approach

As coordinator of the CWJ project in the North American Division

(NAD), Alvin Kibble knew the unique challenges of the Western world required a different approach.

“In North America we have about a 17 percent reader population for the Spirit of Prophecy books, and most of those readers are over the age of 65,” Kibble, an NAD vice president, explains. “That's alarming! It's not that we don't have access to Ellen White books: we're just choosing not to read them.”

NAD project leaders teamed up with White Estate staff to do what they could to “ensure spiritual formation of a new generation of Adventists”—the youth and young adults.

“We believe there's a special need to help young people develop an appreciation for the Spirit of Prophecy as well as the studying of the Scriptures,” Kibble says, adding that they realized they had to use a more contemporary approach. “In this generation of digital technology and extremely fast communication many people don't want to receive information in the traditional fashion,” he notes. “So we decided to try to reach the



SOME DIVISION LEADERS SUPPORTING CWJ:

Top: Paul Ratsara (SID)

Left to right: Artur Stele (ESD),
Alvin Kibble (NAD), Erton Kohler (SAD)

Below: Jairyong Lee (NSD)

new generation—ages 15 to 30—with a format they’ve already embraced.”

The result was downloadable audio versions, in contemporary language and narrated by professional book readers, of the first three books of the Conflict of the Ages Series. Plans are in place to complete the last two books of the series, along with *Education, The Ministry of Healing*, and *Steps to Christ*.

“Young people can either listen to the books on their computers, transfer them to their MP3 players, or even transfer them to their phones,” Kibble says. “They’re able to ‘read’ them on the way to work or school or wherever they are.” Hard copies of the books are also available.

White Estate assistant director Darryl Thompson was responsible for preparing and editing the books. Describing the CWJ program as “phenomenal,” he says, “I’m finding that when I go out and talk to young

people, very few know anything at all about Ellen White. Less than 10 percent have actually read anything, but they’re spiritually hungry.”

Thompson sees the writings of Ellen White as very relevant to young adults today. Even though her writings are more than 100 years old, “they’re still contemporary,” he says. “In some cases, they’re even more relevant because many of the things she talks about are right now being fulfilled. If you read the last few chapters of *The Great Controversy*, it’s like reading the headlines of a major newspaper.” He adds, “We need to remember where these messages come from—they come from God.”

To market the new books, NAD and the White Estate contracted with a company in Australia for 5,000 brightly colored USB bands, which they distributed free of charge at the 2009 International Pathfinder Camporee held in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, United States.

“They went so fast we could have given out 10 times as many,” Kibble says. “On my desk is a stack of requests for more bands. Our young people are wanting Spirit of Prophecy books—that’s what we were dreaming of!”

To access these books online, go to connectingwithjesusaudio.com.

Why Read the Books?

“Our church will be brought together in a more cohesive way as we zero in on the events that are leading up to the [culmination of the] great controversy,” says G. Ralph Thomson, coordinator of the entire CWJ project. “We’re getting ready for the challenges we’ve yet to meet. We must have these messages not just in our heads but in our hearts.”

Wilson adds, “There seems to be three categories of people who don’t have a good knowledge of Ellen White’s writings: those who simply don’t have the materials available, those not interested in reading them, and those—a much smaller category—who, for whatever reasons, are actively opposed to the Spirit of Prophecy. To them I say, ‘Just read them, and see if the messages don’t shine through in their beauty, and the Holy Spirit won’t touch your heart.’ The counsels are so practical, so balanced—a balanced presentation of truth and practical instruction. They’re from the Lord.”

Connecting With Jesus project leaders plan to ask the General Conference Committee to approve continuing the project for another five years. To learn more, go to www.connectingwithjesus.org.

I Once Was Lost

By
ELLEN G. WHITE

...but now I'm found

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The following selection is taken from the autobiography of Ellen G. White and describes events in the summer of 1841 when a young teenager struggled to connect with Jesus—and finally found peace.*

The following summer [in 1841] my parents went to the Methodist camp meeting at Buxton, Maine, taking me with them. I was fully resolved to seek the Lord in earnest there, and obtain, if possible, the pardon of my sins. There was a great longing in my heart for the Christian's hope and the peace that comes of believing.

Come to a Gracious Savior

I was much encouraged while listening to a discourse from the words, "I will go in unto the king, ... and if I perish, I perish." Esther 4:16. In his remarks the speaker referred to those who were wavering between hope and fear, longing to be saved from their sins and receive the pardoning love of Christ, yet held in doubt and bondage by timidity and fear of failure. He counseled such ones to surrender themselves to God, and venture upon His mercy without delay. They would find a gracious Savior ready to present to them the scepter of mercy, even as Ahasuerus offered to Esther the signal of his favor. All that was required of the sinner, trembling in the presence of his Lord, was to put forth the hand of faith and touch the scepter of His grace. The touch insured pardon and peace.

Those who were waiting to make themselves more worthy of divine favor before they ventured to claim the promises of God were making a fatal mistake. Jesus alone cleanses from sin; He only can forgive our transgressions. He has pledged Himself to listen to the petition and grant the prayer of those who come to Him in faith. Many have a vague idea that they must make some wonderful effort in order to gain the favor of God. But all self-dependence is vain. It is only by connecting with Jesus through faith that the sinner becomes a hopeful, believing child of God.

These words comforted me, and gave me a view of what I must do to be saved. I now began to see my way

more clearly, and the darkness began to pass away. I earnestly sought the pardon of my sins, and strove to give myself entirely to the Lord. But my mind was often in great distress, because I did not experience the spiritual ecstasy that I considered would be the evidence of my acceptance with God, and I dared not believe myself converted without it. How much I needed instruction concerning the simplicity of faith!

The Burden Lifted

While bowed at the altar with others who were seeking the Lord, all the language of my heart was: "Help, Jesus; save me, or I perish! I will never cease to entreat till my prayer is heard and my sins are forgiven." I felt my needy, helpless condition as never before.

As I knelt and prayed, suddenly my burden left me, and my heart was light. At first a feeling of alarm came over me, and I tried to resume my load of distress. It seemed to me that I had no right to feel joyous and happy. But Jesus seemed very near to me; I felt able to come to Him with all my griefs, misfortunes, and trials, even as the needy ones came to Him for relief when He was upon earth. There was a surety in my heart that He understood my peculiar trials, and sympathized with me. I can never forget this precious assurance of the pitying tenderness of Jesus toward one so unworthy of His notice. I learned more of the divine character of Christ in that short period, when bowed among the praying ones, than ever before....

Again and again I said to myself: "Can this be religion? Am I not mistaken?" It seemed too much for me to claim, too exalted a privilege. Though too timid to confess it openly, I felt that the Saviour had blessed me and pardoned my sins.

This article has been excerpted from the autobiography *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (pp. 22-24). Seventh-day Adventists believe that Ellen G. White (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.

Recently, we've seen a resurgence of attacks on God and religion—by people such as Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*), Daniel Dennett (*Breaking the Spell*), Sam Harris (*The End of Faith*), and Christopher Hitchens (*God Is Not Great*).

As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we must admit right off that we cannot put God into a test tube and prove His existence by scientific methods. God is beyond proof. Our ability to understand God depends on the extent of His self-disclosure.

Among other ways, God reveals Himself to us (1) in creation (Gen. 1:1), (2) through the natural world (Ps.

living creatures of the sea, the birds of the air, all land animals (Gen. 1:20-22), and, finally, human beings as well (Gen. 1:27; Ps. 139:14). By faith, we accept the divine origin of life, based on the Bible's testimony of God as Creator and Sustainer of the universe (Heb. 11:1).

Many today, however, choose to believe otherwise. On September 10, 2008, thousands of scientists from 80 countries gathered at the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) facility in Switzerland to switch on the world's most powerful particle accelerator known as the Large Hadron Collider (LHC). The experiment was intended to prove the *big bang* theory of creation and indirectly refute



Why I Believe in GOD*

Each person must weigh the evidence.

By LIMONI MANU

19:1), (3) in our sense of morality and the innate longing for the divine, and (4) through Jesus Christ, the apex of God's self-disclosure (John 1:14; Heb. 1:1-3). God makes no apology for who He is. While God allows us room to doubt His existence, He also provides us with sufficient evidences to believe, so that we are without excuse (Rom. 1:19, 20).

Allow me to share a few reasons why I believe in God:

1. The beginning of all things

Think for a moment of the beginning of life. God claims direct responsibility for creating the heavens and earth (Gen. 1:1-3; Isa. 45:12, 18). He claims to have put in place the foundations of the earth and marked off its dimensions (Job 38:3-5). He claims to have created the

the biblical teaching of divine origin. But the outcome was not as scientists had expected; and contrary to what some had feared, there was no explosion, no black hole swallowing up parts of the region, nor did the world come to an end.

For me, the biblical Creation account stands unrefuted.

2. Evidences from the natural world

The earth has more than 11 million species of animal life, including human life; 300,000 species of flowering plants; 20,000 species of birds; and 5,000 reptiles. The planet itself is a fascinating example of extreme complexity: it must be just the right size and its angular velocity must be precise to ensure that seasons and land water ratios are in balance. The slightest interference to this complex cosmic function of

things would mean life or death for all living organisms.

What are the chances that all this complexity just happened? Remote! There must have been some intelligence behind all this. And for me, that says GOD.

The testimony of the natural world, while wordless, is eloquent (see Ps. 19:1). However warped and corrupted by sin (Acts 17:27), we may still see in the natural world an exhibition of God (Rom. 1:19, 20).

3. Morality and the innate longing for God

People at all times and in every place on earth have some sense of morality—even in the most isolated and culturally distinct places. The law of God is embedded in our conscience (Rom. 2:11-16). Everyone knows, “instinctively,” that it is wrong to murder another human being. Where did this moral sense come from? From God, I believe. He is the basis of all morality.

Like morality, the belief in the existence of a spiritual world and of a supreme being (or beings) is also a universal phenomenon. People everywhere show some form of devotion or worship. Some worship the “Unknown God,” as Paul told the people in Athens (Acts 17:22, 23). This innate instinct is, I believe, a direct consequence of God having “set eternity in the hearts of men” (Eccl. 3:11, NIV). We are incurably religious (cf. Acts 17:26, 27).

About this the famous French mathematician-philosopher-physicist Blaise Pascal is attributed to have written: “There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus” (*Pensees*).

4. The testimony of Jesus

Even though the natural world and human life point us toward God, they are insufficient to help us know God fully. The pinnacle of God’s revelation comes to us through Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1-3).

More than three hundred references in the Old Testament alone establish Christ’s credentials as Messiah. Jesus is the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15), born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14), in the town of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:1; John 7:42). He was to be called Lord (Ps. 110:1; Luke 2:11), Son of God (Ps. 2:7; 1 Chron. 17:11-14; Matt. 3:17; 16:16; Mark 9:7), and Immanuel—“God with us” (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23). His betrayal, by a friend, was predicted (Ps. 41:9; cf. Matt. 10:4)—for 30 pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12; cf. Matt. 26:15). He was to be forsaken by His disciples (Zech. 13:7; Mark 14:50) and crucified among thieves (Isa. 53:12; Matt. 27:38). And on the third day He was to be raised from the dead (Matt. 16:21; 17:9, 22, 23; 20:18, 19).

His life, death, and resurrection are well accepted facts of history. But what makes Jesus Christ unique and distinct

People at all times and in every place on earth have some sense of morality. The law of God is embedded in their conscience.

from all the other religious leaders—including Buddha, Mohammed, and Confucius—was His claim to be God (John 5:17, 18; 8:58; 10:30-33).

What we believe about Jesus Christ literally means life or death for us (John 3:36).

What Options Do We Have?

Three options lie before us: Jesus was a liar, a lunatic, or He was God.¹ If Jesus deliberately lied about His deity, then He was not only a hypocrite, He was evil. If Jesus sincerely believed that He was God when He was not, then He was a lunatic. But if His claims are true—that He was the Son of God—then we reject Him at our peril.

In the end it comes down to faith, which should not be strange for any of us. Every time we fly, for example, we exercise some measure of faith, faith in people and machines with which we are not personally familiar. Our heavenly journey is more secure than any airline flight could be. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).

For me, the providential evidences of God and Jesus are sufficient to warrant a total commitment on my part. And to believe in God and in Jesus Christ whom God has sent, is life—life eternal!²

*A version of this article appeared in the *South Pacific Division Record*, July 4, 2009.

¹ The following ideas have been deduced from Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict: Historical Evidence for the Christian Faith*, vol. 1 (San Bernardino, Calif.: Here’s Life Publishers, Inc., 1986), pp. 103-107.

² John 17:3.



Limoni Manu writes from Wanganui, New Zealand.

1 + 1 + 1 = One

The keystone of biblical theology

By
NORMAN R. GULLEY

“I don’t believe in the Trinity!” That’s what some Adventist pioneers concluded. In fact, questions on the Trinity continued for 87 years. It’s happening again today. Is history being repeated? *“Is God a Trinity?” “Does it really matter?” “Doesn’t Scripture say ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one’?”** (Deut. 6:4, cf. 4-9; 11:13-21; Num. 15:37-41).

What do we forfeit if God is only one Person? For one, Christ could not be our Savior. It took the Holy Spirit to bring Christ to Mary. It took the Father to answer Christ’s prayers and give Him needed help. That’s how important the Trinity is to us. Our eternal life depends upon this truth.



Norman R. Gulley is research professor in systematic theology at Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee. He is currently working on the fourth and final volume of his systematic theology, published by Andrews University Press.

The Lord Our God Is One

So why did God say, “The Lord our God is one”? In the ancient Near East there were numerous deities that surrounded and imperiled Israel. God knew His people would be attracted to these gods, and abandon Him. In that context He said, “I alone am God” (“there is no other,” Deut. 4:39). That’s why the prologue of the Ten Commandments states, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt.... You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:2, 3). Only the true God could save in the mighty rescue at the Red Sea! The word “one” focuses on God’s uniqueness, not on His being alone.

The English word “one” is used to translate two words in biblical Hebrew: *yāhīd* (unique, only son, Gen. 22:2) and *’ehād* (those united in marriage “become one flesh,” Gen. 2:24). “The Lord our God is one” translates *’ehād*, and means God is not solitary, even though He is unique. It suggests that God is united, or more than one Person. Scripture declares that God is love (1 John 4:8-16). Prior to the com-

mencement of any creation there was an eternity when God existed as love. God could not be love if He was solitary. For whom would He love? It takes more than one to love. So God’s nature requires that He be more than one Person.

Hints of the Trinity in the Old Testament

Scripture often indicates that God is more than one. Plurality is indicated in the following: In creation “God said [singular], ‘Let us [plural] make man in our image’” (Gen. 1:26). After sin’s entrance into the world, “the Lord God said [singular], ‘The man has now become like one of us [plural], knowing good and evil’” (Gen. 3:22). In response to the Tower of Babel builders God [singular] said, “Come, let us [plural] go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other” (Gen. 11:7). Isaiah said, “Then I heard the voice of the Lord say [singular], ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us [plural]?’” (Isa. 6:8). While focusing on one God to keep His people from

many gods, He allowed them to glimpse that one God is more than one Person. This is really about a different dimension. If God was only one Person, who would have ruled the universe when Christ was on earth, and where would God have been when Christ was in the tomb?

Scripture designates Father, Son, and Spirit as God. Let me just list a number of powerful examples. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1), and He created the universe through His Son (Heb. 1:1, 2). After Christ’s death “He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven” (Heb. 1:3). The Father said to Him, “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever” (verse 8). The Father called Christ God (cf. John 1:1-3, 14). Paul urged the Ephesians, “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God” through unloving talk and acts (Eph. 4:30). Peter told Ananias, “You have lied to the Holy Spirit” (Acts 5:3), and in so doing “You have not lied to men but to God” (verse 4).

Scripture Interpreting Scripture

Some say the Trinity is only explicit in the New Testament, not in the Old Testament. A good example is the Father speaking to Christ at His baptism and the Holy Spirit descending on Him as a dove (Matt. 3:16, 17). Another example is the gospel commission, sending His children to baptize in the name of all three (Matt. 28:19). A third example is Paul’s ending to his Second Epistle to the Corinthians: “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Cor. 13:14). So, clearly, the New Testament teaches the Trinity.

There is, however, more about the Trinity in the Old Testament than

some people realize. When Scripture interprets Scripture, we discover that the Old Testament makes a contribution to our topic. In Luke 4:18, 19 Christ read from Isaiah 61:1, 2, and in so doing recognized that the verses tell of His mission. In other words, Christ gave His commentary on these verses in Isaiah, noting that they speak of the Trinity as follows: “The Spirit [Holy Spirit] of the Sovereign Lord [the Father] is on me [Christ]” (Isa. 61:1).

There are several places in Isaiah where the Trinity is explicit. Here are three more examples: First, in Isaiah 42:1 it says: “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.” God the Father is speaking about His Son, to whom He will give His Holy Spirit. The New Testament corroborates that this passage from Isaiah was fulfilled in the healing ministry of Jesus (Matt. 12:15-21), who was sent by the Father (John 3:16, 17) and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:16, 17; Luke 4:18). Second, Isaiah 48:16 states: “Come near me and listen to this.... And now the Sovereign Lord [Father] has sent me [Christ], with his Spirit” [Holy Spirit]. Third, in Isaiah 63:7-16, reference is made to “the angel of His

presence” who “redeemed them” (verse 9, Christ), the Holy Spirit (verse 10), and the Father (verse 16).

If I was marooned on an island and could take only one book each from the Old and New Testaments, I would choose Isaiah and John. The Trinity is found in both. The Old Testament is about the love of God just as much as the New Testament. Isaiah 53 is one of the best biblical chapters on our Savior’s love for all of us. Isaiah presents the Trinity with greater specificity than any other Old Testament writer. The Old Testament gives evidence that God does not change (Mal. 3:6), a concept that is echoed in the New Testament as “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8).

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit love each other, and in so doing each one loves God and fellow beings (cf. Matt. 22:37-40). That love is eternal and reciprocal in their inner history, and overflows to enter human lives so we can reflect to some degree that love for God and for others. A solitary God could not be a God of love. What an awesome Trinity! ●

*All Scripture quotations have been taken from the New International Version.

Trinity

There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. He is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation. (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 14:7.)

By
ANDREW KING

Responding to a Need

*How church members worldwide
can make a difference*



Top: EDUCATION: The Adventist University of Central Africa will soon have a multipurpose building in which school assemblies and Sabbath worship services can be held for its student body of more than 2,200 students. **Right:** HEALTH: This small, urban health center will soon be replaced with a full-service hospital—complete with maternity and dental services—in Bujumbura, Burundi’s capital city.



The East-Central Africa Division (ECD) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church comprises nine countries: Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda. This division includes nearly two and a half million Seventh-day Adventist members, and it is growing rapidly.

Every Thirteenth Sabbath, a special offering is received in churches around the world. This quarter the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help fund three special projects in Rwanda and Burundi.

Medical Ministry

In Bujumbura, the capital city of Burundi, the Seventh-day Adventist Church operates a small urban health center. Seven more health care centers are scattered across the country. In Bujumbura the needs are great as this facility struggles to keep up with the high demand for its services. In addition to serving the general population, the center also works with nearby businesses.

“We currently have a partnership with nine private companies that ask us to provide care to their employees,”

says Evariste Sindayigaya, director of Health and Temperance for the Burundi Association.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a rich history of medical work. Medical missionaries have long met the immediate medical needs of people, just as Jesus did. Often this interaction is the first time a person comes into contact with a Seventh-day Adventist.

On a typical day more than 40 people visit the clinic for a variety of procedures. The small staff is forced to refer many of the patients to different care centers around the city. The lost revenue caused by turning away patients could have a serious impact on all eight Adventist medical centers in Burundi because income generated from this clinic helps fund the others, which are located in rural areas.

To meet the need for better facilities, the church plans to replace the health center with a fully staffed hospital—complete with a maternity ward and full dental service. In the past patients requiring dental work have had to travel great distances, even to neighboring countries, for care. This new hospital will bring quality comprehensive medical care to the people of Bujumbura. It will also fund the continued growth of smaller, rural health care centers across Burundi.

Education Ministry

Directly north of Burundi lies the country of Rwanda, known as the land of a thousand hills. The Adventist University of Central Africa was originally located in an idyllic setting among lush hills and away from the busy city. But during the violent genocide of the early 1990s, much of the university was destroyed and many lives were lost as people took refuge in university buildings.

After peace was restored, the university was given financial grants as part of the country's rebuilding effort to restore what was lost. Though the original location of the university was beautiful, memories of the genocide made rebuilding there difficult. University leaders decided to relocate the university to the top of a hill in the capital city of Kigali. By 2006, after much hard work, classes were being held in the newly finished central academic building. This new building covers more than 4,000 square meters and provides quality, Christ-centered, higher education to more than 2,200 students.

The university is quickly gaining a reputation for excellence. "This semester the minister of defense decided to send about 100 military officers to be trained in our institution," says Jozsef Szilvasi, former rector of the Adventist University of Central Africa. "The minister of labor uses our institution to train those who have lost their jobs; they finance the students. The minister of education has given about 20 scholarships to students who study in our institution. We are not marginalized as a Seventh-day Adventist institution in the country. We make a real contribution to society, and it is appreciated."

In addition to courses that focus on the teachings of Jesus, biblical history, and Adventist beliefs, the university holds two well-received Week of Prayer programs every school year. Almost half of the students who attend the university are not currently Seventh-day Adventists, so the school provides a perfect opportunity to share the Adventist faith.

The university lacks a facility for the student body to meet for assemblies, special programs—such as Week of Prayer—and most important, church services. Work has already begun on a multipurpose hall to meet this need.

"It will contain seats for at least 2,500 students," says architect Dominic Padarigan, "[including also] a balcony that will seat 300 students."

A facility, constructed with a portion of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering, will be a much-needed place where students can meet and worship together.

Dress Standards

The third project this quarter is centered in Rwanda, but will help the entire East-Central Africa Division.

Civil war and genocide devastated Rwanda in many

ways. One of the major challenges the country now faces is rebuilding its primary and secondary education systems.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church operates many primary schools across the country. These schools provide literacy training for the country's vast young population. Forty percent of the people in Rwanda are younger than 14 years old. This puts an incredible strain on the teachers who have taken on the challenge of educating a new generation.

Seventh-day Adventist schoolteachers across the East-Central Africa Division aren't always equipped to teach the subjects they are expected to teach. A portion of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help fund continuing education for our teachers, to help them learn the skills they need to provide a Christ-centered education for their students.

"We cannot help those kids if the teachers are not trained," says Joyce Musabe, director of Education and Children's Ministries for the Rwanda Union Mission. "We have teachers in our schools—even those who are in Sabbath school classes—but they need training."

After the genocide in 1994 many children were left as orphans. Traditionally, the government of Rwanda mandated that all students must wear uniforms to attend school. Since many orphans can't afford uniforms, they're allowed to bypass the rule and attend school without them. Still, Adventist schoolteachers have observed how not having uniforms affects these students.

"When they look alike in a classroom, there is a kind of a motivation, a kind of a feeling that they are not alone, a feeling that they are integrated into the classrooms with the other kids," says Musabe. "So when they don't look like others, they will surely think, *Why are we here? Who are we? Why are we different from others?*"

To help students feel they are not alone, part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help provide uniforms for orphans who attend Seventh-day Adventist schools in Rwanda.

Thank you for your continued support of the Thirteenth Sabbath and mission offerings. Thanks to church members like you, all around the world these special projects are helping touch lives for Jesus.

For more information about Adventist Mission, visit: www.AdventistMission.org.



Andrew King is a writer and editor for the Office of Adventist Mission.

QUESTION: *What does it mean that God searches “the reins and hearts” (Rev. 2:23, KJV)?*

The Bible associates certain emotional and psychological experiences with body organs. This is not totally foreign to the way we also use the language of emotions. In the English-speaking world the heart is the seat of emotions. We tell our spouses, “I love you with all my heart.” Obviously the reference is not to the physical organ inside our chests. We mean that our love comes from the very depth of our being, and is, therefore, genuine. In the Bible this practice is much more common. I will deal only with the usage of the term “kidneys” (“reins”).

1. A Physical Organ: The Israelites knew about the physical organ known as the kidneys. The kidneys of the sacrificial animals were burnt on the altar of sacrifices, probably because they were usually covered with fat (Ex. 29:13; Lev. 3:4), and the Israelites had been forbidden to consume the fat of animals. The Jewish thinker Philo of Alexandria (c.20B.C.-A.D. 45), appears to suggest that the kidneys were offered to God because they purified the blood (*Special Laws* 1:216). In Babylonian divinatory rituals the kidneys of some animals were used to predict the future. Thus, burning them on the altar was, for the Israelites, a rejection of such pagan practices. Like many other parts of the body, kidneys were used to designate the whole person (a part of the body represented the totality of the body or person). The psalmist writes, “You created my inmost being [*kelāyôth*, ‘kidneys’]” (139:13),* meaning “my body.” Since the kidneys were located in the innermost part of the human body, it was easy to use them metaphorically to designate the innermost aspects of human personality.

2. Seat of Emotions: The Israelites understood that emotions could not be separated from the physical body. The father tells his son, “My inmost being [kidneys] will rejoice when your lips speak what is right” (Prov. 23:16). In this case, the literal translation was avoided in English in order to indicate that the term “kidneys” is being used metaphorically to indicate that joy is deep and possesses the whole person. Negative emotions were also associated with the kidneys. When the psalmist wrote “my spirit [was]

embittered” (Ps. 73:21), he was literally saying, “my kidneys were pierced,” meaning that he was emotionally disturbed and in profound distress. The image is that of a person who has been pierced by an arrow to the kidneys and is in pain, fearing death, emotionally agonizing. In fact, Job describes his emotional distress by using the image of archers shooting arrows at him and piercing his kidneys (16:12, 13; cf. Lam. 3:13). His innermost being was emotionally upset.

3. Seat of Character: According to Jeremiah the people of Israel constantly spoke about God with their lips, but He was “far from their hearts [kidneys]” (12:2), that is to say, God’s message had not transformed their inner being. Here the kidneys are associated with character. In cases like this they become a synonym for the biblical term “heart,” which represents, among other things, the rational, moral qualities of a person. They symbolically refer to human self-awareness or the innermost mind. It could, then, designate the conscience. The psalmist may have had this in mind when he wrote, “Even at night my heart [kidneys] instructs me” (16:7).

4. Object of Divine Analysis: Since the kidneys are associated with character development, it is easy to conclude that God examines them. The phrase you quoted—God searches “the reins and the heart”—is used several times in the Old Testament. It assumes that God sees the innermost being of humans and can make righteous decisions based on that knowledge (Jer. 11:20; 17:10). The psalmist has nothing to hide, so he says to the Lord, “Test me, O Lord, and try me, examine my heart [kidneys] and my mind [*lēb*, ‘heart’]” (26:2). By examining the kidneys God can identify the wicked and bring to an end their violence (Ps. 7:9). The combination of kidneys and heart in the phrase indicates that God examines the totality of the person.

The use of human organs to refer to human emotions reveals that biblical writers had a wholistic understanding of human nature. The physical body was not detached from the spiritual and emotional sides of the person. ●

*Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations in this article are from the New International Version.

Body Parts and Heart RELIGION

By
ANGEL MANUEL
RODRÍGUEZ



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



GOD *the* Creator

By MARK A. FINLEY

Genesis, the Bible's first book, reveals timeless truths for each successive generation. Genesis was written by Moses during his wilderness wanderings, about 1,500 years before the time of Christ. The topics it addresses speak to our hearts in the twenty-first century.

In the next 12 lessons we will study together life-changing principles from Genesis. Although we will begin each study with the Bible's first book, we will journey through the Bible, following Scripture's pathway begun in Genesis. In each lesson we will not only discover truth, but understand how that particular truth relates to our personal lives. The purpose of Bible study is not merely to fill our minds with facts; it is to change our hearts. Let's begin our journey together.

1. What is the very first act of God recorded in the Bible?

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1).

He _____ the heavens and the earth.

Creation is a vitally important Bible truth. The very first verse of the very first book of the Bible declares that God is the Creator. If God did not create the world, as this verse says He did, the whole Bible is brought into question.

Read through Genesis 1 and count the number of times it uses the expressions "God said," "God made," "God created." Write your answer. _____

2. After creating the world and everything in it, how did God complete His work of Creation?

"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27).

God's crowning act in Creation was the creation of _____ and _____.

Creation speaks of our worth in God's sight. Since He created us, we are valuable. According to Psalm 33:15, God fashioned us individually. Whatever the circumstances of our lives, we are special to God. The One who created us will never forget us.

3. How did God create this earth?

"By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.... For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. 33:6, 9).

"By the _____ of the Lord were the heavens made."

"He _____, and it was _____."

God's word is powerful, so powerful that when He speaks, worlds come into existence. If His spoken word is so powerful, think of the life-changing power in His written Word as we study its teachings.



4. Out of what did God form the world?

“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible” (Heb. 11:3).

God made the things which are _____ not from things which are _____.

5. What does Creation tell us about the character and nature of God? Read the Bible passage below and list all the things it says about God:

“Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing.... Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable” (Isa. 40:26, 28).

The Creator God calls us by _____, by the greatness of His _____ and the strength of His _____. His _____ is unsearchable.

What a mighty God He is! He is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-wise. Yet He cares for us individually. He knows our names and loves us as individuals.

6. What is the basis of all true worship?

“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created” (Rev. 4:11).

God is worthy of our worship because He _____ all things.

If we simply evolved, why worship God at all? If we are the product of chance, there's really no reason to worship God. But since He created us, He is worthy of our highest praise and deepest worship.

7. Why does our understanding of Creation give us hope regarding the future?

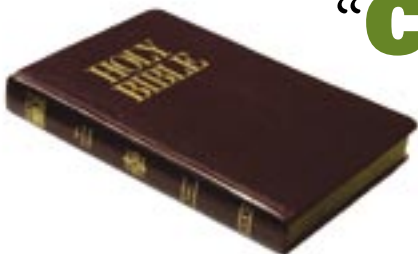
“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create” (Isa. 65:17, 18).

Since God created this world in the beginning, we can rejoice that one day He will _____ new _____ and a new _____.

The Bible truth of Creation is filled with hope. God made us. God cares for us. One day He will create new heavens and a new earth where righteousness will reign forever. This earth will be restored to its original splendor, and we will live with Him forever. This is something to rejoice about today.

Next month we will consider

**“Creation and
End-time Truths.”**



LETTERS

Altering My Future

Thank God for the article “What Have We Done?” by Thurman C. Petty, Jr. (December 2009). Through it God changed my day, my week, and for sure my whole life.

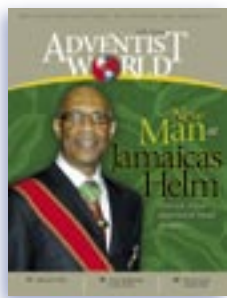
JOSEPH TAMO FEWMAN
Yaoundé, Cameroon



Listeners

I’m greatly blessed by the editorial “An Audience of One,” by Bill Knott (November 2009). It has alerted me to those fleeting bits of human drama where we are overwhelmed by a sense of elation to the extent of developing pride, which has eternal results. Wishing for an audience of specific people or a multitude, feeling that we are worthy to be noticed, is useless. It reminds me to weigh every action, thought, or word, however little they may appear.

KITHAKA MUTEGI
Nyeri, Kenya



God’s Servant First

I read the wonderful news that Patrick L. Allen governs Jamaica (“New Man at Jamaica’s Helm,” July 2009). His life will make

a difference for this position. I will be praying that he may continue to be a light in the darkness of this world as we look toward the end, when we will see the One for whom our souls long—Jesus, our blessed Savior. Alleluia!

LOURENÇO GONZALEZ
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Creation

The July 2009 issue (“Honoring the Creator God,” by Angel Manuel Rodríguez) and the August 2009 issue (“Creation Wonders,” by John T. Baldwin, Leonard R. Brand, Arthur Chadwick, and Randall W. Younker) refer to a division that tends to arise between the children of God, brothers in Christ, on one topic: Creation. I am praying that we all look to Jesus, the source of light. I have also advised supporters of different schools to read and ponder the words of Paul in Romans 12:2, 3.

NGUIMBOUS DIEUDONNÉ
Yaoundé, Cameroon

Regarding Youth and Young Adults

Thanks for *Adventist World* magazine. I read the article written by Pastor Jan Paulsen entitled “Five Things I Have Learned” (May 2009). In the article he wrote: “Continually focusing inward can also be discouraging. If we’re honest, we’ll see many flaws in our church.” I really support the statement, but we can decide to make some situations to help the young ones and the leaders of tomorrow as the Lord has directed us.

I am suggesting that the young adults should be more involved in our programs rather than being pushed aside or looked on as immature. The youth in our churches should be allowed always to take up Sabbath school programs. Likewise, the divine service should be supervised by our pastors and elders while they involve



young adults in the sacred services.

There are lots of things for us to do outside the sanctuary. We cannot reharvest already-harvested crops; neither can we follow Jesus without a mission. Our mission should not always revolve around programs organized for ourselves. May our vision grow to see Christ return.

B. OGUNJIMI
Via e-mail

Questioning the Answer

I felt the column “Raised Hands in Worship,” by Angel Manuel Rodríguez (February 2009), was unfair. When the Holy Spirit touches our hearts through music it is almost impossible for some of us not to respond in a thoughtful yet physical way by raising our hands to God as an affirmation of our love for Him. Music touches our souls.

Some music has the power to bring us to tears. Those tears are simply a physical response from our hearts toward our wonderful Creator. The same is true with our arms raised in praise. Please don’t find fault with such a simple yet meaningful way to express our love for our heavenly Father.

SHIRLEY KARLS
Chico, California, United States

Sharing His Faith

I liked the story “A Daniel in Moscow,” by Andrew McChesney (July 2008). I will use it in my “Life and Teachings of Jesus” class at Dominican Adventist University. It will be a blessing for the students. God bless you.

JOEL ALONZO
*Santo Domingo,
Dominican Republic*

LETTERS

Adventist World Outreach

I was walking in our city with one of my Congolese brothers and found your magazine *Adventist World*. It prompted me to write. I ask for brochures, a Bible, and a book of biblical history.

NGWEJI KOJI
Kasaji, Congo

Appreciation Expressed

Greetings from Ghana and all Seventh-day Adventist Church members: I affirm you for the good work you are doing in proclaiming the true gospel of Jesus Christ through *Adventist World*.

BRIGHT OKINE
Kumasi, Ghana

“Weigh every action, thought, or word, however little they may appear.”

—KITHAKA MUTEGI
Nyeri, Kenya

I am secretary of health ministries for the church district of Makindye in Kampala, Uganda. We dearly love to read and enjoy inspiring articles of *Adventist World*, especially the missionary stories, in which we see the power of God changing people's lives. These encourage us to continue to preach, nurture, and equip our friends.

ROBERT MUTALYA
Kampala, Uganda

Life as a youth is so tempting. Your prayers strengthen my faith in God. *Adventist World* magazine really encourages our lives.

MARTIN MSWALI
Nairobi, Kenya

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



THE PLACE OF PRAYER

Thank you very much for your prayers for me through my exams. God did come through for me as He usually does. I thank God for people like you every day.

MALCOLM, *West Indies*

I ask for prayer for my beloved mother and father. Both have not been in good health.

VANESA, *Chile*

I have been a teacher for the past three years, but was suspended from my job because I put much of my time in serving my church. Pray that I may get fees or a sponsor for a theology course that will allow me to do work of this kind if it's God's will that I serve Him this way.

HABIYAKALE, *Uganda*

Please remember me in your prayers. I'm on my last lap of training at Spicer Memorial College. I'm facing financial constraints for my college fees, and am also planning to get married early next year.

TINTIN, *India*

Pray for financial blessings for me and my family. My husband is unemployed. He has done mechanics and is very qualified. I am also praying for a house, even if I put down a slab and build one room—it will be OK.

ETHEL, *Zambia*

Pray that God will open doors in my life and intervene. I feel lost because of the many problems in my life.

DORICE, *Cameroon*

I am an Adventist student and plan to continue my postgraduate studies in France. I pray God will grant that my application is accepted and help me find a host family.

OBA, *Ivory Coast*

Please pray for me and my health, and for my family. Thank you so much.

MARTI, *United States*

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



EXCHANGE
OF IDEAS

Steady HOPE in His Blood

This month a reader shares how Christ's love and mercy can wash us of sin.

As ashamed by the so many mistakes (sins) committed, and the permanence of every bad stain that seems not to go away, every day we fall, and when once we get up, we make the same mistake again consciously, looking for something more, searching for a little pleasure that can fill the emptiness and loneliness inside, something to satisfy the soul, spirit, and flesh within. But everything turns out to be the destruction of the soul itself, the certain depression of the temple of God.

As once I fell, I was raised up by the Spirit of Jesus, by the certainty of His forgiveness, by the knowledge of His grand love. Filled by His grace, by the wonders of His mercy, and by His precious acceptance, I am accepted just as I am. Just as I am . . . such a deceitful and stained being as I, who always betrays His forgiveness. . . . Who can understand? I don't completely understand myself.

It must be a decision to walk on the right way; to keep myself on behalf of Jesus; to not look behind; to keep my eyes, my mind, my whole soul on Jesus and His love. It is a decision! We need His help; we need so much from God every day—not only the knowledge of His love, but His strength to overcome evil with goodness, to fill every empty space and every need from Him, to put the desires of the flesh away and deny ourselves, to purify our minds every day by His Word, and to listen quietly to His voice.

But even now, just as we are, He *accepts* us and forgives. He has mercy. Now He erases, now He throws every burden to the sea and decides to start a brand-new day, a brand-new way. It is now when He's giving us a new opportunity to know Him, to be close to Him, to be who we must be—simply His children who praise Him.

We are blessed. Let's call on His name—and believe. Do not look at the stain; do not look at the dark hole, or the missteps, or sad mistakes. Just look at His love, look at His eyes; focus on His love and feel it inside. He looked for your soul and now you feel repented, and He's washing you with His blood and making you clean every day.

From now on, we will seek first for His kingdom; we will find it and hold on to it and share it with every other soul. That's the way that, being washed by His blood, we will be saved.

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

—ROSSE MESA DIAZ, *clinical psychology, Dominican Republic*

“Behold, I come quickly...”

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

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The PEOPLE'S PLACE

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS THIS?



SUBMITTED BY MARVIN RAMOS

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“The beautiful Sabbath truth is the logical destination of an extended Reformation.”

—John Paulson, from his sermon “The Prophetic Gift,” referring to the church’s continued work in the ongoing “Great Reformation” of God’s people; at the Seventh-day Adventist church in Pipestone, Minnesota, United States.

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR

“Here I am, send me,”* April Cabuena prayed when she graduated from Mountain View College in the Philippines. The Lord did not fail to grant her request. He sent her as a volunteer to Ukraine, where she is currently teaching English as a Second Language and helping out with Friday night Bible classes for the language school’s students. For Cabuena the best thing about volunteer service is the people she serves. “The laughter and smiles of the new friends I meet make me feel so grateful,” she says.

Though she admits that volunteer service has its challenges, Cabuena is enjoying her time in Ukraine and encourages others to serve as well. “Volunteers for Christ are needed,” she says. “Join the good fight and finish the race so we can all go home to heaven. What a day that will be!”

—Courtesy of Adventist Volunteer Service; for more information, visit www.adventistvolunteers.org.

* See Isaiah 6:8.

ADVENTIST LIFE

I am privileged to live in the land of fields and streams among the majestic mountains of Washington State, where many take fishing seriously—especially in nearby Yakima River.

During Sabbath school recently, a member told about his friend who had caught more than his limit when the game warden came along, took all his fish, and left. Later that warden found the fisherman, returned all the fish cleaned, and said, “Don’t ever do that again!”

My friend said, “When I think of the grace of that game warden, I could never think of breaking the law again!”

The apostle Paul wrote: “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? ... Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Rom. 6:14-16, KJV).

—Dick Rentfro, Thorp, Washington, United States



ANSWER: In South Korea children pray with an adult leader at the K.L.D. (Kids In Discipleship) program at the Baekseok church. Both the children and the village’s non-Adventist children enjoy the program.