

The International Paper for Seventh-day Adventists

June 2012

# ADVENTIST WORLD



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in the Church

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But Indivisible

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# ADVENTIST WORLD

June 2012

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## Beyond the Expected

*“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word” (Acts 10:44).*

I’ll admit that this passage of Scripture always makes me smile, if only because the preacher gets interrupted by the moving of the Spirit. In the midst of Peter’s explanation to the household of Cornelius about God’s freedom to bestow grace on whomever He wills, the Spirit does a surprising thing. He does not wait for the sermon to end, or even for the thought to finish. Suddenly, those who have previously been designated as outside the people of God are visibly and unmistakably the recipients of the same Holy Spirit power that was first poured out at Pentecost. The result is “astonishment”—and ultimately, acceptance and affirmation.

Among the many lessons found in the Book of Acts, this one has particular importance for God’s people today. The freedom of the Holy Spirit to cause what He will, stir up what He chooses, and create new life among us should come as good news—even where that new life does not appear in a way that we expected. Faithfulness to the three angels’ messages and the biblical message of Seventh-day Adventism ought to allow us to extend our support and encouragement to many Spirit-driven ministries. The right questions are these: *Do these new things bear witness to the truths of Scripture? Are they in harmony with the fundamental beliefs of Adventism? Are they confirmed by the principles of the Spirit of Prophecy?* New ministries or movements that pass these tests deserve—and need—our love and encouragement.

Read this month’s cover feature about new things happening in Europe—and other places, and see with us the unmistakable signs of the Spirit’s moving and direction. Don’t be surprised if you are surprised—and delighted.

*Bill Kautz*



## WORLD REPORT

# Groundbreaking *for* Adventist University in Liberia

Local Seventh-day Adventist Church officials in West Africa held a groundbreaking ceremony recently for the construction of an Adventist university in Liberia, the first denominational tertiary institution in the nation and the fourth in the church’s West-Central Africa Division.

The school will be called Adventist University of West Africa, so named for its location within the denomination’s West African Union Mission, with headquarters in Monrovia, Liberia’s capital. The construction site is located on 100 acres of land in Gbeh Town in Margibi County.

When completed, the school will initially launch as a junior college and offer two-year associate degrees in education, business, nursing, and theology.

Government officials have previously commended the Adventist Church for its contribution to education in the nation. The church there operates several elementary and secondary schools, including the country’s only boarding school.

The development of a university marks the church’s first tertiary education offering in Liberia, and church officials hope to contribute to national development following periods of civil war.

Shelton Beedoe, acting president of the Adventist University of West Africa, was quoted in a local newspaper, *The Inquirer*, as saying the university would offer a “new dynamism” to the educational sector of Liberia and that the university will make a difference among other universities in the nation.

Liberia’s director of the National Commission on Higher Education said the Adventist Church’s development of a university was “long overdue,” since the beginning of Adventist work in the country 83 years ago.

The commissioner also said the endeavor supports the government’s Poverty Reduction Strategy in the area of manpower development.



PHOTO COURTESY WAD

**UNIVERSITY CONSTRUCTION:** Adventist education leaders in West Africa speak at the groundbreaking ceremony for the future Adventist University of West Africa, located near Monrovia, Liberia. The school will be the first Adventist university in the country.

*Continued on next page* ▶

## WORLD REPORT

Liberian and Adventist leaders attended the March 27 ceremony, including the assistant minister of operation of the Ministry of Public Works, members of the National Legislature, and J. A. Kayode Makinde, president of the church's Babcock University in Nigeria.

According to *The Inquirer*, Makinde said, "AUWA needs to grow so as to meet the educational needs of Africa to reduce the illiteracy rate and reduce the poverty rate around the continent."

During the ceremony, a representative of the denomination's Columbia Union Conference presented a \$50,000 check to the construction project. Columbia Union is the administrative unit of the Adventist Church in the Eastern Mid-Atlantic region of the United States.

The establishment of the university dates back to 2003, when Liberia's legislature granted a university charter to the Adventist Church's Liberia Mission. But the project was delayed by civil skirmishes and the lack of a permit from the National Commission on Higher Education. The permit was later granted in 2010, and the Liberia Mission acquired land for the project.

The school will be the eighteenth Adventist university in Africa.

Liberia is home to some 3.8 million people, with approximately 26,000 Adventist Church members, according to local records.

—*Emmanuel Gamoe Kla George with Ansel Oliver*

### Guatemala Outreach Yields Baptisms

■ The Central American nation of Guatemala has been playing host to big evangelism efforts by both



LIBNA STEVENS/IAD

**BAPTISMS:** In Guatemala five pastors baptized new Adventist Church members in Lake Atitlan in Panajachel on April 1. The baptisms were part of meetings in which church leaders from throughout Central America met in Guatemala to coordinate mass efforts of sharing the gospel throughout the region.

training evangelists and holding local campaigns, which have yielded results in thousands of new members.

Leaders for the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Inter-American Division held an evangelism training summit in April to coincide with the culmination of local efforts.

The Adventist Church in Guatemala has been evangelizing aggressively this year, holding more than 1,000 campaigns resulting in nearly 5,000 baptisms in three months, said Gustavo Menendez, personal ministries director for the church in Guatemala.

This month's training summit brought together about 50 pastors for continuing education on conducting public evangelism.

The bulk of local campaigns have also included leadership by lay members. The Adventist Church's Vision 60,000 program here is part of the division's call to involve 1 million lay members for discipleship building.

Abraham Tzic, field secretary of the 16,000-member Northwest Adventist Mission office in Totonicapan, said 1,200 active church members have registered in the discipleship program since October 2011. The region aims to have 3,000 by the end of 2012.

Like many ministers in the region, Tzic pastors more than 25 churches.

With a shortage of pastors, Vision 60,000 has drawn more participation from church members and laypeople who have taken it upon themselves to reach those around them with the gospel, with positive results, said Guenther Garcia, president of the Adventist Church in Guatemala.

"So far, this has been a record-breaking year for Guatemala," Garcia said.

A baptism of more than 300 people in Lake Atitlan on April 1 drew spectators to see the results of their months-long efforts to bring the gospel to their friends and neighbors. The Adventist Church in Guatemala typically holds a mass baptism in the lake each year on the last Sunday of the first quarter, Menendez said.

—*Libna Stevens, Inter-American Division*

### Millions of Books Shared in One-Day Outreach

■ Before the start of a massive March 24 evangelistic outreach in São Paulo, Brazil's largest city, Ted N. C. Wilson, General Conference president, had encouraging words: "Everyone can be part of God's remnant church."

Speaking to a congregation of 2,000 at the São Paulo Adventist Uni-

versity Center (UNASP) Church—with another 5,000 to 6,000 viewing a broadcast at other locations—Wilson said he planned to join thousands of church members that day in distributing what turned out to be 4 million copies of *The Great Hope*, an outreach book based on *The Great Controversy*, by Ellen G. White, a pioneering cofounder of the Seventh-day Adventist movement. A total of 25 million books are to be distributed throughout the South American Division in one day, he noted.

Officials in the South American Division emphasized that the March 24 effort is not an isolated venture. The following Sabbath, March 31, was a “friendship day” in which neighbors were invited to participate in an Adventist worship service and lunch with Adventist families. The goal of the “Impact Hope” campaign is to inspire Seventh-day Adventists in the South American Division to live a life-



**SHARING HOPE:** Adventist world church president Ted Wilson poses with a group of volunteers holding copies of *The Great Hope*, a sharing book based on church cofounder Ellen G. White’s classic, *The Great Controversy*. Wilson participated in a March 24 distribution of 4 million copies of the book in São Paulo.

SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION

style of personal evangelism.

For his part, Wilson lauded the division’s massive one-day literature outreach, and said other world church divisions could benefit from similar programs.

“The beauty of all this is that it motivated the entire church on every socioeconomic level to participate in distributing the book to loved ones, friends, neighbors, and others,” Wilson wrote later in an e-mail message. “It got the church out into the community to meet the people, and the Holy Spirit blessed the efforts enormously. . . . It has shown that a single-event approach, along with every other personal outreach activity and local church outreach, can be a huge rallying point to galvanize God’s people for witnessing and missionary work. Divisions and unions around the world need to use this approach to bring church members together in something that is far bigger and grander than anything we could do individually.”

Along with a burgeoning Adventist medical missionary outreach in the region, Wilson said literature distribution is a key means by which megacities such as São Paulo, with a municipal population of 11.3 million (and an additional 8 million in the surrounding metropolitan area) are to be reached. The city will also be one of 12 host cities when Brazil welcomes the 2014 FIFA World Cup soccer championships.

“The world church has committed itself to distribute 175 million copies of *The Great Hope* and the larger version [*The Great Controversy*] this year and next year,” Wilson told the congregation.

Wilson added, “God uses His Word to change people’s lives. He uses books

like this [*The Great Hope*] to change peoples’ lives.”

That change was evident in the life and testimony of Sheyla Guimarães, a homemaker from the city of Mineiros do Tietê, about 140 miles (225 kilometers) from the city. Her video testimony was played during the worship service, and described the story of a spiritual seeker who was dissatisfied. In October 2011 Guimarães’s daughter found a copy of *The Great Hope* in the family’s mailbox. She “devoured” the book, and said she found answers that were not provided in other churches. Today she’s a Seventh-day Adventist.

Guimarães and her daughter came to the platform and were greeted by Wilson and other church leaders. She told Wilson and the congregation how happy she was to be a part of the family of God.

—Mark A. Kellner, news editor

## European Youth Rally to Evangelism, Commitment

■ Approximately 1,300 Seventh-day Adventist youth from several European nations assembled in Mannheim, Germany from April 5-9 for an annual prayer and worship conference called Youth in Mission. This year’s included guest speakers Dwight Nelson, pastor of Pioneer Memorial church in Berrien Springs, Michigan; and Martin Pröbstle, a pastor and theology professor at the Adventist Seminary Schloss Bogenhofen in Austria.

The results of the event can be captured in numbers, but only as a beginning: 180 participants decided to spend one year working for Jesus, 140 decided to get baptized, 37 said they want to become Adventist pastors, and

*Continued on next page* ▶

more than 600 are going to study Ellen White's book *The Great Controversy* during the next 12 months. More than 800 young people joined the outreach on Sabbath afternoon and visited people in the city of Mannheim.

"God changed me inside out during this congress," said Fabian Raudies, from Bietigheim, Germany. "I got answers to so many questions, felt welcome in this unique family, and was looking forward to every sermon. I got to know similar thinking people, people with similar questions, and I could talk to them and get encouragement."

Added Johannes Waniek, from Kraichtal, Germany, a conference organizer: "In my heart the YiM conference holds a very special place. God talks to me, talks to other people through me, and [this] is where I catch fire for this task. This is where my place is, this is where I want to be."  
—Kathrin Müller



YOUTH IN MISSION PHOTO TEAM

**CROWD OF WITNESSES:** Some of the hundreds of young people and adult participants in the annual Youth in Mission conference, which drew young Seventh-day Adventist adults from around Europe to Mannheim, Germany.

By Andre Brink, associate communication director, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, reporting from China

## In China, Adventist Believers Display Spirit of Service, Sacrifice

*Humble beginnings for Beiguan Church;  
member donations fund construction*

The young man looked left to make sure that he was perfectly lined up with his coworkers. Then he straightened his tie.

"We have been looking forward to this visit from Adventist church leaders for a very long time," student Elisha Ding said. Ding is one of more than 100 young people being trained for ministry at the Beiguan Adventist Church in Shenyang, in the northern Chinese province of Liaoning.

Dressed in black suits, young men and women lined the walkway singing songs of welcome as a delegation from Adventist world church headquarters walked toward the church for evening worship. Led by world church president Ted N. C. Wilson, the delegation was on an official 10-day visit to China to meet church members and local leaders.

"The foundation of the Beiguan Church is based on service and sacri-

fice," said Adventist world church secretary G. T. Ng. "This church needs an enormous number of workers to run these church plants because they don't have a formal church system," he added.

Young people are trained for one year and during this time are given various responsibilities by their supervisors. After one year the best students are hand picked for additional theological training. Some students are also sent abroad as missionaries to various countries.

"All our students are self-supporting and need to fund themselves," said Hao Ya Jie, church and school leader.

Beiguan Church had humble beginnings with 20 members meeting in someone's home. Later it shared a church in downtown Shenyang, later rented a church, and finally had enough savings to build its own four-story building.



**PRESIDENTIAL GREETING:** Seventh-day Adventist world church president Ted N.C. Wilson (top) greets members of the Beiguan Church during a recent tour of China. The congregation has grown from 20 members meeting in a home to a 3,000-member community of Adventist believers. **PARTNERSHIP PLANTS CONGREGATION:** Adventist believers (bottom) worship in Meilizhou Church on a recent Sabbath. The church resulted from a partnership between a local church elder and property developer whose upscale resort lacked a church.

PHOTOS: SUK HEE HAN

Many members took savings that they had kept for their children's education and donated it to the church. People also gave much of their retirement savings. With winter approaching, construction workers had to pour the concrete for the main pillars of the church in time to prevent cracking.

"The concrete had just been poured when a cold front passed causing great concern," said Chinese

Union president David Kok Hoe Ng. "Most church members brought their blankets from home and wrapped these around the pillars to save the building. It was quite a sight to see all these brightly colored blankets," he added.

Today the Beiguan Adventist Church has more than 3,000 members and has generated numerous church plants totaling another 7,000 members. Every morning at 5:00, 365 days

a year, church members come to the church to pray.

"The winters in the north are very cold, and sometimes there are not too many people, but there are always at least 100 members praying every morning," Ng said.

Wilson reminded church members that God is calling them to carry on the work of revival and reformation. "You are a vital part of God's worldwide people who are moving towards the Second Coming of Christ, a destiny that Christ himself has provided," Wilson said.

The day before the delegation visited the cultural city of Hangzhou, where Wilson greeted church members at Meilizhou Church inside an upmarket resort development.

This church also came about through sacrifice and the commitment and vision of key church members. A church elder and businessman saw an opportunity and contacted a friend who was a property developer. He told him that his resort had almost everything but one important element—a church.

The church elder contributed 25 percent of the funding and the developer paid the rest to build a church centrally located in the upmarket resort. Meilizhou church's membership is growing steadily as it serves the surrounding community.

"It is incredible to see the way our members are sacrificing their time and means to move forward the work of the Lord," said Adventist world church treasurer Robert E. Lemon. "To see how our members have been able to build such a strong and vibrant church based almost completely on local volunteer support is thrilling."

The churches in China are a testament to God's blessings when members are willing to sacrifice time, talents, and money. ■

Whenever a group of people get together, the potential for conflict is invariably there—even among Christians. From the beginning of the Christian church, even earlier, there has been conflict among believers.

How should we faithful Seventh-day Adventists deal with conflict, particularly when it surfaces in the church?

The book of Acts provides striking examples and a sound biblical foundation for dealing with at least three types of conflict within the church. Through its stories we discover believers in conflict over physical needs, theological beliefs, and with each other. The creative and godly ways in which these conflicts were handled provide worthy models for us to follow in the church today.

### Practical Conflict Resolution

After Pentecost the apostles cared for church finances and the distribution of necessities to the believers (see Acts 4:34, 35). However, as the numbers increased, so did the logistical and practical challenges.

“Now in those days, when the number of disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution” (Acts 6:1). Realizing they could no longer carry all of the responsibilities in the fast-growing church, the apostles recognized it was time to delegate some of their duties to others so they would be free to preach the gospel widely.

The apostles invited *those aggrieved* to “seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business” (verse 3). Everyone was satisfied with this suggestion. They appointed seven men to fulfill this important role. The apostles prayed and “laid



# Conflict IN THE Church

By TED N. C. WILSON

## *Working Toward Consensus*

hands on them” (verse 6), ordaining the first deacons of the Christian church—in response to conflict.

Through prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit the conflict was resolved. “Then the word of God spread; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith” (verse 7).

### Theological Conflict Resolution

Antioch, located more than 300 miles (480 kilometers) north of Jerusalem, had a large, growing church. This city, third in importance after Rome and Alexandria, was a center of missionary activity. The church’s membership was made up of many classes of people, both Jews and Gentiles.

Some of the Jewish converts were concerned that Gentile converts would carry some of their unwelcome practices into the Christian church. Hoping to guard against this, as well as wanting to retain their distinctiveness as Jews, the Hebrew Christians insisted that Gentile converts must be circumcised. While this was certainly an issue with religious aspects, it was

also difficult for early Christians to set aside their national heritage and their rights and privileges as Jews. They were being called to rise above their pride as citizens of Israel and to express their newfound identity as citizens of a higher kingdom.

For many this seemed like an unattainable divide. Political and separatist tendencies led to disunity and division. The wrangling and contention within the church was so fierce that there arose the fear of a split. Finally Paul and Barnabas, along with other church representatives, went to Jerusalem to meet with the apostles and elders, along with delegates from the other churches in order to resolve the issue. Those in Antioch agreed to stop the controversy and wait for the Jerusalem Council’s decision.

The way this theological conflict was addressed at the Jerusalem Council is outlined in Acts 15.

**They held a general council meeting.** Since Christ is the head of the church, and no one on earth can claim that right, it is important that church leaders and representatives discuss important matters affecting the



church by asking for the Holy Spirit's guidance. So we are told, "The apostles and elders came together to consider this matter" (Acts 15:6).

**Time for open discussion was provided.** A clear description of the situation in Antioch was given, then delegates were able to discuss the question: Was it necessary for Gentile converts to be circumcised in order to be accepted into the body of Christian believers?

A lively discussion followed, with everyone having an opportunity to speak. At last Peter spoke, reminding the council about his vision of the unclean animals, and the voice from heaven telling him, "What God has cleansed you must not call common" (Acts 11:9). He described his meeting with Gentiles in Caesarea and how he had seen the Holy Spirit descend on them, just as on the Jewish believers.

Paul and Barnabas supported Peter's point by giving examples of how they too had seen the Holy Spirit working among the Gentiles.

**Main thoughts were summarized and compared with Scripture, and a proposal was presented.** After everyone had opportunity to speak, James, who was chairing the meeting, summarized the main points and compared Peter's testimony with what the Scriptures had prophesied: "'And I will restore it, so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name,' says the Lord, who makes these things known from long ago" (Acts 15:16-18, NASB).

Seeing that Peter's testimony *agreed with Scripture*, James proposed "that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood" (verses 19, 20).

**A consensus was reached, and the decision was put in writing and delivered to the Gentile believers in**

**Antioch.** After listening to James's proposal, the apostles and elders agreed that this was the right course to pursue. A letter explaining the council's decision was delivered by Paul, Barnabas, and other Christians from Jerusalem.

While the Gentiles were grateful for this outcome, not everyone was pleased. Ellen White wrote: "There was a faction of ambitious and self-confident brethren who disagreed with it. . . . They indulged in much murmuring and faultfinding, proposing new plans and seeking to pull down the work of the men whom God had ordained to teach the gospel message. From the first the church has had such obstacles to meet and ever will have till the close of time" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 196, 197).

### **Resolving Interpersonal Conflict Between Christians**

From time to time, even among Christians, there is interpersonal conflict. Such was the case between Paul and Barnabas as they were about to leave Antioch. Wanting to encourage other believers, the two prepared for their journey. However, when Barnabas suggested bringing the younger John Mark with them, Paul refused. The young missionary had deserted them once already when things got difficult, and Paul was not ready to have to deal with him again. (Acts 15:36-40)

Barnabas, however, saw potential in John Mark and wanted to encourage him in gospel work. The two experienced missionaries disagreed sharply and finally ended up going their separate ways, with Barnabas taking John Mark, and Paul taking Silas.

Fortunately, that is not the end of the story. Through the mentoring of Barnabas, John Mark became a strong worker for the Lord and later reconciled with Paul, who referred to him as "a comfort to me" (Col. 4:11) and as "useful to me for ministry" (2 Tim. 4:11).

What can we learn from this conflict between two well-respected church leaders?

They kept the disagreement between the two of them, and did not involve other leaders or the corporate church.

When they were unable to come to an agreement, they decided to go their separate ways for a time rather than prolong the conflict.

They still respected each other and did not speak ill of the other, allowing each to continue as an effective worker for the Lord.

### **Biblical Basis of Church Governance**

Next spring (2013) we Seventh-day Adventists will celebrate 150 years of a church organization built on a biblical, God-given system of governance. It's a system that seeks to build consensus led by the Holy Spirit, based on consistency with His Word.

Any visitor to the world church headquarters will notice that one of the most prominent architectural features of the building are the glass-enclosed committee rooms where church leaders meet to pray, discuss, and vote on important items affecting the world church. Rather than being governed by an oligarchy, the church works through committees and is dependent upon the working of the Holy Spirit to lead and guide as issues are discussed and voted.

The church system throughout its various levels of administration, from the local church to the conference/mission to the union to the division/General Conference level, and, of course, at worldwide sessions of the General Conference, use methods of consensus and democratic voting after seeking God's guidance through the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, earnest prayer, and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

As we look to and follow the examples of the early church as recorded in



# A One-Day Church

A Sabbath Day's Journey: El Triunfo, Ecuador

the book of Acts, we too can be assured of God's leading in our past, present, and future. God is calling us to be united in His Word and work together under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul invited Christ's followers to participate in the "ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18).

As we near the end of this world, we must not allow the devil to divide the church with controversy or conflict. Let us plead with the Lord for revival and reformation leading to the latter rain of the Holy Spirit that will keep us united in our biblical beliefs and our mission to this world. We must follow the example of the early disciples as we fulfill God's designs for us as His last-day disciples.

Ellen White wrote: "More than eighteen centuries have passed since the apostles rested from their labors, but the history of their toils and sacrifices for Christ's sake is still among the most precious treasures of the church. This history, written under the direction of the Holy Spirit, was recorded in order that by it the followers of Christ in every age might be impelled to greater zeal and earnestness in the cause of the Savior" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 593).

May God guide His church, and each of us personally, as we unitedly participate in the ministry of reconciliation, looking to the Holy Spirit to guide us in reaching consensus as we utilize the church's representative and democratic process in decision-making. ■

\* Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the *New American Standard Bible*, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.



**Ted N. C. Wilson** is president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.



BRENDA DUERKSEN



DICK DUERKSEN



DICK DUERKSEN

**PARTNERS IN MINISTRY:** Carlos (left) stands with Victor, the head elder of the one-day church in El Triunfo. **OUT WITH THE OLD:** The old church in El Triunfo (center) served the congregation for many years. **IN WITH THE NEW:** The new church building (right) is not only more comfortable, it is also sturdier, better able to withstand harsh weather.

"It was just what we did," says Carlos. "From when I was 15 years old until now, every Sabbath we would leave our house at 5:00 a.m. and begin the 20-kilometer [12.5-mile] walk to the village of El Triunfo. It took about five hours each way, and was difficult because we climbed more than 3,000 feet and crossed many rivers. But every Sabbath our family walked into the mountains to preach at the tiny Adventist church in El Triunfo."

"It's true!" proclaims Victor, one of the 25 church members in El Triunfo. "They came every Sabbath. They gave Bible studies. They preached sermons. They taught us to sing songs about the return of Jesus. They loved us! We have salvation today because of Carlos, his family, and his friends."

Today you can drive to El Triunfo if you have a sturdy vehicle and lots of time. But the small wooden structure the congregation once used for church is now empty and dark. Instead, just a little farther up the mountain is a brand-new church with a concrete floor, glass windows, electricity, and handmade doors.

"We would never have built the new church," says Victor, the local head elder, "if the One-Day steel church had not come here. But I agreed to donate a piece of my land, and when the Maranatha men built the one-day church, we were inspired to give more and work harder. Carlos and many others joined us, and now we have a complete church. Do you like it?"

*The One-Day Church program is a collaborative effort between the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Adventist-laymen's Services and Industries (ASI), and Maranatha Volunteers International. These stories come to you each month from Maranatha storyteller Dick Duerksen.*





# Eye Health

By ALLAN R. HANDYSIDES and PETER N. LANDLESS

**I have a gritty, uncomfortable feeling in my eyes at times, associated with redness. It's worse in the right eye and when I am in dusty or hot surroundings. There's also a mild blurring of vision when I have these symptoms, but fortunately not very often. What could the problem be, and what should I do?**

**Y**ou are raising a very important issue—your eyes! Eyesight is such a precious gift, and we should not ignore eye-problem symptoms. It's most important that whenever one has such symptoms, one should seek professional help. All too often people ignore these symptoms and use various eyedrops and over-the-counter treatments for eye discomfort, and serious conditions may be missed, resulting in grave consequences.

It's particularly important to be cautious when the symptoms are present in one eye only. There may be a foreign body in the cornea or in the conjunctival areas (the whites of the eyes), and this can cause intense discomfort. If a foreign body is ignored, it can lead to infection and scarring of the cornea, resulting in permanent visual impairment. Another potential condition in which there is redness of one eye only is infection of the eye with a virus called herpes zoster—the same virus that causes chicken pox. The danger here is twofold. First, the diagnosis may be missed and cause significant pain and damage to the cornea. Second, well-meaning advisers may share their cortisone-containing eyedrops, which may have been prescribed for a completely different con-

dition. Cortisone is a wonderful anti-inflammatory when appropriately used, but in undiagnosed herpes zoster eye infection it can accelerate damage and make the disease process worse. Other infections can cause redness of both eyes, and some infections are associated with a discharge from one or both eyes. These infections need to be adequately treated. Frequent hand washing and cleansing of the face are also helpful in preventing infections that may result from rubbing one's eyes following contact with such infectious agents.

Of course, there are many conditions that lead to eye discomfort and the symptoms that you describe. Dryness of the eyes, for example, is one of the more common conditions. Our eyes are kept moist and the cornea sparkling and clear by the constant flow of tears. The tears also help to prevent infections by getting rid of bacteria and viruses.

Too little production of tears or too much evaporation of moisture surrounding the eyes may cause eye dryness; localized inflammatory processes can aggravate the condition. Hot weather outdoors during the summer (as well as indoor air-conditioning) and dry air indoors during the winter

aggravate this condition. One of the ways in which the body copes is by increasing the rate of blinking in order to spread tears across the eye's surface. Activities that decrease the rate at which we blink include working at the computer, watching television, or even driving a car. Age is another factor. Not only do the actual glands produce fewer tears as we get older, but the lower eyelids may sag and fail to form the appropriate seal around the eyeball. Autoimmune diseases such as Sjögren's disease and rheumatoid arthritis may also aggravate the condition. Prolonged wearing of contact lenses and medications such as antihistamines and beta-blockers may add to eye dryness. The commonly used Lasik surgery for correcting farsightedness or nearsightedness may also be associated with increased dryness of the eyes.

The first thing to do is to get professional help and assessment. It's also very important to drink adequate amounts of water and wash one's face thoroughly and regularly. Keep your hands clean, and try hard not to rub your eyes. Warm compresses applied to the eyes may also be helpful in those cases in which there is infection and inflammation around the eyelids (blepharitis).

Celebrate the gift of life and vision and keep your eyes single to the glory and honor of our gracious Creator! ■



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By MARVENE THORPE-BAPTISTE

# The Valley... of Prayer

*Reflecting on God's quiet protection*

***“Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven”*** (Matt. 6:10, 11, KJV).

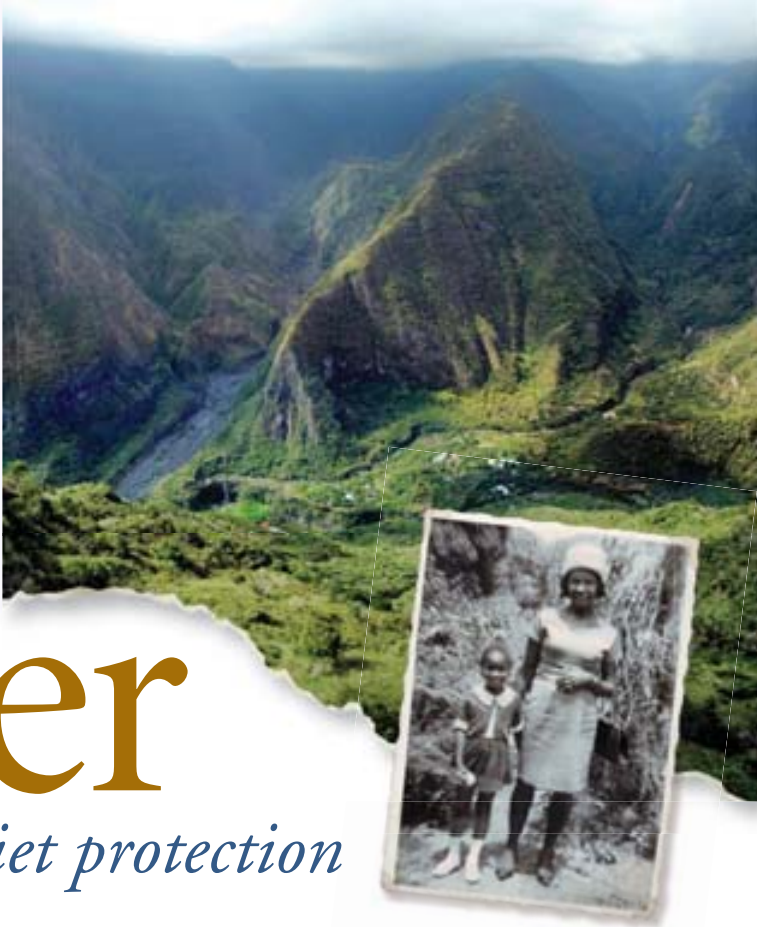
The decision to move must have been made prayerfully and carefully. We were leaving our home in the city and moving to the country, more specifically “the valley,” with lush, green vegetation everywhere.

We kids viewed the move as an adventure, but for our parents it was a necessity.

The house we moved into was located near my father’s job, the church school, and the college. In terms of space the house was big enough to accommodate a large family, and the fact that it lacked a few amenities didn’t bother us kids in the least. We were viewed as “outsiders,” coming into a village in which practically everyone was related. And, unknown to us, the villagers did not expect us to remain for any period of time.

***“Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors”*** (verses 11, 12, KJV).

Our home boasted an adequate vegetable garden and was surrounded by every fruit tree that our young minds could imagine, and we went wild tasting and staking out our favorite fruits, which ranged from different types of mangoes, guava, plums, oranges, grapefruit, and cherries to tamarind, bananas, limes, and lemons. There was even a cashew tree from which a few lessons were learned—



namely, that the juice produced a terrible stain, and the nut, which grew at the top of the flower, would cause terrible blisters to the fingers or mouth if eaten unroasted. Being able to climb all these trees was a must—so I learned from my brothers.

To add to this veritable “Eden” was the nearby river with various pools, where we enjoyed many an early-morning bath, much to the dismay of our mother, who always fussed with Dad for taking us out at 5:30 or 6:00 to bathe in the cold water.

As the summer ended we discovered just how fortunate we were to live opposite an elementary school. On the first day of classes it became obvious that the previous occupants had made and sold different snack items to the schoolchildren. My mother, who was quite industrious, realized what was expected and quickly learned to make such treats as Popsicles, guava candy, peanut butter fudge, pickled plums and mangoes, and tamarind candy—to name a few items. This provided additional income for the family.

To quote Dickens, it was truly “the best of times” and “the worst of times”—especially for some of our family members.

***“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”*** (verse 13, KJV).

One night I was awakened by what felt like an earthquake. The queen-size bed that I shared with my younger sister was shaking—violently! Sitting up, I discovered my

**MEMORABLE SETTING:** Trinidad's natural splendor was the setting for this story. The author's mother, Elvira, and sister, Sharon (inset).

sister huddled in the corner of the bed, terrified, eyes bulging, teeth chattering, hands clutching the blanket so tightly that I had to physically pry her fingers open. Being so young, she was unable to say what had given her such a fright. (Years later we learned that she had seen the form of a person in the room, but she was too terrified to scream.) And this was not a one-time incident. This “fright night” continued over a prolonged period, each following a familiar pattern. Ultimately, it became a cause for concern for my parents.

Coincidentally, my younger brother complained that something was scaring him at night. My older brothers joked and accused him of eating too late at night, thus causing nightmares. He shared a large room with four other brothers. The older boys had partitioned the room by installing a heavy navy-blue curtain. They were all in the same room; why did he not feel safe?

We finally took him seriously when one morning the boys discovered a huge slash in the curtain. Upon questioning, our youngest explained that almost every night he saw what appeared to be a large hand coming toward him as though to strangle him. Therefore, as a form of protection, he had started sleeping with a pocket knife under his pillow. That night in question he had decided to strike out at “the hand,” thus slashing the curtain.

What was scaring these children? Why the two younger ones? And why only at night? were just some of the questions that swirled in our heads.

Slowly the pieces came together.

In relating the various incidents to our nearest neighbor, Mom discovered that the original owners had often engaged in occult practices and rituals, holding “lodge meetings” and séances at late hours in the night. The neighbor told stories of different individuals coming and going at various times of the day and night, and of strange, sometimes terrifying “otherworldly” sounds coming from the house.

How naive and innocent we had been! There was so much that we didn't know.

When we had first moved in we never knew *what* those drawings on the walls, of circles with crosses and other frightful-looking animals in the middle, meant. We had simply erased them and gotten rid of the strange-looking artifacts we found in and around the house. Nor had we understood why our neighbor had been so emphatic when she told us to throw away and never, ever open the many bottles filled with red-, green-, and blue-colored liquid that we'd uncover while “digging for treasure” around the house.

It had always been a mystery to us why the house seemed to be a haven for all creatures “great and small”—

from bats and owls that made their nocturnal rounds *inside* the house to an occasional snake, as well as many scorpions and house lizards that acted as if *they*, not we, owned the place. We, however, took it all in stride, never being hurt by any of these creatures—especially the scorpions. Somehow we thought that this was normal country living.

**“For thine is the kingdom”** (verse 13, KJV).

The drawings, the vials of colored liquid, and the various creatures all meant something—but only to those who fully believed in the otherworldly.

Thank God my parents did not fall into that category. They never raised an alarm—or gave a name to the terrifying incidents. They realized that we were wrestling not against “flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers . . . in heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). They decided to intensify the spiritual atmosphere in the home; we were awakened very early every morning, rain or shine, for family worship, and end the day with more of the same, especially on Friday evenings.

My parents had an awesome, powerful, personal prayer life in which they presented each one of us before the Lord. My dad had his personal devotions about 4:30 a.m., and Mom at some point during the day while we were at school. Their prayers, like a huge blanket, cloaked us, the innocent, who had been exposed to the elements of evil. This led to the inevitable triumph over the powers of evil, for in a short time the “fright night” and “nocturnal visitations” declined in frequency and intensity, until they ceased altogether. In fact, things became so normal my youngest sister was born in that house.

These unpleasant experiences, however, did not dampen our enjoyment of living in a setting in which we were free to roam, explore, and enjoy the bounties of the earth—if only for a short time. By God's grace the younger ones, to this day, have not suffered any ill effects from having lived in “the valley.” My mom summed it up best when she said, “It was truly God's mercy and His blessings that brought us through those difficult years.”

**“For thine is the . . . power and the glory, for ever, Amen”** (verse 13, KJV). ■



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# NUMBER 2

# Distinct— *But* Indivisible

By DANIEL K. BEDIAKO

**O**f all Christian teachings, the doctrine of God is most difficult to explain. This is so because our finite human mind cannot fully comprehend the infinite God. At the center of this doctrine is the concept of the Trinity, or the Godhead, by which is meant that God is one in essence but three in person. Thus, Christians generally believe in one God—a triune God—not three Gods. But if God is one, how can there be a Trinity? And if there is a Trinity, why do we believe there is one God? Let's search for some answers from the Bible!

### **The Oneness of God**

Scripture tells us that there is one God: "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one" (Deut. 6:4; see 1

Cor. 8:4-6).<sup>1</sup> However, the same Scripture says that the Father is God (Matt. 27:46; 1 Cor. 8:6), the Son/Christ is God (John 1:1; 20:28; 2 Peter 1:1), and the Holy Spirit is also God (Acts 5:3, 4; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18). These persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, constitute the Godhead.

### **The Plurality of God: Old Testament**

The concept of the Trinity is not explicit in the Old Testament, though it is not completely absent. The divine summons in Genesis 1:26 ("Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness"; cf. Gen. 3:22) has often been understood to have the Godhead in view. The "angel of the Lord" who appeared to Moses in a burning bush

(Ex. 3:2) calls Himself "the Lord," "God" (verse 15), and "I AM" (verse 14). It is this "angel of the Lord" whom God sent to lead Israel to Canaan (see Ex. 23:20, 21; cf. Ex. 14:19) and who appears in Joshua 5:14 as "Commander of the army of the Lord" (NKJV).<sup>2</sup> In Psalm 45:6-8 (cf. Heb. 1:8, 9) God is anointed by God, suggesting, as in the above texts, that there is more than one divine person. Isaiah 63 presents three divine persons: the Lord/Father (verses 8-11, 16), the "angel of His presence" (verse 9), and His Holy Spirit (verses 10, 11, 14). As in Isaiah 63:16, God is also called Father (e.g., Deut. 32:6; Isa. 64:8; Mal. 2:10).

There are also references to a God-Son: "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us, . . . and His



# Trinity

There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal 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.)

name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). Isaiah 53 refers to a “Servant” whom the Lord caused to bear the iniquity of others (verses 6, 10, 11). This Servant is universally understood to refer to Christ, and is distinct from the Lord (i.e., the Father) and the Spirit (Isa 42:1; 48:16). Similarly, Daniel 7:9-14 presents two divine beings: the “Ancient of Days” who presides over the judgment and the “Son of Man” to whom the everlasting kingdom is given. The anointed Messiah (Dan. 9:25), the “man dressed in linen” (Dan. 10:5, 6), and Michael (verses 13, 21; Dan, 12:1), all refer to the Son of Man. Finally, as in Isaiah 63, there are references to the Holy Spirit, sometimes with personal characteristics (e.g., Gen. 6:3; Isa. 48:16).

## The Plurality of God: New Testament

In the New Testament the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are presented as distinct persons. God the Father is referred to many times (John 5:36, 37). The Father sent the Son to save the world (John 3:16, 17). The Son obeyed the Father (Matt. 26:39-42), whom He calls “MY GOD” (Matt. 27:46). Christ is “the Son” (Luke 22:70) and is God (John 1:1; Col. 2:9; Titus 2:13). This God-Son was crucified, but He arose from the dead and returned to the Father (John 20:17). Subsequently, the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33), who is Himself God (Acts 5:3, 4), and has personal characteristics (John 16:7-13; Acts 13:2, 4; 16:6, 7).

Some believe that there is one God but reject the concept of Trinity.

For them, Father, Son, and Spirit are manifestations of a single divine person. This view encounters insurmountable difficulty in passages where three divine persons are seen taking distinct actions simultaneously. For example, at Jesus’ baptism, the Spirit descended in the form of a dove, and the Father called out from heaven: “You are My beloved Son” (Mark 1:11). Further, because the Father sent the Son to the earth, and because the two sent the Spirit, it follows that the Son is not the same person as the Father and that the Spirit is distinct from the other two persons.

There is a Trinitarian formula, which presents the Godhead as consisting of three coequal and coeternal persons who, while distinct, are an undivided unity (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2; Jude 20, 21). For example: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). Note that baptism takes place not in the *names* but in the *name* of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This implies that while the persons of the Godhead are distinct, they are indissolubly united in essence and nature: “Therefore it is evident that in God’s substance there are three persons, in which the one God is recognized.”<sup>3</sup>

## Function or Relation?

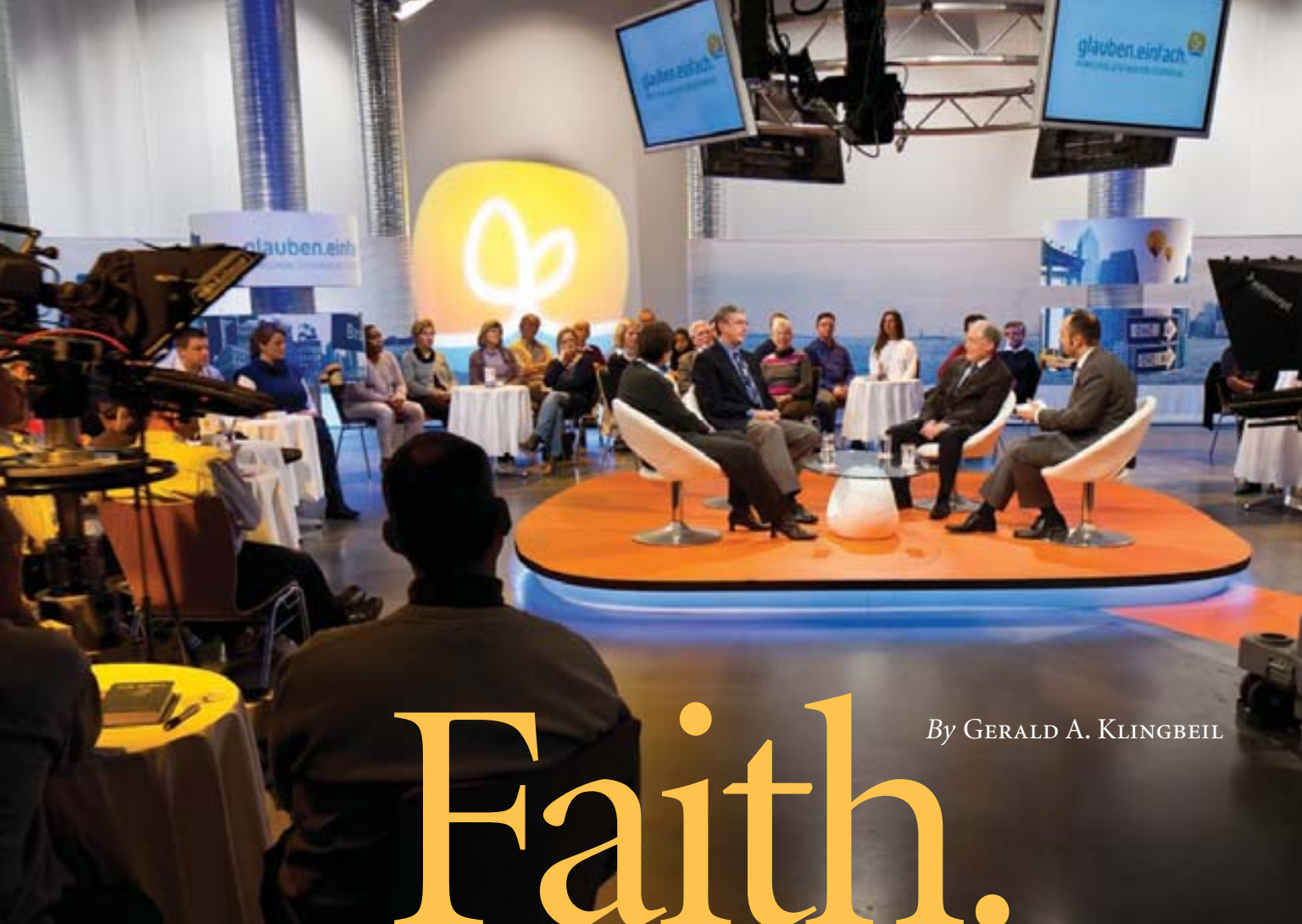
Because God is one in three, the terms *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Spirit* may best be understood in terms of function as opposed to relation. In this regard, the Father sends the Son (John 3:16, 17), the Son accomplishes His

task (John 19:30), and the Holy Spirit continues the divine work (John 14:26). When understood in terms of function, we do not need to ask whether the Son was really born by the Father, or whether the Father and the Son are superior to the Spirit. So even though Mary was “found to be with child by the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 1:18), the Spirit is not the Father of the Son, who is Himself “Eternal Father” (Isa. 9:6). We worship one God who reveals Himself in and consists of three, distinct persons who participate in one substance and coexist in unity. This doctrine is biblical, even if it remains a mystery. ■

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations in this article have been taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.  
<sup>2</sup> Texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.  
<sup>3</sup> So John Calvin, see Ekkehardt Mueller, “Our God” (<http://biblicalresearch.gc.adventist.org/Bible%20Study/Our%20God.pdf>).



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By GERALD A. KLINGBEIL

# Faith. *Authentic packaging of timeless truth* Simple.

**W**e all have seen them in our hectic cities: twenty-something professionals with eyes glued to their iPad or smartphone; busy men and women trying to find family time together and often living past each other; lonely retirees shuffling past us on a busy downtown street. Most of them, when asked about God and the future, would shake their heads: no time, no interest, no chance to open their heart. *And yet we wonder, How can we reach these diverse, mostly secular people and share the love of Jesus with them?*

## **The Challenge**

Missiologists tell us that throughout the developed world (and more and more also in the developing world, particularly in the megacities) secularism makes evange-

lism increasingly difficult. People don't like to open doors. Others are too busy to listen. Some just don't care. Hardcore secularists are passionately opposed to Christianity and its perceived "easy" answers to life's challenges.

Here are some numbers from Germany, right in the heart of secular Europe: Less than 20 percent of all Germans enter a church—any church—on a regular basis.<sup>1</sup> While nearly 65 percent are nominally Lutherans or Catholic it appears that this does not affect their lives—including also church visits.<sup>2</sup> More than 60 percent stated in 2009 that humans developed from other life-forms, with another 20 percent who were unsure about the biblical Creation account.<sup>3</sup> You get the picture: For most people living in Germany, organized Christianity and its biblical foundation is of little or no consequence—obviously a major





**LIVE ACTION:** The presenters interacted every evening with invited guests, the live audience in the media center studio, and with the larger audience via social media.

challenge when trying to be faithful to Jesus' command of *going and making disciples* (Matt. 28:18-20).

However, this is not just a European or German phenomena. All around the world we can see similar trends. Secularism is on the rise—particularly in the big cities that dot this planet.

### The Dream

Exciting things usually begin with a dream.

In early 2007 Matthias Müller, general manager of the Media Center of the Euro-Africa Division (EUD), *Stimme der Hoffnung*, began dreaming after he returned from participating in the Council on Evangelism and Witness at the headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A., where he had heard about the

availability of an extraordinary title for special mission projects. As he paced the halls of the Media Center in Alsbach-Hähnlein in Germany he ran across Klaus Popa, one of the editors of *Stimme der Hoffnung*, and spontaneously asked if he would be interested in joining him in planning an innovative evangelistic approach that would use all kinds of media—TV, cinema, the Internet, social networks. *He was* (and not just because it was his boss asking!) Later in the year, during administrative meetings of the EUD, Matthias probed the division treasurer: “How big should we plan?” “Think big!” was the answer—and that’s what the team did. In the summer of 2007 Matthias and Klaus spent hours brainstorming. What was needed to reach a secular, postmodern society, speaking an understandable language? What elements and media should be included? How should one go about getting the local churches to buy into such a program?

In December of 2007 the project was submitted via the EUD to a special appropriations committee at the General Conference. Eight months later Matthias and Klaus got the green light, and the team began to further develop the concept. The year 2009 was reserved for bringing the regional church administrations on board (including representatives from all German-speaking European countries), and the project was finally voted in December of that year. Two years of planning and extensive discussions lay behind. Now it was time to get into promotion mode. In February 2010, during a Hope Channel advisory in Beirut, Lebanon, the ambitious project was introduced to media experts from around the world, and a month later the German-speaking unions formed an oversight committee and named Pastor Willie Schulz as the *Faith.Simple*<sup>4</sup> coordinator. Nobody counted the dozens of visits to local churches, ministerial meetings, or administrative board meetings. As more and more churches signed up, the excitement for this new evangelistic approach grew by leaps and bounds. In the end, *Faith.Simple* had 462 official (and numerous unregistered) downlink sites—a huge increase when compared to previous Net-evangelism experiences.

The team, guided by the oversight committee, had decided to run the live TV program for 17 evenings, twice a week, between October 8 and December 3 of 2011. The relatively long time window would give guests tuning into *Faith.Simple* a more realistic chance to connect to a local church. Furthermore, the lighter rhythm of the evangelistic project would help avoid event oversaturation. After 482,115 flyers, 37,715 business cards carrying the *Faith.Simple* logo and invitation, and 16,089 posters, the clock was ticking louder and louder. An online prayer chain had prayed for 365 days. Hundreds of churches, thousands of church members, as well as the hardworking team around Matthias and Klaus were ready—kind of. It was time to

communicate to a secular and postmodern culture that faith is truly simple, that God is still on the throne, and that pain, death, and disaster are not forever.

### The Experience

After more than four years in the works, *Faith.Simple* finally went live on October 8, 2011.

Every evening consisted of five segments. In the first part a short three- to five-minute video clip was shown of a feature-length film that had been shot in 2010 in New York. While the film was not made by the Media Center, the team had significant input into the scriptwriting process and coproduced it. The movie tells the story of Niklas, a secular German yuppie bank manager on a mission to close down an affiliated bank in New York, and Leticia, a talented young woman from Brooklyn, growing up in a Christian home with a father pastoring a church in New York, and dreaming of a music career. As these two people meet and their lives interact, their worldviews collide and many questions and conflicts arise.

Each carefully selected film episode was connected to a short (15- to 20-minute), thoughtful presentation of the main topic of the evening by either Matthias or Klaus, shot on-site in New York. The link to

New York helped connect the presentation to the preceding film clip and also made the reflection

more universal and applicable to different cultures and contexts. Shooting the reflection pieces on the streets of New York also emphasized the real-life focus of *Faith.Simple*—visitors should intuitively understand that God’s Word cannot be contained in a pulpit; it simply touches everything in our lives.

This was followed by a 30-minute panel discussion, transmitted live out of the studio at the Media Center in Alsbach-Hähnlein. Each evening one of the presenters would be the host and would interact with two specially invited guests, his cohost, and a live audience. Klaus remembers what impressed the audience the most: It was the unscriptedness of the conversation. It was not “safe” TV programming, but very personal and open conversations about a God who is reaching out to the world but cannot always be explained. “We reached a level of vulnerability that impressed our audience,” recalls Matthias. The Bible was central to the conversation—and linked to real life.

Prior to the final wrap-up from the studio, there was one additional segment of 25 to 30 minutes that really grounded the biblical presentation and connected it to the audiences. Following the televised live discussion from the Media Center, each local downlink site throughout Austria, Germany, and Switzerland (and beyond) hosted live discussions about the topic of the evening. People interacted about the particular topic, be it onsite or virtually. Topics included Creation, the Sabbath, the future and last events, death, or baptism. Each site had a discussion leader guiding the conversation. People felt free to ask questions, and as

## In Conversation

Associate editor Gerald Klingbeil spoke with Matthias Müller and Klaus Popa during a recent visit to the General Conference. Here are some excerpts of the conversation.

### How did people react to the *Faith.Simple* concept and approach?

**KP:** Actually, I think what impressed most of our audience was the unscriptedness of the whole thing. We didn’t prep our guests on the questions, and we didn’t give them the answers.

**MM:** They kept pushing us: “Please let us know which way you want to go. What should be the outcome of the discussion?” And we always said, “Sorry, we can’t tell you what the conclusion



TOBIAS KLEPP

should be. We wanted it to be open to everyone to think and to share his experience.”

**KP:** It was personal, and in a sense we reached a level of vulnerability because we allowed space that we did not control. I think this element of vulnerability was a major factor that impressed our audience.



they searched together for answers in Scripture there was a sense of community. Strangers began to feel at home.

Finally, a five-minute wrap-up by the presenter of the evening concluded each *Faith.Simple* program. This was the decisive moment, often layered with personal experiences and definitely content-driven. It included the call to make a decision for God—even a small decision leading to change; because life as we know it cannot go on when we have met Jesus. Ninety minutes of reaching out for Jesus in a way understandable by secular, postmodern people had come to an end. The studio lights went out. However, Matthias and Klaus and the Media Center team spent another hour each evening interacting with hundreds on social media and via phone. People commented on the program, asked questions, requested prayer, or obtained media files from their sites.

### The Voices

Matthias tells about a Catholic woman who drove one and a half hours in order to be at the studio site. She had discovered Hope Channel “by accident” on the first night of *Faith.Simple*. “I sat spellbound in front of that TV set,” she said. “Is it possible to find something so authentic on TV?” She called her skeptic husband, and they watched together. Then she lost the channel, found it again later, and continued to watch every night. In the last week she brought her two daughters to the studio. “My skeptic husband is now enrolled in your Bible correspondence school,” she excitedly told Matthias.

Listen to Sonja’s feedback at the end of the last program on December 3, 2011: “Dear *Faith.Simple* team, thanks so much for this series and your long-lasting com-



**NEW YORK, NEW YORK:** Matthias Müller (below) and Klaus Popa (in the car above) shot all the primary presentations for each evening in New York.



This functioned as a clear link to the film’s narrative, and also made the presentations more international and universally relevant.

### Was *Faith.Simple* some type of “softball” evangelism—you know, the kind of “feel good” evangelism?

**KP:** I hear your question. No, it was not. We addressed key issues of faith. Just think about suffering; the beginning of the world, Creation; love, sexuality, desire; death; end-times; the Sabbath; or Revelation 13.

### So you handled key Adventist doctrines?

**KP:** Yes, we handled them, but we not only handled them—we really asked tough questions. We challenged each other in our different roles as host or guest. For instance, we had people there who had lost loved ones, and we asked them tough questions: How did your Christian faith help you? Did it help you? This is not softball evangelism; this is just asking the existential questions that people struggle with, non-Christians and Christians. When you lose your wife, then your faith is at stake. When you lose your 3-year-old child, your faith is at stake. This is asking that person, Does your faith have substance that is real, to be able to carry you, or is it just “faith”?

### New York plays a significant role in the initiative to reach the big cities of this world that are increasingly secular, postmodern, and hard to evangelize. Do you think the approach taken in *Faith.Simple* can make a contribution to this initiative?

**MM:** While we were producing in New York, we spent quite some time there and visited a number of Adventist churches in New York. We always felt welcome, and those were wonderful churches. Nevertheless, there were differences. We would strongly recommend not just preaching to the population. It is a special population there in New York, those financial and art people. You need to find an avenue to get into personal contact with them. Just preaching doesn’t do it. I say that from my heart, although I’ve been an evangelist and pastor all my life. If we want to reach the cities, we need to establish some type of community service, interaction, where people feel this church offers more than just sermons.



ALL EARS: Faith. Simple. Aimed at reaching all generations, covering the range from young adult to retiree. Each evening contained significant time when people talked about the evening's subject from a biblical perspective and shared their own experiences.



mitment. My friend and I were very blessed. After the program last Wednesday my friend prayed for the first time in seven years. God gave her a wonderful prayer experience—she could hardly believe it! We are now

watching the previous programs on the Internet and want to thank you again for your courage and energy to allow God to use you.” Or what about Sabine who happened to stumble over the channel “by accident”? When her satellite dish installer told her about an Adventist house church in a little town not far from her city she found a church that was highly respected in their small community. “My 14-year old granddaughter is looking for God, and I took her to church. It was the first church service in her life! She is enjoying reading her Bible.”

The program drew on average about 10,000 viewers at the official downlink sites. Additionally, the Web stream

was watched at another 500 computers, and nobody knows how many people saw it on satellite or cable TV. Based on the reporting of the downlink sites, nearly 1,500 non-Adventist guests participated each night. These numbers may look insignificant in some parts of the world. However, these 10,000 viewers represent nearly 25 percent of the Adventist population of Austria, Germany, and Switzerland—a huge part of the total church population.

Many German-speaking church members felt affirmed by this culture-sensitive evangelistic approach. Members of the Hohe Marter church in Nürnberg, Germany, highlighted the importance of having two different presenters, each representing a different age group that enabled them to connect to different audiences—and demonstrate generational cooperation. Matthias concurs: “I always dreamed that all age groups should be able to work together in the church. For me it is a fulfillment of Malachi, you know, bringing the fathers back to the sons.” Klaus adds: “We took a risk, the two of us, to embark on a journey, representing different age groups, and different personalities. Some people told us, ‘You are kind of different, you guys.’ But to believe that different age groups can work together so closely—that was a sign in itself.”

### The Future

*Faith. Simple* is not a successful one-time event that worked in Germany, in the heart of secular Europe. *Faith. Simple* is much bigger than that. It represents a model of how to present in a culturally sensitive way unchanging truth that *can* connect to different age groups. It provides a wholistic way of reaching the secular mind, moving beyond modernity’s arguments and paying attention to Jesus’ method of reaching the unreached. It underlines the need to listen and begin a dialogue with people beyond the walls of our churches. Lasting evangelism must always be dialogical—it begins with an invitation and continues with an honest conversation that lasts into eternity. *Faith is that simple—period.* ■

<sup>1</sup> See <http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/179832/umfrage/haeufigkeit--kirche-oder-religioese-veranstaltungen-besuchen/>, which is based on a 2008 survey of nearly 20,000 people.

<sup>2</sup> See the numbers at <http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/179440/umfrage/zugehoerigkeit-zu-einer-religionsgemeinschaft/>, of which nearly 30 percent indicated that they did not belong to any religious community.

<sup>3</sup> Compare <http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/5171/umfrage/glauben-anschoepfungsgeschichte-oder-evolution/>.

<sup>4</sup> Following the conventions of digital expression, the title should be read “Faith-dot-Simple.” Check out the German version at [www.glauben-einfach.com](http://www.glauben-einfach.com).



**Gerald A. Klingbeil**, a native of Germany, serves as an associate editor of *Adventist World* and is married to Chantal, who is home-schooling their three daughters.

# Meeting Hearts and Minds

## *Reaching Unbelievers*

By ELLEN G. WHITE

In the providence of God, those who are bearing the burden of His work have been endeavoring to put new life into old methods of labor, and also to invent new plans and new methods of awakening the interest of church members in a united effort to reach the world. . . .

### **Search the Scriptures**

In years past, I have spoken in favor of the plan of presenting our mission work and its progress before our friends and neighbors, and have referred to the example of Nehemiah. And now I desire to urge our brethren and sisters to study anew the experience of this man of prayer and faith and sound judgment, who made bold to ask his friend, King Artaxerxes, for help with which to advance the interests of God's cause. Let all understand that in presenting the needs of our work, believers can reflect light to others, only as they, like Nehemiah of old, draw nigh to God, and live in close connection with the Giver of all light. Our own souls must be firmly grounded in a knowledge of the truth,

if we would win others from error to truth. We need now to search the Scriptures diligently, that, as we become acquainted with unbelievers, we may hold up before them Christ as the anointed, the crucified, the risen Savior, witnessed to by prophets, testified of by believers, and through whose name we receive the forgiveness of our sins.

As we exalt the cross of Calvary before others, we shall find that it exalts us. Let every believer now stand in his lot and place, catching the inspiration of the work that Christ did for souls while in this world. We need the ardor of the Christian here who endures to the end, ever beholding Him who is invisible. Our faith must have a resurrection. Wherever we are, and whatever our opportunities, whether limited or extended, we are to exert a positive influence for good.

### **Let the Holy Spirit Direct**

In order to fulfill the purpose of God as laborers together with Him, it is not necessary that all believers work in the same manner or along similar lines. No precise lines are to be laid

down. Let the Holy Spirit direct each worker; and let each be willing to listen to the counsel of those who have been chosen to lead out in the various activities of the church. Thus the truth will ever stand on vantage ground. Some can best recommend the truth, not by argument or talk, but by living the principles of truth, by leading a modest, humble life as consistent disciples of the meek and lowly Christ. Especially is this true of those who are unable to give an intelligent reason for their faith, and of those who have a zeal not according to knowledge. Such believers should talk less in vindication of our faith, and study their Bible more, letting their deportment bear eloquent testimony to the power for good which the truth exercises on the willing heart and life. ■

Published in *Manuscript Releases*, volume 7, pages 363, 364, this work was originally titled "Methods for Reaching Unbelievers." Seventh-day Adventists believe that Ellen G. White (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.

By EPHRAIM NKONYA

# *The* Church *That Met Under* *a* Tree



*Faith provided a building, and more.*

There is no reliable weather forecasting in Tanzania. So every Sabbath morning Magulyati Pandageila used to search the skies for signs of rain.

He was not alone. Other church members would not come to services if it looked like it was going to rain. Pandageila's 200-member church in Ikunguilipu, northern Tanzania, used to meet under a spindly leafed Acacia tree that didn't offer much protection from rain. The church started as a branch of a district church, meeting at the local elementary school that was established by Seventh-day Adventists.

A few years after it gained independence in 1961, the government of Tanzania took over all primary schools and banned worship in their classrooms. This forced the congregation to conduct worship services under an Acacia tree that belonged to a non-Adventist farmer.

The farmer, perhaps objecting to the "noise" of their singing, cut down the tree, forcing the members to seek an alternate place of worship.

As this was going on, the church members worked to build a small chapel, which they completed in 1998. The church was built with mud bricks and corrugated iron sheets. Unfortunately, the wall of the building collapsed after strong winds blew off its roof in 2000, forcing the members again to worship under another tree.

Despite these difficulties the congregation grew from fewer than 100 members in the 1980s to more than 200 members in 2004.

### **Moved by Disaster**

In 2002 Pandageila's aunt, Yohana Nkonya, died in a train wreck while returning from a women's retreat in Morogoro, eastern Tanzania. Her funeral service under the tree was attended by many people from outside the village. This painful service led to an aggressive fund-raising effort to build a much stronger and larger church. Construction began in October 2002.

The building of the church stalled for two years because of limited

resources, but it started again in December 2004, when the church conducted another funeral for Perpetua Maduhu, one of the first Adventists in the village. Again, family and friends came from outside the village to bid her farewell. This time they joined the congregation in fulfilling one of Perpetua Maduhu's dreams: building a church in the village.

In a matter of weeks a roof covered the 33 x 74-meter church construction. Because there is no running water or electricity in the village and no machines or other equipment, most of the construction was done by hand.

Church members reached out to nonmembers to ask for help. The entire community joined hands to build the church. The construction turned from being an Adventist project to a community activity. Nonmembers responded by collecting water, crushing stone, and lifting heavy structures.

School children on break offered their help. They used small containers to collect water while singing Christian songs.



Church members met under a roof, safe from the elements, on December 25, 2004. The new building and reenergized spirit led to ambitious plans for evangelism. The overwhelming community support during construction seemed to verify God's power and support for their efforts.

### Community Outreach

In May 2005 the church conducted an evangelistic effort, inviting Pastor Daudi Ndekeja from the Tanzania South Nyanza Conference to lead out. The three-week effort was well attended.

The last day of the series saw more than 33,000 people in attendance, about five times the population of the village. More than 330 new believers were baptized, and 604 joined the baptismal class! This effort alone increased church membership almost sixfold: from about 200 to 1,136!

The rapid church growth was yet another demonstration of God's powerful hand.

### A Gift Almost Unclaimed

After completing construction of the church building, members decided to cover the dirt floor with tile as a way of thanking God for increasing their church membership and for faithfully answering their prayers.

They asked family and friends living outside the village to support their plan to install floor tiles. A believer from Europe responded by providing tiles on the condition that the church members pay to transport the tiles from Europe to Ikunguilipu.

After a frantic period of fund raising, the church paid to transport the tiles, worth 14,824 euros, from Europe to Dar es Salaam. Churches in Tanzania are exempted from paying import taxes on church materials, but the clearing process involves cumbersome and expensive procedures.

The tax-exemption process started at the district where the church is located. An official letter was required to verify that the church of Ikunguilipu existed and that it had purchased tiles for the church. It took two months for the letter to be written, despite constant reminders from the church.

Every day storage fees increased by US\$20. The letter was sent to the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) in Dar es Salaam, but it got lost in the TRA offices. The church had to request another letter, since TRA accepts only original documents. This took another month. But these documents got lost as well, further delaying the clearance of the tiles. Worse still, the church didn't have money to pay the storage charges and other costs.

Failure to pay these costs led to the auctioning of the tiles. This gave church members the sinking feeling that they would have to inform the donor of the tiles that his donation had been auctioned off.

Church members continued praying, asking God to save them from this

embarrassment. The church asked for clemency for paying the storage charges, citing the delay as due to loss of documents in the hands of TRA as being the cause of the delay and that the church was not responsible. But their application was rejected. Human efforts availed nothing, and the church members and their friends were forced to surrender their burdens to the One who never fails.

An advertisement for the auction was put in local newspapers and announced on local radio stations. The church's clearing agent advised them to participate in the auction in order to buy back some of the tiles. But even though the advertisements ran for several days, no one seemed interested in purchasing the tiles. This gave the church members hope that God would answer their prayers in His own time.

On May 26, 2009, the TRA informed the church that it would waive all storage charges of "God's tiles." By this time the storage fees were 17,747,600 Tanzanian shillings (US\$10,650). But the church was asked to pay only 25 percent of the charges, the exact amount it had already collected for clearing the tiles from the port!

This miracle provided yet another milestone in the growth of this church. Their dream of building a modern church in this remote village had come true.

If we believe in God and lay all our burdens on Him, our faithful Father will not allow the devil to embarrass His people and stop their spiritual growth and vibrancy. May His name be blessed! ■



**Ephraim Nkonya**, a native of Tanzania, works for the International Food Policy Research Institute in Washington, D.C., United States.

In a Communist environment where public gatherings are banned, and rules and regulations restrict freedom of religion, how do you spread the good news of the gospel? It is indeed possible, because the seed of the gospel knows no boundaries. Like yeast in bread dough, the truth of the gospel grows and produces much fruit.

A Pioneer Mission Movement (PMM)<sup>1</sup> missionary called Shen,<sup>2</sup> found his niche in a secular Communist university at which the seeds of his faith are growing and multiplying. Eager to learn the local language, both he and his wife enrolled in the top university in the town he was sent to,



# The Word of God—UNSTOPPABLE

By SALLY LAM-PHOON

*Unlikely evangelism cannot be stopped.*

and he quickly made friends. Soon Shen was asked to be a language teacher. From there he gained the confidence of top leaders in the university and was later given the responsibility of working on international relations with other foreign universities to encourage better communication between teachers and students.

In this capacity, Shen found many mission opportunities to minister to the many young people there. In time his silent witness resulted in the con-

version of some of the leaders of the university.

While Shen labored on, his wife began working with a group of children in their home. A total of 70 children visited their home every Thursday evening to learn English, sing songs, and listen to stories. Their parents were delighted. They asked Shen's wife, "Why are you so willing to teach English for free? Everyone who teaches English here charges a lot of money."

"You don't understand how much your children are helping my children adjust to a new culture and language," said Shen's wife. "Since your kids help my kids, we want to help them with English."

In a country where making money is a top priority—doing anything for free often raises suspicion. But in Shen's case, the parents see it as a service to their children, and they feel comfortable that they can learn English in a safe environment. From time



to time these grateful parents even send special gifts and resources that the Shens can use as incentives in their English classes.

### Powerful Textbook

At the university something out of the ordinary occurred. The English department decided that in order for students to have a strong foundation in English, they must read English books. One of the courses in the curriculum is Bible, and all English majors use it as a textbook for studying English. Inevitably, the university also made sure the instructors were agnostics or atheists, who viewed the Bible merely as a language text rather than a holy book.

What the university didn't understand, however, is the power of the Word of God. A student named Serene held the Bible in her hands for the first time when she enrolled in the class. A strange feeling came over her, and she found herself saying, "Who knows? One day I may become a Christian." She quickly brushed the notion aside. "How can I even think such a thing? I'm a Communist Party member; it's impossible!"

But as she perused its pages she had many questions. So Serene approached her new friend Shen, whom she knew had a background in Christianity and theology. Little by little, Serene came to understand more and more about Christianity.

As her heart was stirred, the struggle began. Serene came from a family of Communist leaders, and as a party member she was already establishing herself as a student leader. As trust grew between her and Shen, she revealed her internal turmoil. Shen used the story of Moses as an example. "This prince of Egypt was willing to give up his position in the Egyptian court and chose to be the leader of his tribe," Shen told her. "He chose to be

mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward' [Heb. 11:25, 26, NIV]."<sup>3</sup>

Shen continued: "But where is Moses now? He lived for his tribe, serving them until the day he died, but he was taken to live in heaven, and now he is enjoying the ultimate life of living with God."

After this conversation Serene cast her lot with Jesus and joined the church. After her baptism she became very active in sharing the Word with her dormmates every morning and evening. Shen taught her the importance of feeding on heavenly manna daily, so as she read Serene invited her dormmates to read along with her.

Serene is now one of the "shepherds" for a little flock that numbers 44. She preaches in neighboring churches, teaches children about Jesus, and witnesses to her university friends about how the Word of God changes lives and imparts hope. Since her baptism she has led five friends to the cross. To date, more than 20 university students have been baptized and are now sharing the love of God with their classmates.

Shen has more ideas for urban evangelism. His success in his little town has inspired him to ask the Lord for bigger dreams to fulfill. Today Shen has a business teaching English and other foreign languages. He also has a shop selling all kinds of products from cosmetics to clothing to accessories. Through this shop he is able to provide employment for the young people who are new converts so that they can be part of missions.

### Professional Witness

Lee, a health professional, has been working in a Communist country for

the past seven years, quietly making friends and gaining respect in her field. She conducts seminars in her area of expertise, trains leaders, and just lives her life as a Christian. Lee has found that her seminars have served as excellent places to make connections with attendees. As she gains their confidence, they ply her with questions. Lee then invites them to her apartment for a discussion. With a smile she gently warns them that her principles are grounded in Christianity and the teachings of Jesus. If they don't mind that, she is more than happy to share. Many lives have already been touched in this manner, but we may see the fruits from this type of evangelism only when Jesus comes.

The Word of God will go forward even in the most difficult situations. First Peter 1:23 calls it the "enduring word" (NIV), the unstoppable Word that continues to work like yeast even in the most hostile environments. Nothing can kill it or destroy it, because it contains God's living power to a dying world. And like yeast, it grows silently and surely until it feeds the minds of millions with nourishment that only God, through His Word, can give. ■

<sup>1</sup> The Pioneer Mission Movement (PMM) is a Global Mission project of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division that sends regular pastors as pioneers to foreign countries within the division to plant churches. Their contract is a six-year term. During the first year they learn the local language. More than 50 pastors are serving in Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Mongolia, and China. Requests from countries outside of the Northern Asia-Pacific region have resulted in the sending of PMMs to Russia, South America, and Africa.

<sup>2</sup> Names have been changed.

<sup>3</sup> Scripture quotations credited to NIV are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.



**Sally Lam-Phoon**, a native of Malaysia, is serving as the children's/family/women's ministries director of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division in Hsai, South Korea.

*Why did David support the request of the Gibeonites to kill Saul's seven sons in 2 Samuel 21:1-9?*

# Crime and Punishment

The text provides an answer, but it does not explicitly state the legal ground for the decision. In order to answer your question, we have to understand the nature of Saul's crime, and the law that applied in such a case.

This requires reviewing some background information and discussing legal materials.

**1. Some Background:** The Gibeonites were Canaanites who, during the Israelite conquest of the land under the leadership of Joshua, resorted to a ruse out of fear of extermination. After telling Joshua they had heard about the fame of his God, they expressed their desire to make a peace treaty with the Israelites. When asked where they were from, they deceived the Israelites by telling them that they came from a distant country and that they simply wanted to be their servants (Joshua 9:7-11). In fact, they lived a few miles northwest of Jerusalem. Without inquiring from the Lord, the Israelites made a covenant of peace with the Gibeonites that preserved their lives (verses 14, 15). Three days later the Israelites discovered the deception. But they could do nothing about it, because, as part of the covenant ceremony, they had taken an oath before the Lord that they would spare the Gibeonites, who dwelt among the Israelites as their servants.

**2. Nature of the Crime:** Several centuries later Saul decided to rescind the covenant of peace with the Gibeonites. According to the Gibeonites, Saul was the man who “consumed [*kālah*] us and who planned to exterminate [*shāmad*] us” (2 Sam. 21:5, NASB).<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew verb *kālah* means “to bring to an end,” which in context expresses the idea of attempting to finish them. The verb *shāmad* strengthens that idea by emphasizing the attempt to totally destroy them. The biblical writer confirms this charge by stating that Saul “tried to annihilate [*nākah*, to inflict a dead blow] them” (2 Sam. 21:2, NIV).<sup>2</sup> Saul did this “in his zeal for Israel and Judah.” So for nationalistic reasons Saul was guilty of attempted genocide. David became aware of this situation after consulting the Lord concerning a famine in Israel that had lasted for three years. He called the Gibeonites and asked

them what could be done to expiate the sin of Saul and his family. This was a case of bloodguilt.

**3. Legal Basis:** In the Bible bloodguilt occurs when life is illegally taken from someone. Unjustified killing was often premeditated murder. In such cases the blood of the victim was on the hands or the head of the perpetrator—he or she was legally responsible for it. This illicit spilling of blood contaminated the land, and the only way to cleanse it from this stain was through the blood of the culprit (Num. 35:33). In some cases a blood avenger would legally request that the crime be redressed. But the Gibeonites' lack of power made it impossible for them to bring the king of Israel to justice, and the crime was consequently ignored (see 2 Sam. 21:4). That's when the Lord took their case in His own hands and allowed the bloodguilt to fall on the land in the form of a prolonged famine.

The crime committed by Saul was illegal not only in that there was no justifiable reason for it, but particularly because he violated an oath made before the Lord that protected the Gibeonites. His nationalism was more important to him than obeying the Lord. In cases of bloodguilt the verdict was clear: Retribution in kind—the punishment should correspond to the crime (cf. Lev. 24:21, 22). Attempted genocide could have resulted in the extermination of Saul's family. But the Gibeonites and David agreed in limiting the extent of the enforcement of the law to the execution of seven descendants of Saul. Justice was done.

Abuse of power is not overlooked by the Lord, who in His goodness, love, and justice has appointed a day of judgment when the crimes of the human race will be addressed in righteousness. Meanwhile, we should practice justice and speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. ■

<sup>1</sup> Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the *New American Standard Bible*, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation Used by permission.

<sup>2</sup> Scripture quotations credited to NIV are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.



**Angel Manuel Rodríguez** served for many years as director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference.

# Transformed Thinking

By MARK A. FINLEY



Isaac Watts, author of 750 hymns, is considered the father of English hymnody or hymn writing. On one occasion later in life a parade in his honor was held in London. The streets were lined with admiring people. Watts was a small man with a large mind. As the parade passed, one woman cried out in astonishment, “What? You’re Isaac Watts?”

Immediately Watts stood in the carriage and responded, “Madam, could I in fancy grasp the poles and hold creation in my hand, I would still be measured by my mind, for the mind is the measure of a man.”

He was right. The essence of who we are lies deep within our minds. In this lesson we will explore the importance of transformed thinking as it relates to our growth in grace and living a life totally consecrated to Jesus.

**1 Read and reflect on Philippians 2:5. What counsel does the apostle Paul give regarding transformed thinking? What does Paul imply when he uses the expression “Let this mind be in you”? What does he mean by the “mind” of Christ?**

**2 What two contrasting words does Paul use in Romans 12:2 that describe how our minds are shaped in one way or another?**

Each day our minds are either being transformed into the image of Christ or *conformed* to this world. The word for transformed that Paul used is *metamorphē*, from which we derive the English word metamorphosis. A metamorphosis is a complete transformation, such as a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. Jesus Christ, through His Holy Spirit, longs to change our thinking process so that our minds are renewed and we think the thoughts of heaven.

**3 Read the following texts to discover a basic principle of transformed thinking: James 4:7, 8; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 10:4. How can we cooperate with the Holy Spirit to think the thoughts of heaven? What role do we play? What role does the Holy Spirit play?**

Here is a vital principle of transformed thinking: The current of our thoughts will not change without the divine transformation brought about by the Holy Spirit. God will

not transform our thinking without our cooperation. Jesus says: “Without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Paul adds: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13).

**4 Read the first line of Proverbs 23:7 and Matthew 15:8. Where do all evil thoughts or desires come from?**

In Scripture the “heart” often represents the deepest part of our emotions, affections, and thoughts. The Holy Spirit longs to change us in the depths of our being. His work is not as superficial as picking leaves off a rotten tree. He wants to establish a new root system in our hearts so the fruit of the Spirit grow naturally in our lives.

**5 Read 2 Corinthians 3:18. How can we most effectively cooperate with God in allowing the Holy Spirit to transform our thoughts?**

It is a law of the mind that our minds gradually adapt themselves to that on which they dwell. The more we fill our mind with heavenly themes the more heavenly minded we will be. The more we fill our minds with earthly themes the more earthly minded we will be. Reflect for a few moments on this truth in Colossians 3:1-4.

**6 Read Philippians 4:7. What counsel does the Holy Spirit give us through the apostle Paul to safeguard our thinking process?**

Just as screens on the windows of our homes protect us from flies and mosquitos, God’s screen in Philippians of honesty, purity, nobility, loveliness, and truth protects us from the invasion of the evil one.

**7 Read Ezekiel 11:19 and Hebrews 8:10. What promises of life-changing, thought-transforming power does the Bible give us?**

If we consent, our Lord will do for us what we can never do for ourselves. As we submit our thoughts to Him, He will transform our thinking. Through His Holy Spirit, He will write the principles of His law in our hearts and minds so deeply that our deepest desire will be to please Him in everything we think and do. ■



# Letters

## Something's Fishy

"Something's Fishy" (March 2012) was an interesting read! People always assume that being a vegetarian, I eat fish, as if fish is just another vegetable. I think the problem people have with fish and seafood is that they are not "cute and cuddly," so somehow their pain in being caught and "drowning" out of water seems insignificant.

We do not need fish or any other living creature in our diet. God knows what our bodies need and has provided accordingly. There was no death in Eden, and there will be no death in heaven; so no animal or fish has to die.

N. BARBOUR  
*England, United Kingdom*

## Do We Hear Them?

"Do We Hear Them?" by Larry R. Evans (February 2012), has deeply appealed to my heart. The issue was addressed with competence and compassion. This is a large group of people, and programs have to be made accessible. I liked that the author wrote about the deaf culture without labeling it. It is estimated that deaf persons number anywhere from 93 million to more than 300 million worldwide; and all are valuable in the eyes of God and deserving of being reached with the gospel. It's a good idea to have a deaf pastor or interpreter in each conference.

I was once at a meeting with hearing and deaf siblings. It was an exciting experience. They were really interested in what I wanted to share with them, and they had great patience with me. I wonder if the "hearing" are also ready to warmly and sympathetically incorporate the "deaf" into their circles.

*Adventist World* provides connection, unity, and understanding among people. Thank you for the interesting and uplifting reports on a variety of topics.

WALTRAUD RÜHLING-HUBER  
*Bogenhofen, Austria*

I am completely deaf. "Do We Hear Them?" was a wonderful, well-written article. My thanks to Larry R. Evans for the much-needed information—this is needed in our churches.

I sit at home on Sabbath and watch 3ABN, which has some closed-captioning for the deaf. I would like to see the church concentrate more effort on providing closed-captioning on programs broadcast on Hope Channel, so they can be an example to the world that they are reaching out to the deaf community.

ARTHUR L. CHAPUT  
*Pawtucket, Rhode Island,  
United States*

## Where Is God?

I really appreciated the article "Where Is God When You Need Him?" by John Skrzypaszek (January 2012).

All the great heroes of the Bible suffered somehow (see Heb. 11).

For me, the strongest example is Elisha, one of the most prominent prophets of the Old Testament who was not spared suffering before he died (2 Kings 13:14).

DENIS GNUTZMANS  
*Piracicaba, São Paulo, Brazil*



## Prayer & PRAISE

I want my husband to go to church with me. He smokes and drinks. We have three children. We also need a house. Thank you.

DORICA, *Zimbabwe*

Please pray for me and my family. I need financial help to get into school. Please also pray for our spiritual awakening.

HARRISON, *Kenya*

Please pray for my youngest daughter, who got divorced, left the church, and is spiritually confused. Pray also for her two children and the man she is planning to marry. I believe him to be receptive to the Adventist message.

BETTY, *United States*

# Where in the World Is This?

## The Gift of Prophecy

I have been given two *Adventist World* magazines. Of the two, one has been a special blessing to me because of Gerhard Pfandl's article "The Gift of Prophecy" (November 2010), which tells about Ellen White, the messenger of the Lord.

Could you send me the monthly magazine? It will be a blessing for me and my family.

HENRY JAVIER SANTIAGO  
*Dominican Republic*

*Our advice to this reader and others with similar concerns is to contact the Seventh-day Adventist Church union conference or division office in your region of the world. We are gratified that the magazine is filling this need.*

—EDITORS

## Very Glad

I'm very glad to read what God wants for me through your magazine. I am interested in what is written to God's people each month. God bless you.

CLAVER KABAYA  
*Matadi, Democratic Republic of Congo*

**Letters Policy:** Please send to: [letters@adventistworld.org](mailto:letters@adventistworld.org). Letters must be clearly written, 100-word maximum. Include the name of the article and the date of publication 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.



**ANSWER:** In Peru 86 education directors and primary-level coordinators pray before their training course in January.



Harvard University followed 121,000 people for 20 years and found the following foods most effective in helping people maintain a healthy weight:



1. Nuts
2. Yogurt
3. Fresh fruit
4. Whole grains
5. Fresh vegetables

Source: *New England Journal of Medicine*, 2011

Please pray for my wife, newborn son, and me; and for the city we live in.

TSEFAYE, *Ethiopia*

Kindly pray for the Adventist people living in Orissa. They lost their church and small clinic during riots and are waiting for help to rebuild.

SIJO, *India*

Thank you for your prayers! I passed my nursing board exam; now I'm praying to get a job so that I can help the church building project in our province.

FLOR, *Philippines*

**Prayer & Praise:** Send prayer requests and praise (thanks for answered prayer) to [prayer@adventistworld.org](mailto:prayer@adventistworld.org). Keep entries short and concise, 50-words or less. Items will be edited for space and clarity. Not all submissions will be printed. Please include your name and your country's name. 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.

# Thirsty?



**95.5** percent of the world's water is found in oceans, seas, and bays.

**4.5** percent of the world's water is fresh; of that more than half is trapped in glaciers and ice caps.

**2** percent of water is available at any one time for drinking and agriculture.

Source: *The Atlantic*, 2011



ADVENTIST ARCHIVES

## 113 Years Ago

The first Seventh-day Adventist church in Japan was organized in Tokyo with a membership of 13 on June 4, 1899. A few weeks later a monthly periodical, *Owari no Fukuin* (*The Gospel for the Last Days*), was launched and paid for by profits from the sale of health foods. The paper was renamed *Toki no Shirushi* (*Signs of the Times*) in June 1917.

Ten years earlier, in 1889, Abram La Rue, pioneer self-supporting missionary to China, made a number of trips to Japan and distributed Adventist publications in Yokohama and Kobe. S. N. Haskell visited Japan in 1890. Writing from Hong Kong on July 16, he reported: "We baptized one man in Japan. There are others there who are interested; and we learned that the Sabbath question has been discussed among the Japanese, and that there are some of them keeping the Sabbath" (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Aug. 26, 1890). The first Seventh-day Adventist missionaries sent to Japan were W. C. Grainger, former president of Healdsburg College; and T. H. Okohira, a native of Japan and former Healdsburg student. —Robert Costa

### QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“A cheerful disposition is **good** for your health; gloom and doom leave you bone-tired.”

—PROV. 17:22, *Message*\*

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## What's So Funny?

E-messages that indicate laughter vary from country to country, and language to language.

**lol** = laughing out loud  
**English**

**mdr** = *mort de rire* (died of laughter)  
**French**

**jajaja** = ha ha ha  
**Spanish**

**mkm** = *ma khanda mikonon* (I am laughing)  
**Dari** (spoken in Afghanistan)

**ha3** = ha times three  
**Malaysia**

**asg** = *asgarv* (roars of laughter)  
**Swedish**

**g** = *griner* (laughter)  
**Danish**

**o o o** = ha ha ha  
**Korean**

Source: *National Geographic*, March 2012

*“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 *Adventist World*, an international periodical of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The General Conference, Northern Asia-Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists®, is the publisher.

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*Adventist World* is published monthly and printed simultaneously in Korea, Brazil, Indonesia, Australia, Germany, Austria, and the United States.

Vol. 8, No. 6

## 50 WORDS OR LESS

# My Favorite... Hymn

■ My favorite hymn is “And Can It Be?” The reason? Charles Wesley’s lyrics in the chorus explain it all: “Amazing love! How can it be that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?”

—FLAVIA, *Milwaukee, Wisconsin, United States*

■ Whenever I sing “We Have This Hope” I’m reminded of the times I’ve heard it sung at General Conference sessions over the years. It’s so perfect in describing our Adventist hope in Jesus’ return.

—SOOK YI, *Seoul, South Korea*


■ “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” brings tears to my eyes every time I sing it. Even though I often find myself unworthy of His grace, God’s compassion never fails.

—HERBERT, *Brighton, England*

■ “Mas Allá del Sol” (“Far Beyond the Sun”) is an anthem for many Hispanics in North America. Most of us know the words by heart, reminding us that although we don’t have worldly riches, we have a home, a beautiful home, far beyond the sun.

—CARLOS, *Harlem, New York, United States*

Next time, tell us in 50 words or less about your favorite Bible promise. Send your response to: [letters@AdventistWorld.org](mailto:letters@AdventistWorld.org). Put in the subject line “Bible Promises.”

A photograph of Herbert Blomstedt, an elderly man with glasses and a white shirt, conducting an orchestra. He is smiling and holding a baton in his right hand, with his left hand raised in a conducting gesture. The background is dark, suggesting a concert hall.

Herbert Blomstedt is a conductor of international renown. He has served as chief conductor of the Staatskapelle Dresden (one of the world's oldest orchestras, founded 1548), the San Francisco Symphony, the NHK Symphony (Tokyo, Japan), and many other prestigious orchestras.

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gets into this  
maestro's hands.

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