

DIALOGUE



**Should We Love or
Hate the World?**

Artificial Intelligence

**Adventist Advance in
Latin America**

What Shall I Wear?

VOLUME 7: No. 2



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They “entered the schools of the world as students. They made no pretensions; apparently they paid no attention to anyone; but they lived out what they believed. They never sacrificed principle, and their principles soon became known. This was different from anything the other students had seen, and they began to ask themselves, What does this all mean?”

Thus wrote Ellen White of the Waldensians (*Selected Messages*, Book 3, p. 233). Their steadfastness to principle, their love for truth, their commitment to be God’s witnesses in a hostile culture made them keepers of the flame. The torch passed on from one to another, from one generation to another, enabling the preservation of truth, including the Sabbath, for generations to come. Neither secular indifference nor religious persecution deterred them from their resolve to be true to eternal values. They became the salt of the earth, the light of their day, the leaven of their communities.

The more I think of those valiant Christians of history, the more I am convinced that Seventh-day Adventists students and professionals studying and working in secular environments would do well to consider themselves as spiritual descendants of the Waldensians. Indeed, they should not only go for that claim but also pray for a double portion of God’s power so that they can be the sowers of the seed in today’s complex world.

Adventist fellowship groups on non-Adventist campuses can be the Waldensians of today. Like those heroic Christians of yesteryear, we too have a divine mandate: to preserve truth, to pass on the torch, to position ourselves in our communities as witnesses of a loving God. The same demonic powers that were aligned against the Waldensians are now combining their forces to extinguish the light of God’s love.

But we are a people chosen precisely for these last days. Non-believers know us for our publications, our health care, our educational system, and our relief and developmental work. But do they know us as people who love their Lord, share their faith, never sacrifice their principles, and await the soon-coming Jesus?

Not so long ago I attended an international conference on campus ministries. The keynote speaker was introduced as a Waldensian pastor. That captured my interest. Flashbacks of church history on the role of the Waldensians warmed my heart. I sat back to hear the speaker tell of Waldensian youth—how they shared God’s love on their campuses, how they stood for principle at personal cost, how they courageously endured suffering and ridicule. But I was disappointed. The keynote speech bypassed their rich and heroic heritage. Instead, it focused on a political and social agenda.

That, I believe, does not reflect the priorities of Adventist university students and young professionals. By and large, they are confident of their role and committed to their calling. In an environment of indifference to eternal values, they can stand firm like Joseph, be courageous like Daniel and conscientious like Esther, and can witness like the Waldensians. They can indeed let their walk match their talk. Maranatha!



Richard Barron, *Associate Editor*

Relevant and fascinating

I’m studying agronomy at the national university located in my hometown. As an Adventist student, I frequently face challenges to my faith and my religious convictions. Last year my sister, who is the treasurer at our local Adventist high school, loaned me several back issues of *Dialogue* in Spanish that she had received. I found their contents relevant and fascinating! The article “Citizens of Two Worlds” (*Dialogue* 3:3) was particularly useful to me, because it cleared several questions I had about the Seventh-day Adventist stance toward social issues. I intend to share these copies among my friends. Please list my name in the “Interchange” section. AMiCUS’ interest in and support of Adventist university students is much appreciated. God bless you!

ANGEL A. AGUIRRE
Piura, PERU

Hello to all computer fans!

I was delighted to learn that through “*Dialogue Interchange*” one can get in touch with other Adventists around the world who share our interests. After completing high school, I began studying computing and later worked for a while at the Seventh-day Adventist Romanian Union office. Although we read and hear a lot about Internet, CompuServe, and the Information Highway, few people within our church in Romania are really knowledgeable about computers. I’m now married and, at 21, working as a mailman. However, I remain very much interested in the computer world. Some day I hope to have better hardware and software. In the meantime, I would appreciate corresponding with other Adventists who can share with me, in English or Romanian, new ideas about the computer world, including software for virtual reality. My telephone: 40 062 437 715. Thank you!

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Petru Rares 29/45, Maramures
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ROMANIA

Keep it balanced

By now I have read several issues of *Dialogue* and find its content relevant to my situation. In fact, I suggest that you consider publishing six issues per year instead of three. Include some essays on Adventists and the military service. Keep your approach balanced, challenging the Christian mind while remaining accessible to the non-specialized reader.

JOSÉ MIGUEL DÍAZ
Sta. Cruz de Tenerife
Canarias, SPAIN

Always challenging and enjoyable

I enclose my renewal form for *Dialogue* and list my VISA card number for the appropriate charge. Please extend my subscription for two years. I really enjoy *Dialogue*. It certainly fills a gap in the Adventist magazine market, and I find the articles always challenging and enjoyable. Many thanks!

ANGELA LOGAN
West Lothian, SCOTLAND

What about poetry?

Although I usually get copies of *Dialogue* late, I always read them from cover to cover. They are consistently informative and spiritually uplifting. As a foreign language teacher, I take the liberty of suggesting that you include more poetry in the journal. Good poetry always captures the imagination and conveys its message from an unexpected angle. May the Lord continue to bless your ministry, and may we meet on the Earth made new!

MARITZA NÚÑEZ
Colegio Adventista San
Cristóbal
Santo Domingo,
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The editors respond:
Members of *Dialogue's* editorial team also enjoy poetry and have included a few free verse poems in past

issues (see, for example, "A Physicist's Psalm," 1:1; "Prayers from the Ark," 2:1; "Driver's Ed and the Will of God," 5:3). However, the fact that the journal is published in several parallel language editions makes it difficult to find poetry that lends itself to good translations. It will interest you to know that we plan to "profile" some Adventist poets in future issues.

I met you by chance

I just completed reading two back issues of *Dialogue* that my sister brought home. You might say that I met you by chance, although from God's perspective nothing really occurs "by chance." As a nursing student, I especially enjoyed the Profiles section as well as Campus Life and Action Report. Your journal provides stimulating religious articles that encourage us to live the Christian life wherever we are. Keep up the good work!

MARITES S. ROSALITE
Cebu, PHILIPPINES

More articles on ethics, morality, and justice

We have found *Dialogue* useful and timely, and enjoy reading it. Unfortunately, Spicer Memorial College does not receive it any more, and we miss it so much! We encourage you to publish more articles on ethics, morality, and justice. As students in a Master of Business Administration program we often see that our churches and institutions are not managed properly. Corruption is seen hovering too close to our Christian community. For those reasons we are discouraged and can't understand certain actions. Please, assure us by publishing articles that will rebuild our faith in Jesus Christ, who's coming very soon!

R. ROY, S. MISHAL, & CH. BABU
Spicer Memorial College
Pune, INDIA

The editors respond:
Thank you, graduate students, for your frank but encouraging letter. *Dialogue* is distributed free among Adventists attend-

ing public colleges and universities around the world. Some Adventist institutions of higher learning buy a certain number of copies of our journal for distribution among their students. We suggest that you ask the administrators of your college to obtain copies of *Dialogue* for internal circulation, or at least to have it available in the library. Don't be afraid of calling the attention of those responsible to specific cases of institutional mismanagement. Then make a personal commitment to God, asking Him to help you to act with integrity as you enter the professional world of management.

It answers questions

A friend of mine introduced me to *Dialogue* by giving me a copy of your 6:2 issue. As a single female Adventist, I was obviously interested in the article, "Preparing for a Happy Marriage." It answered some of the questions I had on this important subject. I also appreciated the thoughtful approach of Steve Case in his article, "Shall We Dance?"

CLEAH SAMBAI
Kiale, KENYA

Provides a global view

I want to congratulate you for such an interesting and constructive journal as *Dialogue*. It provides a global view from an Adventist perspective and also helps readers like me to connect with other young men and women who share my

Continued on page 33

Write to us!

We welcome your letters, with reactions and questions, but limit your comments to 200 words. Address them to *Dialogue Letters*: 12501 Old Columbia Pike; Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; U.S.A. If selected for this section, your letter may be edited for clarity or space.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church can truly claim to be international in its work and global in its vision. After 150 years of one of the most persistent and systematic mission programs in church history, we have established Adventism in 209 of the 236 countries recognized by the United Nations. Our membership is almost nine million. We are increasingly involved in the arts, education, government, health care, mass communications, research, and socio-economic development in many parts of the world.

However, growth on a global scale produces its own dilemmas. One dilemma that confronts our church today is not a new one. In fact, it has been called the perennial Christian question: How do we relate to culture? The question was anticipated by Jesus Himself. In His high priestly prayer, the Lord petitioned: "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it... As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (John 17:15-18).*

A look at two passages of the apostle John reveals an intrinsic tension. On the one hand, quoting the words of Jesus, John writes, "For God so loved the world [*kósmos* in Greek] that he gave his one and only Son" (John 3:16). On the other hand, he admonishes us, "Do not love the world [*kósmos*] or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

The issue is clear. We are in the world, a world that God loves, and a world in which we have a mission. And yet we are not of this world, and we should guard against falling in love with this world.

How do we reconcile these seemingly conflicting statements? How can we be in the world and yet not become part of it? How do we understand and interrelate culture, community, and our commitment to faith? Where do we draw the line between the demands of society and the kingdom of God?

A review of Scripture and the way Christians have handled the problem in the past will help us (a) define some key concepts; (b) outline basic responses to the problem; and (c) develop an Adventist position.

Christians Versus Culture: Should We Love or Hate the World?

Key concepts

To begin with, let us define two words: *culture* and *world*. In a broad sense, culture may be defined as the beliefs, values, and priorities of a community expressed through its institutions, practices, and creative manifestations.¹

To arrive at a biblical perspective of culture, we must turn to the cultural mandate God gave to our first parents at Creation: "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" (Genesis 1:26). "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it" (Genesis 2:15).

This mandate gives to humanity rulership over the earth. The rulership includes not just power and dominion, but also creativity, concern, and care. The Lord commanded us to "take care" of the earth. The English phrase "to care" is rendered in Latin by *colere*, the word from which we derive *culture*. In a biblical sense, then, culture may be understood as the result of human cultivation of and interaction with God's

by
Humberto
M. Rasi

creation. Seen thus, culture is the secondary environment that human hands and minds impose on the natural world.

The New Testament often uses the word *world* (*kósmos*) to refer to culture, or the results of human activity and creativity. The usage has two connotations. The first is a neutral or positive one. *World* is seen as the created order, including the material earth (Matthew 24:21), the people living on it (Matthew 4:8; John 12:19), the sphere of human life (1 Timothy 6:7), and the target of the disciples' mission (Matthew 5:14). Though affected by the Fall, the world and its inhabitants are seen as God's creation.

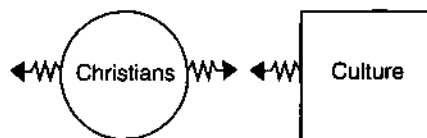
The second usage has a negative connotation. *World* consists of human agencies controlled by Satan, in open rebellion against God. The earth and its inhabitants are seen as involved in a cosmic struggle between spiritual forces under the command of Jesus and Satan (Ephesians 6:12). In this competing battle for loyalty, the sinful world didn't recognize Jesus as God when He came to this earth (John 1:10) and opposed Him throughout His ministry (John 16:33). Hence John warns those who follow Christ not to love this world or anything in it (1 John 2:15, 16). James adds that friendship with a world such as that is equivalent to hating God (James 4:4). Indeed, why would a Christian love such a world, for as Paul says, without God the world is hopeless anyway (Ephesians 2:12) and its wisdom is nothing more than foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:20)?

Thus the Bible posits a dual understanding of the world: on the one hand, a world that evidences God's original creation and His work toward its restoration; on the other, a world, controlled by Satan, in rebellion against God, fostering a life independent of Him. Christians are to live in the former and to flee the latter. More than that, living in the former, they have a mission to the latter. They need not fear that world, for the powers of that world, under the dominion of the demonic forces, have already been defeated at the cross and are doomed to a final annihilation at the end of time (Malachi 4:1; Revelation 20:7-10).

Three basic responses

Until that cataclysmic end, what should Christians do? Perhaps we can learn from history by asking the question, How have Christians in the past dealt with the problem? Richard Niebuhr's seminal work on the issue serves us to isolate three major responses that emerge as we study how Christians have struggled with culture.²

First response: opposition and separation. Basic to this posture is the assumption that the present world is evil and that Christians are "aliens and strangers" (1 Peter 2:11). Hence Christians should have nothing to do with the world.



The history of Christianity is replete with examples of this response. Early Christians rejected Greco-Roman culture, declaring it idolatrous and corrupt. The monastic movement of the Middle Ages reflected the desire for complete withdrawal from the world. Many Protestant sectarian movements—the Brethren, Mennonites, Anabaptists, Quakers, and also the Millerites (forerunners of our church)—also embraced this approach.

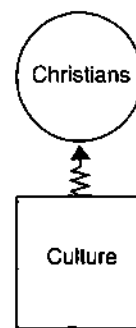
How should we evaluate this response? Those who chose this route did so with a sincere belief that they were faithfully applying the lordship of Jesus Christ to their lives. Their sincerity should be respected, and their courage in enduring persecution and martyrdom should be admired. Theirs was not a rosy path. Their total commitment to the gospel and the radical nature of their Christianity often led to revival and reformation in history.

However, the Bible does not mandate a complete withdrawal and isolation from the world; indeed, even as it cautions that we do not completely identify ourselves with the world and its preoccupations, it urges us to mediate God's message to that world in need. Christians cannot escape culture. We are created to be social beings, and it is within a society or a culture that we live, work, worship, and witness. At most,

those who break away from the world simply develop a different culture or subculture. More importantly, the response of withdrawal assumes that sin is caused by the external world, whereas the Bible teaches that sin begins within the mind. Excessive emphasis on separation from the world makes religion irrelevant and communication of the gospel difficult.

Second response: tension. This response recognizes in this world evidences of both the goodness of God's original creation and of the evil of human fallenness. But this reality is marked with unavoidable tension between the two: Christ's kingdom and that of the enemy. Christians have sought to solve this dilemma in different ways:

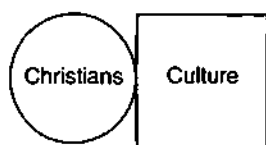
• **Christianity as superior to culture.** Such a view considers culture as basically good but deficient and hence in need of improvement. Christians should involve themselves in all lawful worldly activities but live by a higher standard of goodness prompted by divine love. Human intellect can achieve only imperfect knowledge and happiness; ultimate wisdom and true fulfillment are received only through Jesus Christ.



We have here a rational basis for cooperation between Christians and non-Christians for the improvement of life on this planet, while allowing for the gospel's distinctiveness. Believers who have embraced this view have had a positive influence on the arts, education, government, and the sciences. However, this response doesn't acknowledge the presence of evil in every human undertaking, leaving Christians with the risk of attending to the preservation and improvement of culture rather than to the establishment of the divine kingdom.

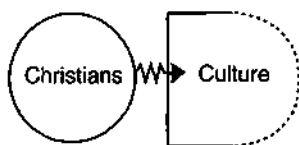
• **Christianity in juxtaposition to culture.** This dualist position acknowledges that the result of human activity in

the world is usually evil but necessary. There is an unavoidable conflict between God's righteousness and human sinfulness. Reason is tainted with selfishness, and culture is infected with godlessness. Although Christians are aware of the situation, they cannot escape it. The apostle Paul saw that society's efforts in the moral realm are designed more to prevent evil from becoming destructive rather than to provide a positive good (see Romans 13:4). Likewise, Martin Luther (1483-1546) saw Christian life on this planet as both tragic and joyful—a dilemma without resolution on this side of death.



However, Christian dualists have to face the tension between God's ideals and human reality, between grace and sin. So believers involving themselves with the world do so without any illusions. They stress individual conversion and, like Paul, they view social institutions as merely restrainers of anarchy rather than constructive forces providing for human freedom and justice.

• **Christianity as culture-transformer.** This posture considers culture as fallen but redeemable. The present world still reflects God's creation, albeit imperfectly. The problem is perverted good, not essential evilness. Culture needs to be transformed, not discarded, and Christians can help change the world to God's glory.



Augustine (354-430) and John Calvin (1509-1564) are representatives of this hopeful stance. The involvement of Christians in "worldly affairs"—business, education, health care, and science, for example—has resulted in admirable improvement of various societies. However, the very nature of socio-political activism raises two significant cautions for the Christian. First, over time social

activism can easily erode the core Christian concerns of the gospel. Second, there is the presumption that the ultimate solution to human predicament lies in social programs rather than in the biblical teaching that God will intervene and establish His eternal kingdom.

Third response: assimilation. This position assumes that culture is basically good. It points to the abundant evidences of God's presence and activity in this world. Has not Christianity itself established in the past a close connection with a culture or mindset (e.g., medieval Catholicism, enlightened capitalism, or Christian socialism)?



Stressing cooperation and communication, this approach allows the gospel to be interpreted, understood, and embraced in different cultural settings. In the process, a tendency to compromise the essence of the gospel creeps in, resulting in the emergence of Christ the great moral teacher rather than the Lord of life and sole Savior of the world. Thus, Christianity becomes an all-embracing humanitarianism. The blurred distinction between the realms of God and Satan, propped by a moralistic humanism, offers on a silver plate universal salvation.

Toward an Adventist position

Which of these approaches has been the Adventist attitude toward the world during our 150-year history? And what should our present posture be? Obviously, it needs to be both consistent with biblical revelation and flexible enough to respond to the diverse cultures and settings in which Adventists live and witness. I propose that such a stance include at least three principles:

1. Nurture a biblical worldview that includes the Great Controversy motif.³ This overarching narrative is the framework within which Adventists place salvation history. It consists of seven great moments:

• **God.** "In the beginning God" (Genesis 1:1). An Adventist worldview must begin with the assertion of God's self-existence as a Person.

• **Creation.** God creates a perfect universe and populates it with intelligent beings. He also fashions this earth, creates plant and animal life, and brings into existence our first parents.

• **Satan.** Lucifer, an exalted angel, rebels against God and is expelled from heaven with his followers.

• **Fall.** Satan tempts Adam and Eve into sin. The entire world suffers the consequences.

• **Redemption.** Jesus Christ, the Creator, comes to this world in human flesh and through His death and resurrection offers salvation to those who accept Him.

• **Second Coming.** Christ returns to this earth in glory, grants immortality to those who have received Him as Savior, and takes them home to heaven.

• **Consummation.** At the end of the millennium God destroys those who have rejected His salvation, eliminates evil from the universe, and restores creation to its pristine state.

The Great Controversy centers on two conflicting views of God's character and principles: one that considers God as loving, gracious, and just; the other that considers God as arbitrary, unjust, and unfair. Our world has become a battleground for these opposing forces of good and evil, and the battle is played out principally through human lives. Although created in the image of God, we have fallen from our original perfect state. Without supernatural help, we cannot hope to return to our original condition.

2. Seek a critical engagement with the surrounding culture. Such a stance requires that we balance four biblical approaches to the world:

• **Separation** from anything openly contrary to God's revealed will. God is holy; those who choose to love Him seek holiness (1 Peter 2:9) and "avoid every kind of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22). Christ expects total allegiance from His followers to His principles (Matthew 6:24; 12:30) and total rejection of evil (Revelation 18:2, 4).

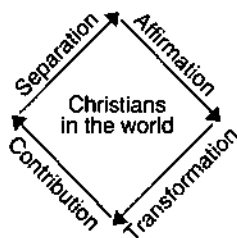
• **Affirmation** of everything that is compatible with God's revelation and original plan for humanity. God is the source of all truth, justice, and beauty attainable by humans (James 1:17). In addition, God has conveyed through His Holy Spirit the basic guiding principles of goodness to operate in the human environment (John 16:13; Romans 2:14, 15). So Christians must affirm, as did Paul, all acceptable aspects of culture, and use them to carry out the gospel mandate to live and witness as Christians (1 Corinthians 9:22, 23; Acts 17:19-34).

• **Transformation** of individual human beings, the exertion of a positive influence over social structures and practices through these individuals, and the movement of culture toward greater conformity with God's principles (Matthew 6:10). For this reason, Seventh-day Adventists give priority to spiritual conversion and view teaching, healing, and socio-economic development as complementary activities in the transformation of humanity. To honor God must ever remain the ultimate goal of all activities in which Christians engage (1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17).

• **Contribution** to the surrounding culture through elements that benefit humanity and enhance life. Jesus launched His earthly ministry by stressing the spiritual and social dimensions of His mission (Luke 4:18, 19). Throughout history, the world has been

enriched by the contributions of Christian artists, benefactors, lawmakers, missionaries, musicians, scientists, and other professionals. Indeed, Christians have promoted religious liberty, extended education to those with limited opportunities, founded modern science, abolished slavery, and produced works of art that awaken the best in human beings.

This eclectic approach to the world can be diagrammed as follows:



3. Study God's Word, pray for discernment, and listen to the insights of other committed Adventists. In our unavoidable involvement with the world, we should seek wisdom from the Holy Spirit. Together with other Adventists, we also need to discuss how the Bible's counsel applies to our relationship with the culture in which we live. We should not fear to be counter-cultural, if necessary. As Jesus promised (John 16:13), the Holy Spirit will guide us in our choices—our career or profession, our entertainment, the use of our

resources, participation in social processes as voting, and our stand on issues such as freedom and justice, life and death, war and peace, environment and public health.

Doing God's will where we are

Meanwhile, Jesus expects us to do His will where we are—just as He did with the demon-possessed man of Mark 5:1-20. After He freed the man, Jesus and His disciples were preparing to go to the other side of the lake. The man who had experienced the healing power of Jesus wanted to follow Him. But Jesus told His new follower to return home—to his own culture—and share the good news with his family and friends. Therein lies the key to a Christian understanding of culture: Be a follower of Jesus where you are, and testify to the wonders of His grace in a world torn apart in different directions. As Niebuhr has noted: "Belief in him [Christ] and loyalty to his cause involves men in the double movement from world to God and from God to world... Christians... are forever being challenged to abandon all things for the sake of God; and forever being sent back into the world to teach and practice all the things that have been commanded them."⁴

Humberto M. Rasi (Ph.D., Stanford University) is director of the Education Department of the General Conference and editor of *Dialogue*.

*All Scripture passages in this article are quoted from the New International Version.

Notes and references

1. I have adapted Oliver R. Barclay's definition in *The Intellect and Beyond* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Corporation, 1985), p. 123.
2. See Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951).
3. See John M. Fowler, "The Making of a Christian Worldview," *Dialogue* 2:1 (1990), pp. 5-8, 30, 31; and Humberto M. Rasi, "Fighting on Two Fronts," *Dialogue* 3:1 (1991), pp. 4-7, 22, 23.
4. Niebuhr, p. 178.

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Horses gave way to automobiles. Rubber to plastics. Cotton to polyester. What about intelligence? Are computers about to replace human intelligence? Is artificial intelligence a threat to our humanness?

The term artificial intelligence (AI) is rather new. Over this century, theories concerning AI co-evolved around two perspectives: a formal approach using deterministic computer programs and a biological approach.

Understanding Formal AI

AI immediately evokes images of user-friendly robots from movies like *Star Wars* or *Star Trek*. In reality, however, the meaning of AI is rather nebulous. Note how varied the definitions are:

- "AI is the attempt to answer the question ... how does the human brain give rise to thoughts, feelings, and consciousness."
- "AI is the study of computer problems that have not been solved."
- "AI is the art of creating machines that perform functions that require intelligence when performed by people."

Each of these statements define AI in a manner suitable to the goals of particular research interests. But none of them defines AI conclusively. So what do scientists mean when they talk about formal AI? Basically, they refer to a deterministic computer program capable of imitating intelligent behavior.

Historical background. AI emerged from the fertile turmoil of mathematics from 1870 to 1930, when the goal was to unify all mathematics using a small collection of basic principles. However, this goal remained elusive. The most ambitious of these attempts was set forth by David Hilbert as a mathematical problem, known as the *Entscheidungsproblem* ("the tenth problem").

Hilbert's goal was to prove that mathematics is consistent (without contradictions), complete (all mathematical statements could be proved or disproved), and computable (the truth value of any mathematical statement can be determined by a mechanical device). However, to avoid the difficulties

associated with other attempts to unify mathematics, the problems and their proofs were approached on strictly formal methods, that is, following logical rules of inference based on axioms. Such formal methods would substitute human insight and judgment with mechanical means.²

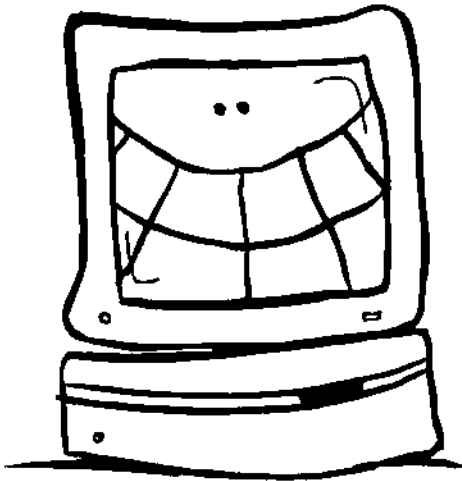
Hilbert's *Entscheidungsproblem* was ultimately proven to be impossible by the logician Kurt Goedel, who demon-

Artificial Intelligence: Can Machines Think?

strated in 1931 that mathematics could not be both complete and consistent. While Goedel ignored the issue of computability, his finding nonetheless modified the question associated with it to ask: "Does there exist an algorithm to decide if a problem has a solution?"³ In 1936 a theoretical model of computation, the Turing machine, proved that even this was not possible.

The Turing machine (TM, see box, p. 11), developed by the mathematician Alan Turing, is a mechanical device that precisely defines the notion of an algorithm. In other words, it outlines the steps one must follow to accomplish a task—a "recipe," if you please. The machine is programmed to solve a problem defined in strictly formal terms. However, although such problems do not require semantic insight—that is, knowing the meaning behind a rule or a symbol—they can potentially represent

by
Raymond
L. Paden
and James
Wolfer



real-world problems ranging from balancing a bank account to simulating the behaviors of human intimacy. Today's computers are equivalent to a TM, in that any problem that can be solved by a TM can be solved by a computer and vice-versa. (Hence the terms *computer* and *TM* are used interchangeably in this essay.) Problems that can be solved, or that can be attempted but are not solvable by a TM, are called *computable*. Problems that are so complex that they cannot even be attempted on a TM are called *uncomputable*.

Church's Thesis and the Goal of Formal AI. A TM is a simple machine. In spite of this simplicity, it is believed to be the most powerful form of mechanical computation known to man. It can execute any procedure that can be mechanically performed. While this assertion regarding TM's power, known as Church's thesis, cannot be formally proven, no mechanical model of computation that has been invented is more powerful.⁴ Going a step farther, we can ask another question: Can all of human intelligence be performed by mechanically equivalent procedures?

To this, Hofstadter responds rhetorically: "Here one runs up against a seeming paradox. Computers by their very nature are the most inflexible, desireless, rule-following of beasts. Fast though they may be, they are nonetheless the epitome of unconsciousness. How,

then, can intelligent behavior be programmed? Isn't this the most blatant of contradiction of terms?"⁵

To the proponents of formal AI, including Hofstadter, this is not a contradiction at all. Indeed, they believe that the next century will have computers that are the functional equivalents of human beings. However, the critics of formal AI, like Joseph Weizenbaum, assert: "We are capable of listening with the third ear, of sensing living truth, that is truth beyond any standards of provability. It is that kind of understanding, and that kind of intelligence that is derived from it, which I claim is beyond the abilities of computers to simulate."⁶

Perhaps, it can be speculated, this living truth—which represents higher forms of human intelligence—lies in the domain of uncomputable functions that are not accessible to computers.

The meaning of humanness

The attempt to emulate human intelligence raises the question of our humanity. Christianity and science have disagreed over this issue for many centuries.

The Scripture looks at humans from the perspective of Creation and redemption. It raises the question, "What are human beings?" (Psalm 8:4, NRSV), and provides some answers. Humans are created "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:27). They are spiritual (Romans 8:16; 1 Corinthians 2:11, 14-16), intellectual (Isaiah 1:18, Mark 12:30), creative (Exodus 31:1-5; Psalm 33:3), social (Genesis 2:18), affectionate (Proverbs 18:24; Ecclesiastes 3:5) and sexual (Genesis 4:1; Song of Solomon 4:16-5:1). God has given human beings freedom of choice (Deuteronomy 30:19; Joshua 24:15; John 7:17), but this freedom is not absolute (Romans 6:23). God has made them to be loving creatures (Matthew 22:37-39), but they also have the capacity to hate (Ecclesiastes 3:8). Through their choice, they have fallen (Romans 5:12, 17), but God has sent His Son (John 3:16, Philippians 2:6-11) to restore them into His image (Acts 3:21; 1 John 3:2), provided they consent (John 14:15). Moreover, God will hold them accountable for their choice in the judgment (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14).

Science looks at human beings from a different perspective altogether. Formal AI views the mind in behaviorist terms,

based on the doctrine of logical positivism.⁷ The mind is conceived of as a machine, and the task of formal AI is to create another machine, a properly programmed computer to be the mind's equivalent.⁸ Thus science typically ignores many of the issues that arise from the biblical perspective.

At first glance, these two views of humanness seem at odds; but are they? One must ask whether there is anything special about the mechanisms of the brain. Be it computer chips or biochemical processes, the issue is intelligence, not the hardware that sustains it. Moreover, proponents of formal AI would argue that either these lofty aspects of our humanity can be programmed or are mere illusions.

Freedom of choice. A good example of the complexities involved in such questions can be seen in the issue of non-determinism (i.e., freedom of choice). In formally emulating intelligent behavior, one uses a computer that is programmed deterministically. But it can be proven that deterministic and nondeterministic TMs are equivalent. Thus scientists conclude that our feeling of free will can be programmed, using deterministic techniques.

Hofstadter accounts for this "feeling" of free will: "It is irrelevant whether the system is running deterministically; what makes us call it a 'choice maker' is whether we can identify with a high-level description the process which takes place when the program runs. On a low... level, the program looks like any other (deterministic) program; on a high... level, qualities such as 'will,' 'intuition,' 'creativity,' and 'consciousness' can emerge."⁹

Thus AI proponents argue that at the low level of neurophysiology deterministic choices are made in the brain, similar to the way they are made in a TM, and at high levels of consciousness, people merely have the perception of free will. Hence the argument: A human being is only an automaton.

If this is the case, as Bible-believing Christians we need to make three observations. First, this view of humans runs counter to basic Seventh-day Adventist teachings.¹⁰ Second, it contradicts the Scriptures, which assert that human beings must choose whom they are to follow. Since we will be held accountable for this choice in the

judgment (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14), we must have the ability to choose our destiny. Third, it denies that the love principle is God's ideal for humanity (Matthew 22:37-39; 1 John 4:8). Since free choice is the infrastructure of love, then we must be free to be able to love God! These observations should lead to question, if not reject, the proposed equivalence between the human mind and the TM.

The ethics of AI

Another question needs to be raised: Is it desirable to create a "machine" identical to a human being? From a practical perspective, many would probably answer No. In creating a machine, it makes little sense for scientists to program it to make arithmetic errors, to get angry, or to lie. Moreover, it would make no sense to program a computer to anticipate the future, only to have it "dismantled" once it becomes obsolete, and its software is no longer transferable to a new generation of computers.

If it were possible to create formal AI, many scientists would probably develop a machine with an alien intelligence that is understandable and submissive to people, much like robots in science fiction movies. Such machines would be programmed to recognize speech and have vision. They would be given a socially pleasing and accessible means of interfacing with humans. And they would need to be granted rights appropriate for an intelligent agent.

However, such a vision of formal AI may not be necessary for a TM model of genuine intelligence. Rather than creating truly intelligent machines, programs which merely appear intelligent could be designed to emulate those aspects of the human mind that are programmable. In this sense, intelligence becomes a practical metaphor used in the design of programs. The less accessible aspects of intelligence such as free will and spiritual vitality would not, could not, be programmed.

Biologically inspired AI

While formal AI has attained some success in areas such as expert systems and game-playing strategies, it has essentially failed to achieve many day-to-day survival necessities such as vision, which even the simplest creatures

perform easily. Recent theoretical advances have produced a renaissance of paradigms based upon biological metaphors. These include artificial neural networks, genetic algorithms, genetic programming, and artificial life. These approaches share the basic assumption that complex behavior can emerge from simple computations or processes.

Artificial neural networks, for instance, are based upon the concept that useful computation can be distributed throughout a system of very simple computational elements ("neurons") by encoding information at the points of connections between these elements. Scientists have developed procedures that allow interconnected networks of these metaphorical neurons to learn relationships by example. Applications of these artificial neural networks include learning to drive a vehicle by "watching" a human driver, cancer screening, and financial management.¹¹

In theory, one can apply the genetic mechanisms for information transfer in nature, such as selection, mutation, and sexual reproduction. One can also apply genetic mechanisms to search for a set of solutions under which an organism would survive, operating within a given set of stimuli and stipulated conditions. Genetic programming is an example of evolutionary computation that actually evolves programs to solve particular problems.¹² Applications of genetic programming include creating aesthetically pleasing art, learning to balance an inverted pendulum ("broom balancing"), and automatic target image recognition.

Artificial life research attempts to abstract the characteristics of life and reproduce them in some computational form. Farmer and Belin identify some of these attributes: life as a pattern in space-time (e.g. most of our cells are replaced in our lifetime); self-reproduction; information storage of self-representation (for example, DNA); metabolism; ability to interact with the environment; interdependence of parts forming the organism; stability under perturbations and small changes; and ability of the lineage to evolve.¹³

Those involved in artificial life research recognize two different claims, the strong and the weak. The weak claim asserts that anything produced is a simulation that may explain certain

The Turing Test and artificial intelligence (AI)

One significant dilemma facing proponents of formal AI is how to recognize intelligence in a computer when it is manifested, since there is no adequate definition for intelligence. Alan Turing attempted to answer this question in 1950 with an operational view of AI, using what is now called the Turing Test.¹⁷ A computer claimed by its designers to be intelligent and a person are hidden from the view of a panel of judges. The judges interview the computer and the person through a keyboard and a monitor to determine which is the computer and which is the person.

Suppose a judge asks the respondents to factor a 30-digit integer. The answer would be a quick matter for the computer, but quite tedious for the person. Thus it would be necessary to program the computer to slow down on mathematical responses and even make mistakes. It would also be necessary to program the computer to get angry, lie, and cheat as well as to emulate the more noble aspects of humanity such as appreciating the aesthetic appeal of a musical composition.

So suppose it were possible for a computer to appear genuinely human (for example, to think and feel). Does this necessarily imply that a real aspect of humanity is alive in the computer's circuitry? If a computer acts intelligent by means of a program, then to the proponents of formal AI, it is intelligent. To others, if there is no understanding of the meaning behind a rule or a symbol (semantic insight), then there is no intelligence: "Acting, no matter how skilful, is not the real thing."¹⁸

properties of life. The strong claim asserts that the computer programs will eventually achieve the state of actually being "alive." Will a machine ever be intelligent? Will a machine ever be "alive"? Are our concepts of intelligence and life so focused on biological forms that we will preclude anything else attaining that status by unspoken definition? These questions cannot be answered at this time, but there is still much to gain from their study. As Langton asserts: "Although AI has not yet achieved anything that even its most ardent supporters would call genuine machine intelligence, AI has completely changed the way in which scientists think about what it is to be 'intelligent', and has, therefore, made a major scientific contribution, even though it hasn't achieved its overall goal."¹⁴

Similarly, research in artificial life will force us to rethink what it means to be "alive." Farmer projects some possibilities: "With the advent of artificial life, we may be the first species to create its own successors. What will these successors be like? If we fail in our task as creators, they may indeed be cold and malevolent. However, if we succeed, they may be glorious, enlightened creatures that far surpass us in their intelligence and wisdom. It is quite possible that, when the conscious beings of the future look back on this era, we will be most noteworthy not in and of ourselves but rather for what we gave rise to. Artificial life is potentially the most beautiful creation of humanity. To shun artificial life without deeper consideration reflects a shallow anthropocentrism."¹⁵

A Christian response to AI

From the current state of research in AI to consciousness, it is a long journey—and one that has achieved only small, incremental steps toward its goal. Yet the assumption of many, and the goal of some, is that it is not only possible, but also inevitable.

While the authors of this essay have differing opinions about the potential for creating artificially intelligent agents, they agree that we should be cautious about ruling it out categorically. Though science is incapable of discovering the totality of truth,¹⁶ nonetheless, many of its experimental discoveries have produced tangible benefits. Moreover, we must always recognize that our arguments may be incomplete or even wrong. For instance, recall such events as the Great Disappointment of the Millerite movement or statements asserting that people would never land on the moon because they are sinful and the moon had known no sin. If we base our beliefs on fears of the unknown, they are likely to be shattered, resulting in a crisis of faith.

So how should a Christian respond? The Bible does not seem to directly preclude artificial intelligence. What Scripture does provide, however, is a stable basis from which to evaluate the consequences of artificial intelligence. Even if machine intelligence surpasses human intelligence in certain areas, we as Christians need not lose any of our self-worth or identity. Many feel threatened by AI's potential encroachment upon their humanity. In an age when we are at times reduced to numbers and intimidated by computers, is not the attempt to make machines our equal the ultimate threat to humanity? The answer is No. Our humanity is rooted in our relationship with our Creator, and our ultimate destiny is well defined in Scripture. Regardless of the successes or failures in AI, we must remember that God has "fearfully and wonderfully made" us (Psalm 139:14), that He sent His Son to redeem us (John 3:16; 1 John 2:1-2), and that we are welcome before His throne (Hebrews 4:16). Nothing can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39). This alone, if nothing else, sets us apart from machines. 🙏

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The 1990s mark the centennial of Adventism in Latin America. As the church in this fast-growing region enters its second century of life and ministry, the author looks back at history and looks forward to the future, and sees the unmistakable hand of God in it all!

Seventh-day Adventists in several Latin American countries are celebrating their centennial. When Adventism was planted in the Hispanic soil 50 years after it began in the United States, it was like the parable of the mustard seed—small, insignificant, and unnoticed. But today Latin American Adventism has grown to gigantic proportions, bursting at the seams, with a membership leaping over the 2.5 million mark. This remarkable growth of Adventism in a strange and hostile environment bears witness to a history of faith and toil, adventure and sacrifice, God's leadership and the church's obedience to that call.

As we celebrate a century of God's blessings in Latin America, it would do well to reflect on the hallmarks of the early beginnings, strategies of growth over the years, and the challenge for the future.

Hallmarks of early beginnings

Like in most other parts of the world, three significant factors characterize the beginnings of Adventism in Latin America.

First, the influence of literature. Adventist publications arrived in various countries of Latin America between 1880 and 1890. In all the known cases, the immigrants in these countries were the first to receive such literature, mostly in their native languages. German publications arrived in Brazil in 1879 and were distributed in some German colonies in the southern part of the country by those who were not yet Adventists. French magazines and tracts reached French and Swiss colonies in Argentina around 1885. About the same time, English publications were distributed in Honduras and Belize.¹

Second, the witness of laypersons. Before any salaried denominational employee could establish a foothold for Adventism, laypersons had begun the job. A housekeeper was the first to share her faith in Honduras in 1885. Adventist

farmers, settled in Argentina, organized a Sabbath school in 1890, the first in South American territory. An Adventist tailor had his rendezvous in Mexico City in 1891. Such participation of the laity and volunteer workers was not only fundamental to the beginnings of Adventism

Adventist Advance in Latin America

A Century of Miracles

in Latin America, but, as we will see later, has been a key element in the dramatic expansion of the church in later decades.

Third, the work of self-supporting missionaries. The Foreign Missions Board of the General Conference, organized in 1889, sent the first three self-supporting missionaries (literature evangelists) to South America in 1891, and very soon these workers were sharing the gospel in four countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay. The trail cut by these colporteurs led to the organization of the first Adventist churches between 1894 and 1896.

Another group of self-supporting missionaries—in this case doctors and nurses—established themselves in Guadalajara, Mexico, in 1893, in the first attempt to organize Adventist medical work outside the United States.² As a result, the first church in Mexico was organized in Guadalajara.

by
Juan
Carlos
Viera

Strategies for Growth

Adventist pioneers may not have been quite aware of the technical terms for the strategies they employed in developing and building their churches in various countries of Latin America. However, a study of the evangelistic, pastoral, and administrative principles employed by those pioneers in building a strong church reveals what contemporary missiology considers “modern” strategies of church growth.

First, the principle of “homogeneous units.” A homogeneous unit is a population group that is perceived to have something in common—color, race, income bracket, or any such bonding factor. As one church growth expert states: “When marked differences of color, status, income, cleanliness, and education are present, men understand the Gospel better when expounded by their own kind of people. They prefer to join churches whose members look, talk, and act like themselves.”³

Adventism in Latin America thus grounded itself first in homogeneous units of population rather than among the natives. The first congregations in the Latin Caribbean, Central America, and the northern countries of South America were organized among English- and French-speaking colonies. In the rest of South America, Swiss, Russian, and

especially German colonies were the first to receive and to accept the Adventist message. With the passing of time, the Adventist faith extended itself from these homogeneous people groups to the native population of diverse territories.

Second, the principle of social responsibility. This issue has provoked heated discussions in religious circles, especially after the emergence of “liberation theology” in Latin America. Adventists, nevertheless, had received, from the very beginning, inspired counsel that related to the issue of social responsibility. The definite advice was to follow in the footsteps of Jesus who, “by the good He accomplished, by His loving words and kindly deeds, . . . interpreted the gospel to men.”⁴

Adventist pioneers in Latin America followed that kind of “hermeneutics.” Besides preaching the gospel, they lived it and practiced it as they related to their neighbors, especially those who were oppressed and needy. Several analysts of Protestantism in Latin America conclude that this was one of the secrets of success for Adventists in this region of the world. A Catholic author states: “The missionary work of Adventism is not limited to preaching, albeit this supercedes everything else. Because in reality Adventism preaches with its schools of different levels, with its agricultural industry, its hospitals and schools of medicine. And all of that is spread around the world. It is the practical and positive work of one church that while awaiting the end of time, does not do so, at least, with folded hands.”⁵

A German anthropologist who studied Adventists in the Bolivian highlands states: “The ‘praxis’ of the Adventist mission was since the beginning and at all times something more than the realization of the gospel mandate. Together with the expansion of the Biblical word were the ‘acts of mercy’ that were manifested through the medical attention and in the scholastic education.”⁶

The Peruvian highlands also illustrate this second principle of Adventist church growth in Latin America. When Fernando and Ana Stahl arrived on the shores of Lake Titicaca at the beginning of the century, they immediately realized that education was one of the most felt needs among the native population. They began to

establish elementary schools and to prepare native teachers for that work. A decade later, dozens of schools were caring for hundreds of native children. Teaching rather than preaching yielded massive conversions. Organization of churches followed the schools, and by 1920 more than 3,000 members had joined the church in the highlands of Peru alone.⁷

The Amazon basin in central South America offers another illustration. Here the strategy of “preaching and living the gospel” not only produced an extraordinary growth, but also brought in recognition and appreciation to the church from the population in general and government authorities in particular.

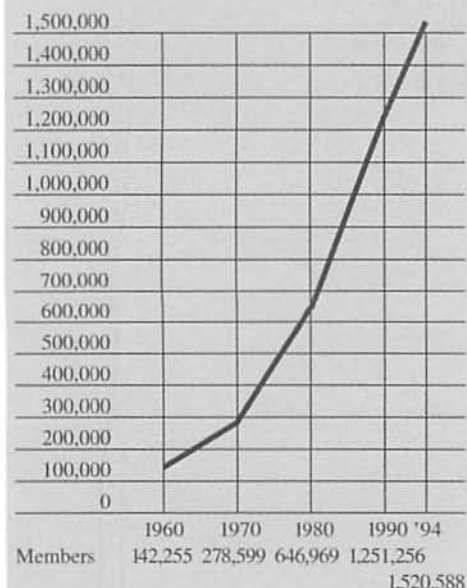
Religious scholars took note of the work of Seventh-day Adventists. J. B. Kessler in 1967⁸ and David Martin in 1990⁹ in their works on Protestantism in Latin America concluded that Adventists have been agents in the “upward social mobility process.” That is to say, Adventism improves the quality of life of individuals and communities that accept its message.

Third, the principle of lay involvement. The third strategy in the growth of the Adventist movement did not begin until about the mid-1950s and still remains a key element of growth: lay participation. Almost every country in Latin America has had a high degree of inclusiveness of the laity in both evangelistic outreach and church leadership. Space limits a detailed analysis of factors that produce such a vast lay mobilization, but we need to note some general factors.

Since World War II, Latin America has undergone tremendous social, political, and economical upheavals. These factors do affect church growth. For example, financial crises have forced most conferences and missions into a situation where they cannot maintain pastors at a rate commensurate to that of membership growth. As a result church leaders have to involve the laity in the performance of evangelistic and pastoral duties. In Latin America, it is not unusual to see a pastor in charge of five or more large churches and a score of companies. The only way the pastor can do this is to train and equip the laity to assist in ministerial duties.

Central America provides an extraordinary illustration of church growth through lay involvement. Nicaragua reached a 348 percent decadal growth

Inter-American Division Baptized Members



Source: General Conference Annual Statistical Report.

rate (DGR) between 1970 and 1980. In the last decade, Honduras reached a 360 percent DGR, surpassed only by two African countries, Uganda and Gambia. Surprisingly, during the same time, the proportion of the number of pastors in relation to the membership dropped drastically. In El Salvador, for example, there was one pastor for every 250 members in 1960. In 1990, there was a pastor for every 2,000 members! But church growth did not stop for that reason. In 1960 there were 1,700 members in El Salvador; currently, there are more than 60,000.

This growth pattern is seen in almost all areas. The Latin American Seventh-day Adventist Church has organized a lay leadership supported by pastors and administrators, and has developed what missiology defines as “a model of church growth easily reproducible.” This model allows a church to begin a new congregation without waiting for the arrival of an ordained minister on a payroll and under an authorized budget. Lay leaders can easily leave their own church and begin a new congregation without the financial limitations of an ordained minister. The “easily reproducible model of church growth” also allows a church to reproduce itself in many units, without waiting for new church buildings: an open field, as well as a family home or a rented room, can serve as the starting point for a new congregation.

This “easily reproducible model of church growth” is, indeed, the key for the success of Latin American Adventism. Both Inter-America and South America have already surpassed the mark of one million members. Because they are each adding more than 100,000 new members every year, the second million mark for each is not far away. With the leadership of the Holy Spirit, and with an ever growing army of volunteer workers, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Latin America is preparing a multitude of believers for the coming of the Lord.

Challenges for the Future

So far so good. The saga of Adventism as it marks its centennial in Latin America is one of joy and thanksgiving. But what of the future? The greatest challenge confronting the Adventist Church in the near future is related to the

changes in Latin American society. For 500 years—since the discovery of the Americas—the participation of the church in the historical process of the Latin American society was accepted without questioning. But in recent decades the new social theologies, such as the liberation theology, are calling for a complete change in the church. Some Catholic and Protestant authors call for a new ecclesiology, a new Christology, and a new hermeneutic. They see a church too far removed from the people, and they want the distance closed. They ask for a “poor” church and a “people” church. They ask for a new Christ, more active among the people and different from the suffering Christ of the crucifix. And finally, they cry for a new hermeneutic, an interpretation of the gospel that takes into account not only the “text” but also the “context”: the situation of misery and oppression in which large masses of people live.

Although Adventists do not agree with the combative philosophies behind these new theologies, they do feel the responsibility of introducing a new religious perspective in Latin America. And, in reality, they are in the best conditions to do it. Following the Pattern, the Lord Jesus, they come closer to the poor, the needy, the oppressed. They show in their own lives the living Christ who heals, feeds, comforts, and saves. And in introducing the gospel to the people, they not only preach it but practice it, as the Lord did, and as the Adventist pioneers did in the highlands of Bolivia and Peru, in the Amazon basin, and in other areas of Latin America.

The church must also confront the increasing challenge of urbanism and secularization. By 2001 Latin America not only will have the largest city in the world—Mexico City—but also dozens of cities with millions of inhabitants. Urbanism accelerates the process of secularization, leaving God and religion out of the lives of people.

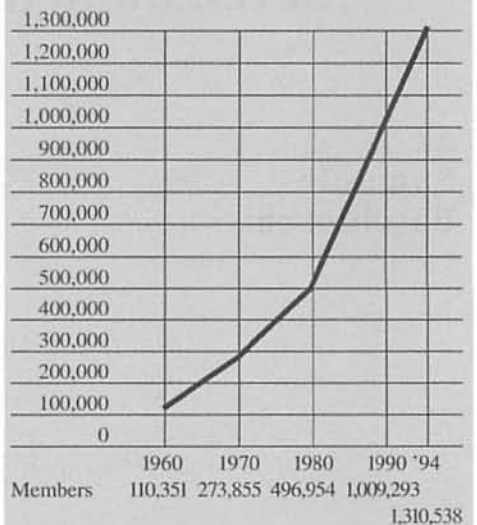
As it enters its second century of life and mission in Latin America, Adventism is conscious of its role in the new order of the 21st century, even as it anticipates the fulfillment of the prayer of all ages, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” ☪

Born in Uruguay, Juan Carlos Viera (D. Miss., Fuller Theological Seminary) was recently appointed secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate, in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A. The title of his doctoral dissertation was, “Seventh-day Adventists in Latin America: Their Beginnings; Their Growth; Their Challenges.”

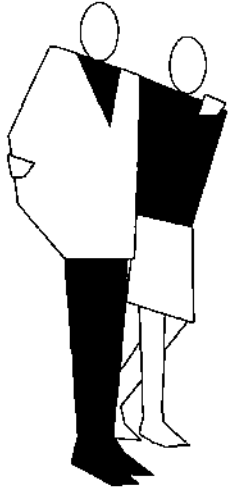
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South American Division Baptized Members



Source: General Conference Annual Statistical Report.



The desire to adorn the body with eye-catching clothes, costly jewelry, and colorful cosmetics have left few untouched. It is not surprising, therefore, that throughout biblical and Christian history there have been frequent calls to dress modestly and decently.

The biblical teaching on dress and ornaments is especially relevant today when many in the fashion industry operate with little respect for the dignity

moral values. William Thourlby, an acclaimed clothing consultant who advises executives on "how to package yourself for success," points out that "consciously or unconsciously the clothing we wear reveal a set of beliefs about ourselves that we want the world to believe."² The business world has long recognized the importance of clothing and appearance in marketing their products, services, and the image of their companies.

The Bible also recognizes the importance of clothes. Implicitly, this is indicated by the symbolism of modest clothing used to represent God's provision of salvation ("garment of salvation," Isaiah 61:10; see also Revelation 3:18; 1 Peter 5:5),* and of immodest clothing used to represent spiritual adultery and apostasy (Ezekiel 23:40-42; Jeremiah 4:30; Revelation 17:4-6). Explicitly, this is indicated by the numerous stories, allegories, and admonitions regarding appropriate and inappropriate attire and adorning.

The Bible views the outward appearance as a visible and silent testimony of our moral values. Some people dress and adorn their bodies with costly clothes and jewelry to please themselves. They want to be admired for their wealth, power, or social status. Some dress in accordance with certain fashions to be accepted by their peers. The Christian dresses to glorify God.

Clothes are important for Christians because they serve as a frame to reveal the picture of the One whom they serve. "In no better way," wrote Ellen White, "can you let your light shine to others than in your simplicity of dress and deportment. You may show to all that, in comparison with eternal things, you place a proper estimate upon the things of this life."³

As Christians we cannot say, "What I look like is no one's business!" because what we look like reflects on our Lord. My house, my personal appearance, the vehicle I own, my use of time and money, all reflect on how Christ has changed my life from the inside out. When Jesus comes into our lives, He does not cover our blemishes with cosmetic powder. Instead, He cleanses us wholly by working from within. This inner renewal is reflected in the outward appearance.

The most effective witness to the change that Christ has wrought within is a radiant smile on the face of a clean,

What Shall I Wear?

Seven biblical principles on dress and adornment

by
Samuele
Bacchiocchi

of the human body as created by God. In this article, I shall present seven basic principles that can guide Christians in developing a philosophy of personal adornment. These principles are a result of studying biblical examples, allegories, and admonitions regarding clothing, jewelry, and cosmetics.¹

Principle One

Dress and appearance are an important index of Christian character. Clothes and appearance are most powerful nonverbal communicators not only of socioeconomic status, but also of

becomingly dressed person. A too-sophisticated, coiffured, and made-up appearance, with glittering jewels and extravagant clothes, reveals not the radiance of a God-centered personality, but the artificial image of a self-centered man or woman.

Principle Two

Adorning our bodies with colorful cosmetics, glittering jewelry, and luxurious clothes reveals inner pride and vanity, which are destructive to ourselves and to others. This truth is brought out implicitly by several negative examples and explicitly by the apostolic admonitions of Paul and Peter.

Isaiah reproves wealthy Jewish women for their pride shown by adorning head to foot with glittering jewelry and expensive clothes. They seduced the leaders, who eventually led the whole nation into disobedience and divine punishment (Isaiah 3:16-26).

Jezebel stands out in the Bible for her determined effort to seduce the Israelites into idolatry. The inner corruption of her heart is revealed by the attempt she made even in her final hour to look her seductive best by painting her eyes and adorning herself for the arrival of the new king, Jehu (2 Kings 9:30). But the king was not fooled, and she died an ignominious death. Because of this, her name has become a symbol of seduction in biblical history (Revelation 2:20).

Ezekiel dramatizes the apostasy of Israel and Judah through the allegory of two women, Oholah and Oholibah, who, like Jezebel, painted their eyes and decked themselves with ornaments to entice men to adultery (Ezekiel 23). In this allegory again we find cosmetics and ornaments associated with seduction, adultery, apostasy, and divine punishment.

Jeremiah also uses a similar allegory to represent the politically abandoned Israel, who is vainly trying to attract her former idolatrous allies (Jeremiah 4:30). Here again cosmetics and jewelry are used to seduce men into adulterous acts.

John the Revelator provides a prophetic portrayal of the great harlot "arrayed in purple and scarlet, and bedecked with gold and jewels and pearls" (Revelation 17:4). This impure woman, who represents the end-time apostate religious-political power, lures

the inhabitants of the earth to commit spiritual fornication with her. By contrast, the bride of Christ, who represents the church, is attired modestly in pure and fine linen without outward ornaments (Revelation 19:7, 8).

Thus, with few metaphorical exceptions (Isaiah 61:10; Jeremiah 2:32; Ezekiel 16:9-14), both the Old and New Testaments relate the use of colorful cosmetics, glittering jewelry, and eye-catching clothes with apostasy and rebellion against God. Such a pattern implicitly reveals God's condemnation of their use. What is taught implicitly in the Old Testament through negative examples is reiterated positively in the New Testament by the apostles Paul and Peter in their condemnation of the use of jewelry and luxurious clothes.

Both apostles contrast the appropriate adorning of Christian women with the inappropriate ornaments of worldly women. Both apostles give us essentially the same list of inappropriate ornaments (1 Timothy 2:9, 10; 1 Peter 3:3, 4). Both apostles recognize that, for both women and men, the outward ornaments of the body are inconsistent with the appropriate inward ornaments of the heart, the quiet spirit and benevolent deeds.

Principle Three

To experience inner spiritual renewal and reconciliation with God, it is necessary to remove all outward objects of idolatry, including jewelry and ornaments. This truth is expressed especially through the experience of Jacob's family at Shechem and of the Israelites at Mount Horeb. In both instances ornaments were removed to effect reconciliation with God.

At Shechem Jacob summoned his family members to remove their outward idols and ornaments (Genesis 35:2, 3) as a means of preparing themselves for an inward spiritual cleansing at the altar he intended to build at Bethel. The response was commendable: "So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had, and the rings that were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was near Shechem" (Genesis 35:4).

At Mount Horeb God requested the Israelites to remove their ornaments as proof of their sincere repentance for worshiping the golden calf: "'So now put off your ornaments from you, that I may know what to do with you'" (Exodus

33:5). Again the response of the people was positive: "Therefore the people of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments, from Mount Horeb onward" (Exodus 33:6). The phrase "from Mount Horeb onward" implies that repentant Israelites made a commitment at Mount Horeb to discontinue the use of ornaments in order to show their sincere desire to obey God. Both at Shechem and Mount Horeb the removal of ornamental jewelry helped prepare the people for a renewal of a covenant commitment to God.

These experiences teach us that wearing ornamental jewelry contributes to rebellion against God by fostering self-glorification, and that removing it facilitates reconciliation with God by encouraging a humble attitude. Therefore, to experience spiritual renewal and reformation, we need to remove from our hearts the idols we cherish—whether they be self-exaltation, professional achievement, material possessions—and replace them with devotion to God.

Principle Four

Christians should dress in a modest and becoming way, avoiding extremes. This principle is found in Paul's use of the term *kosmios* (well-ordered) to describe the appropriate adorning of the Christian (1 Timothy 2:9). When referring to clothing, the term means that Christians must dress in a *well-ordered, decorous, becoming way*. This principle challenges us to be attentive to our personal appearance but to avoid extremes.

To dress modestly implies that clothing must provide adequate covering for the body so that others are not embarrassed or tempted. This principle is especially relevant today when the fashion industry seeks to sell clothes, jewelry, and cosmetics that exploit the powerful sex drives of the human body, even if it means marketing immodest products that foster pride and sensuality.

We can violate the Christian dress code of modesty by neglecting personal appearance as well as by giving excessive attention to it. "Dress neatly and becomingly," Ellen White counseled, "but do not make yourself the subject of remarks either by being overdressed or by dressing in a lax, untidy manner. Act as though you knew that the eye of heaven is upon you, and you are living

under the approbation or disapprobation of God.¹⁴

Principle Five

Christians should dress in a decent, dignified way, showing respect for God, themselves, and others. This principle is found in Paul's use of the term *aidos* (decency, reverence) to describe appropriate Christian adorning (1 Timothy 2:9). Christians show reverence and respect by dressing *decently* and *sensibly*, without causing shame or embarrassment to God, others or themselves.

This principle is especially relevant today when the fashion industry frequently rejects respect and decency as the basis for constructive human relationships. The Bible explicitly condemns the lustful look: "Every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). The revealing clothes promoted by some of the leading fashion designers awaken lustful passions in the heart of the beholder and contribute to the depravity of our time. By dressing modestly, Christians play a key role in maintaining public morality.

God calls us to dress modestly and decently, not only to prevent sin, but also to preserve intimacy. People who want to sin will sin no matter how modestly dressed are the people they see. The purpose of modesty is not only to prevent lustful desires, but also to preserve something that is very fragile and yet fundamental to the survival of a marital relationship: the ability to maintain a deep, intimate relationship with one's spouse. If marriage is to last a lifetime, as God intended, then husband and wife must work together to preserve, protect, and nurture that intimacy. Modesty and decency will preserve the joy of intimacy long after the ringing of the wedding bells.

Principle Six

Christians should dress soberly, restraining any desire to exhibit themselves. This principle is found in Paul's use of the term *sophrosune* (soberly) to describe appropriate Christian adorning (1 Timothy 2:9). This term denotes a mental attitude of self-control, an attitude that determines all other virtues. The apostle recognized that self-control is indispensable in helping a Christian to dress modestly and decently.

Paul pictures the converted Christian woman as one who dresses soberly by restraining her desire to exhibit herself through wearing *elaborate hair styles, gold, pearls, or expensive clothes* (1 Timothy 2:9). Her appearance does not say, "Look at me; admire me," but rather, "Look at how Christ has changed me from inside out." A Christian woman or a Christian man who have been freed from the abiding concern to be the object of admiration will not be afraid to wear the same piece of clothing too often, if it is well-made, modest, and wears well.

Paul's admonition to restrain the desire to buy or wear "expensive clothes" (1 Timothy 2:9, NEB) also points to the principle of Christian stewardship. Expenditures that go beyond our means are incompatible with the Christian principle of stewardship. Even if *we can afford to buy expensive clothes, we cannot afford to waste* the means that God has given us at a time when there are many crying needs to help the needy and reach the unreached with the gospel message.

Principle Seven

Christians should respect gender distinctions in clothing by wearing clothes that affirm their male or female identities. This principle is taught in the law found in Deuteronomy 22:5, which prohibits wearing the clothes of the opposite sex. One Bible commentary, reflecting a widely held view among scholars, points out that "the immediate design of this prohibition was not to prevent licentiousness, or to oppose idolatrous practices...but to maintain the sanctity of that distinction of the sexes which was established by the creation of man and woman."¹⁵

This concept is especially relevant today when many, in the world of fashion, no longer shout "Vive la difference!" but rather "Vive la similarite!" In fact, the similarity between certain men's and women's hairstyles and clothing has become so great that one cannot always be sure whether two young people walking down the sidewalk are both boys, both girls, or one of each.

The Bible considers it important to preserve gender distinctions in dress. These are fundamental to our understanding of who we are and of the role God wants us to fulfill. Clothes define our identity. A man who wants to be treated as a woman will most likely wear feminine

items like jewelry, perfume, and ornate clothing. Similarly, a woman who wants to be treated like a man will most likely dress like a man.

The Bible does not tell us what style of clothing men and women should wear, because it recognizes that style is dictated by climate and culture. The Bible does teach us to respect the gender distinction in clothing as it is known within our own culture. This means that as Christians we need to ask ourselves when buying clothes: Does this article of clothing affirm my gender identity, or does it make me look as though I belong to the opposite sex? Whenever you feel that a certain type of clothing does not belong to your gender, follow your conscience: Don't buy it, even if it is fashionable.

At a time when some fashion styles seem bent on abolishing gender distinctions in clothing, it is not always easy for Christians to find clothes that affirm their gender identity. But it has never been easy to live by biblical principles. Yet this is our Christian calling—not to conform to the values and styles of our society, but to be a transforming influence in this world through the enabling power of God.

Conclusion

Clothes do not make a Christian, but Christians reveal their identity through their clothes and appearance. The Bible does not prescribe a standardized dress for Christian men and women to wear, but it calls us to follow the simplicity and unpretentiousness of Jesus' lifestyle, even in our clothes and appearance.

To follow Jesus in our dress and adornment means to stand apart from the crowd by not painting up, jewelizing up, and dolling up our bodies as many of our contemporaries do. This takes courage and discernment. Courage not to conform to the seductive dictates of fashion, but to be transformed by the sensible directives of the Word of God (Romans 12:2). Discernment to distinguish between the capricious mode that changes and the sensible style that remains. Courage to reveal the loveliness of Christ's character, not by the external decoration of our bodies "with gold or pearls or expensive clothes" (1 Timothy 2:9, NEB), but by the internal beautification of our souls with the graces of the heart, the gentle and quiet spirit which is precious in God's

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Dialogue 7:2—1995



AUDA Italy Celebrates 20th Anniversary

by
Roberto
Ianno and
Manuela
Casti

In 1975 a group of Adventist university students and recent graduates in Italy decided to organize an association that would provide a forum for biblical discussion, spiritual fellowship, and continual affirmation of Adventism. The need for this was obvious, for we have in this country of 57 million only 5,300 Adventists struggling to maintain our identity and mission.

Thus, 20 years ago, AUDA (*Associazione Universitari e Diplomati Adventisti*) was born. For more than 10 years its members held annual sessions to encourage each other and to study in depth specific topics that are relevant to Adventists in our country. After a break of four years (1987-1991), the association was reorganized and began meeting again in 1992, with strong support from the Italian Union.

At present, our association has about 50 members scattered in various parts of the country. Our main activities are as follows:

- **Yearly meeting.** The session is held over an extended week-end and is devoted to discussion of a topic selected well in advance. Usually an Adventist specialist from Italy or from abroad leads out. The meeting also provides time for social activities, singing, and sports. This year, the meeting was held in April at the Adventist Youth Center, in northwestern Italy. A theologian from Germany and the editor of *Dialogue* met with us (see photo).

- **Annual statement.** At the end of the annual meeting the members draft a statement that summarizes the consensus on the topic discussed and suggests an

Adventist approach or response to it. Subjects covered thus far include biblical interpretation, abortion, communicating the gospel, human sexuality, Adventists as conscientious objectors, the role of the Spirit of Prophecy, Adventist health principles, drugs, the mass media, and Adventist identity. The annual statement is usually published in *L'Opinione*, the Italian Adventist youth and young adult periodical.

- **Bulletin.** This includes the text or an abstract of the lectures and discussions, and is distributed among AUDA members.

Since not all eligible members are able to attend the annual meetings and since our association wishes to involve youth who may not yet be university students, AUDA is establishing branches at the local church level. These branches take up youth-related issues and discuss them with the church at large.

Currently, AUDA is conducting a survey of Adventist young people in Italy similar to the *Valuegenesis Study*. The survey, which is being done in cooperation with the youth department of the Italian Union, will analyze the faith and values of Italian Adventist young people, and use the findings to chart the future direction of youth ministry in Italy. Although our church is a small minority in Italy, we believe that God has called us to represent Him at this special moment in history. By His grace and power, AUDA members intend to carry out this task faithfully. 🇮🇹

Roberto Ianno (a young pastor in central Italy) and Manuela Casti (a teacher at the Italian Junior College) serve, respectively, as president and secretary of AUDA.



Verna Alva

Dialogue With an Adventist Psychiatrist in Peru



Verna Alva, M.D., teaches psychiatry and public health in the School of Medicine, Cayetano Heredia University in Lima, Peru. She is also the director of the Department of Child Psychiatry at the National Institute of Mental Health.

After completing her studies in medicine at San Marcos University, one of the oldest universities in the Americas, she won the prestigious British Council scholarship and went to the University of London to specialize in psychiatry. In 1980 she completed a Master of Public Health at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Dr. Alva was a member of the commission that planned and obtained government approval in 1984 for the creation of Inca Union University, a Seventh-day Adventist institution of higher learning in Peru. She also served as its first dean of the School of Health Sciences.

Dr. Alva has remained active in professional circles, occupying positions of responsibility such as president of the Association of Women Physicians of Peru (1984-1985), vice president for Latin America of the World Association of Women in Medicine (1988-1992), and president of the Peruvian Association of Psychiatry, Neurology, and Neurosurgery (1987).

Dr. Alva has also served as a member of several governing bodies in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Currently she is on the Executive Committee of the General Conference, serving as a lay representative of the South American Division.

■ *Tell us, Dr. Alva, about your family background.*

I was born in a first-generation Adventist home. My father, Agustin Alva, was among the first Adventists in his hometown, in northern Peru. After literally a long night of study, meditation, and prayer he accepted the Bible truths as taught by Seventh-day Adventists. He was then 29. Yet he decided to study at the first secondary school that the church was planning to establish in Lima. Through great effort and sacrifice, my father was among the first graduates of our school, the forerunner of Inca Union University. He returned home and married Maria Leon, a teacher. Together they began establishing schools throughout the province.

■ *You seem to have inherited from your parents your interest and involvement in education.*

I have. My earliest childhood memories relate to education. My parents were teachers. Our home was like a school

hostel—with five younger siblings and several young relatives staying with us while attending Adventist schools. Also, Christian education gave to us an extended family that includes today several ministers, teachers, physicians, secretaries, and other professionals. Eventually my father became a departmental director, a minister, and the first national president of the Peru Mission. My childhood and adolescence was blessed with a happy, loving family committed to Christ and to the finishing of the gospel commission.

■ *Do you wish to share a particular memory of those formative years?*

Although we attended Adventist schools, my sister and I had to enroll in a public school for a short period to have our studies officially validated. An experience at that time taught us the value of commitment and God's gracious providence. My sister's final examinations were scheduled on Sabbath. My parents tried to arrange for an alternative date, but the school refused while the teacher—who liked my sister—told her to simply “drop

by for a short while” to take the exam. My sister did not go, and my parents were accused of fanaticism. On Sunday, unexpectedly, the teacher had to give a special exam to another student who had been ill and invited my sister to sit in for hers. She did, but the school director decided not to accept the results obtained by “the Protestant fanatic.” Finally, the regional inspector ordered that the passing marks be accepted. It was a memorable experience that prepared me for future challenges and decisions.

■ *Why did you choose medicine as a profession?*

Since elementary school days, my dream was to become a physician. Later, during my secondary studies, I was fascinated by the complexity of the human body and challenged by the many illnesses that affect it. I saw in medicine an opportunity to learn more and to serve. Now, with years of experience behind me, I'm amazed not only at the extraordinary expansion of knowledge in medicine, but also at how much there is still to learn.

■ *What kind of challenges did you face at the university?*

First, I had to make the transition from the protected Adventist subculture—that gave me a solid character foundation—to life “in the world.” Second, I had to accept the fact that at that time, many in the church were not in favor of young people, especially women, attending non-Adventist universities. Third, I had to face the usual Sabbath classes and examinations. But the beautiful thing is, the Lord always helped me to find a way out of whatever the problem. Thus I was able to arrange for exams in advance, or to do additional projects. At all times my fellow university students, although not sharing my faith, showed their solidarity and support for my convictions. When you stand for principles, you always stand tall!

■ *After you completed your medical studies, what did you do?*

I joined the Adventist Hospital at Chullumani, in Bolivia. The short experience there helped me see the important role that health and healing can play in the mission of the church. Later, I went to London to do my specialty in psychiatry.

■ *What led you to specialize in psychiatry?*

Mainly three factors: interest in neurology and psychiatry while in medical school, direct experience with sick people, and a growing realization of the role of mental and emotional factors on health and sickness. Later on I chose to focus on child and community psychiatry.

■ *Why did you concentrate your interest in the treatment of children and youth?*

Because they are an age group that needs immediate attention—while they are in the process of development—and because the positive results of intervention will be felt for a long time. In addition, they have great potential and constitute an important asset for the future of a nation and the world. Caring for the needs of children and youth requires the active involvement of parents and teachers.

■ *Do Christian psychiatrists have an advantage over their non-Christian colleagues?*

Perhaps not so much an advantage, but certainly a privilege: the privilege of knowing that we deal with a delicate facet

of God’s creation, of having as a model the greatest Healer and Teacher in the universe, of being able to utilize a wider range of treatment methods, including the therapy of faith and hope.

■ *What aspects of your work give you the most satisfaction?*

Being able to guide, through teaching, the formation of future physicians. The opportunity of working clinically with children and their parents, and of seeing positive results.

■ *What does it mean to you to be a Seventh-day Adventist?*

To be a Christian and an Adventist involves a major commitment. It means to acknowledge that, without the assistance of the Holy Spirit, we can’t truly follow the example of the Master. It means to carry on the triple ministry of teaching, healing, and preaching at a special time in the history of the world—“the time of the end.” It also means to do our part in the revival and reformation of our church so that it may provide a powerful example of love and service to all.

■ *Do you have opportunities to share your faith in connection with your work?*

To share my faith is to make clear to anyone who would listen that there is a God who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. It is to become an instrument of His grace in leading others to know and accept Him as Saviour. Once these two steps are taken, it is easy to present other biblical doctrines.

Many people are aware that I’m an Adventist even before meeting me. My prayer is that when they do meet me, they will find that, beyond religious labels, I’m a true follower of Christ. It is then that I can share my spiritual convictions with them. With colleagues at work, during group or individual discussions, in the clinical contacts with patients, and in visiting non-Adventist relatives, I find opportunities to share my faith, joy, and freedom in being a Christian.

■ *Keeping a balance between one’s professional and spiritual life is not always easy. How do you manage this?*

It is a constant challenge. My experience is similar to the one expressed by the apostle Paul: “What I want to do I do not do.” Whenever I sense that I’m losing my balance in life, I resort to the well-tested formula—devotional study of the Bible, prayer, and Christian service. I

thank God for His abundant grace, for the assurance of total victory through Christ, and for the gift of eternal life.

■ *Some years ago you were a candidate for a seat in the Senate of Peru. Do you think it is appropriate for Adventists to occupy positions in government?*

In 1985 I was a senatorial candidate, but did not win the seat. I don’t think that being a Christian and serving the country in a political office are incompatible. The prayer of Jesus for His followers was not that God would take them “out of the world” but to protect them “from the evil one.” There are many ways in which we, as Adventists, can contribute to the improvement of life in our countries both as ethical professionals and as representatives and servants of the people in a democratic process. The challenge is always to promote justice, peace, and fraternity on this earth without losing sight of “the blessed hope” of Christ’s return to establish His eternal kingdom. As Jesus said, we must work “as long as it is day.”

■ *As a very busy single person, do you have time to cultivate friendships and have a social life?*

I’m committed to my teaching, my clinical work with children, and to my church responsibilities. These three circles give me opportunities to cultivate social relations. I also enjoy the friendship of several people with whom I went to the university. In addition, I can always rely on an extended family network that provides me with encouragement and support.

■ *Finally, do you have any counsel for young Adventists who are considering psychiatry as a profession?*

As Bible-believing Christians, aware of the powerful interaction between mind and body, we have much to contribute to health and healing. Psychiatry offers great opportunities and satisfactions to anyone who approaches it with a clear understanding of human nature, a commitment to ethical principles, and a perennial striving for self-development. ☺

Interview by Willy Benzaquen

Willy Benzaquen is Youth Ministries director of the Inca Union Mission, in Lima, Peru.

Alexei Sergeev

Dialogue With an Adventist Art Historian in Russia



Alexei Sergeev is an administrator at the renowned Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia. Born in 1947, he is a trained art historian and a linguist, fluent in English, French, German, and Italian. After completing his secondary education, Sergeev studied at the Institute of Culture and later at Zdanov University in Leningrad, where he obtained a teaching degree in French language, literature, and culture.

In 1971, while still a student at the university, Sergeev began working at the Hermitage Museum. After graduation, he was promoted to be administrator of the educational department and since then has served as administrator of several other departments.

Sergeev recently completed his first lecture tour of Adventist colleges and universities in the United States, sponsored by a La Sierra University art foundation. We interviewed him during his visit to Washington, D.C.

■ *Please tell us about your family background.*

I was born in Leningrad, which in 1991 reverted to its original name—St. Petersburg. My father was the head of the main bank in the city. When I was three, a car ran over my father and killed him. My mother was just told the news. Even today we do not know the details. Both my parents were Russian Orthodox Christians, and my mother took me to church every Sunday.

■ *St. Petersburg is quite a famous city.*

It is. In fact it's a classical city, with beautiful palaces, churches, and public buildings. Founded by Peter the Great in 1703 on the northwestern corner of Russia, the city served as the capital of the Russian Empire for two centuries and has continued to play a vital role in our nation's history. During World War II it suffered a terrible siege and was fiercely defended. The city has always been a cultural center, open to the rest of Europe, attracting writers, artists, and creative people. I'm proud to be a citizen of St. Petersburg.

■ *What makes the Hermitage a special museum?*

The Hermitage is one of the largest museums in the world. It includes more than 350 exhibition halls in five large interconnected buildings. The art collection was started in 1764 when Catherine II purchased 225 paintings in Berlin. Through the centuries, it has continued to grow, not only with many additional paintings, but also with hundreds of engravings, drawings, carvings, coin collections, and books, including Voltaire's personal library. Each year 3.5 million people from all over the world visit the museum.

■ *What are some of the unique art works exhibited at the Hermitage?*

The museum has a Rembrandt collection of 24 paintings that represent the main periods of his life. Among them is the famous "Return of the Prodigal Son." There are also two beautiful paintings by Raphael and two by Leonardo da Vinci. The list could go on and on.

■ *When did you become interested in art?*

As a child, going to the Orthodox church with my mother, I was attracted by

the icons—those beautiful paintings of religious people and scenes that decorate the walls and ceilings of the Christian churches in the Eastern tradition. My mother also showed me art books with illustrations. Later I began to visit the Hermitage and admire the paintings of the western European artists and the Russian masters.

■ *What are your responsibilities at the museum?*

I have worked in several departments, conducting research and training the staff. Frequently, because of my ability to speak several languages, I'm asked to guide some of the special visitors who come to the Hermitage. They represent many countries and professions such as government officials, dignitaries, religious leaders, writers, and artists. Some of them visit the museum privately, and we have very interesting conversations.

■ *What gives you satisfaction in your work?*

I enjoy showing visitors the masterpieces and paintings from various periods and styles. I get a lot of satisfaction when I notice that a visitor captures the meaning of a particular work of art and enjoys the experience.

■ *Are you interested in a specific period in the history of art?*

I have studied in depth French art of the 18th century, the period before the French Revolution. During the late Baroque and the Enlightenment, there was an attempt to make the world a better place by sheer human effort, without any spiritual or divine dimension. There was the illusion that nationalism could subdue the problem of evil, only to explode tragically during the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars.

■ *Do you find modern parallels to that period?*

We repeated the experiment in the Soviet Union under Marxist ideology. We also wanted to create a perfect society through rigid control of people and ideas, by human effort and without God. Now we see the results.

■ *Tell us about your spiritual pilgrimage.*

My mother was a very religious person and truly loved God. When I went to the Orthodox church, I was moved by the beautiful paintings, the wonderful choir music, and the colorful rituals. I felt that God existed. I wanted to understand Him better and to communicate with Him. But I didn't know how to do it, how to make Him real in my life.

Later, as I began to study the paintings at the Hermitage I realized that many of them depicted Christian scenes and characters, and conveyed religious feelings. In my desire to learn more about the background of these paintings, I went to the library and asked for a Bible. But I was told that only those with special permits could read this book.

■ *How did you get access to a Bible?*

For years I sought in vain to get one. One day, after I had completed my university studies, I was returning to Leningrad by train and noticed that the man sitting next to me was reading an unusual book. When I asked him about it, he told me it was the Bible. I learned that his name was Vladimir and that he was a Christian. He also told me that he could help me have access to a Bible like his.

We agreed to meet the next Saturday at a metro station. From there we walked a very long way until we came to a small house—a barn really. There was a group

of about 25 Sabbathkeeping Christians meeting almost secretly. I took a seat near the door, just in case, because I was afraid of what might happen. But when I listened to the people and felt their Christian love, I decided to come back the next Sabbath.

■ *That was your first contact with Seventh-day Adventists?*

Yes. The congregation had approximately 40 members, and with them I started to study the Bible. At first I didn't even tell them my name, but slowly I began to feel part of a family of Christians. It was in that church that I began to understand God and His role in my life. The pastor and I discussed a real problem I faced. My work at the Hermitage did not always allow me to come to church on the Sabbath. So we decided to postpone my baptism until that matter could be resolved. For 15 years I kept going to that church as frequently as I could.

■ *When did you finally get your own Bible?*

In the mid-1980s. A foreign visitor came to our church and brought with him one Russian Bible. He gave it to our pastor, and the pastor in turn gave it to me as a present. Then in 1991 an Adventist pastor from Portland, Oregon, came to St. Petersburg to hold a series of evangelistic meetings. He baptized me, and so I formally joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

■ *How would you describe the status of Christianity in Russia today?*

For years communism tried to stamp out Christianity in our country. Their leaders destroyed or desecrated many of our churches, but they couldn't destroy the faith in Christian hearts. There were always people who loved God and, in spite of many difficulties, hoped for better days. Since *perestroika* we have been enjoying increasing freedom of religion. People have been able to read the Bible and attend churches without fear.

■ *What about the Seventh-day Adventist Church?*

Russia is the largest of the 15 republics that made up the former Soviet Union, now called the Confederation of Independent States. In Russia itself, we

have approximately 40,000 members in a country of about 150 million people.

■ *What about St. Petersburg?*

We have four congregations in the city. The one where I am a member is located downtown and has about 400 members. We are in the process of building our own church, with assistance from Adventists in the United States.

■ *What are the challenges our church faces in St. Petersburg?*

A physical facility, yes. We are on our way to having it. More than that, we must build a temple in our own hearts. We need to anchor our new members in the truth and create a stronger sense of community among ourselves. Only then will we be able to effectively share the truth about God with the five million inhabitants of our city. Many of them are intelligent, well-educated people who are seeking knowledge and a new understanding of life. With the economic changes that have taken place in the past few years, there is a great deal of uncertainty and discouragement among the people, and we could give them hope. I dream of our church becoming a center for counseling, education, and training for a better life. Young people, particularly, need guidance and help, which our church can provide.

■ *This is your first visit to Adventists outside of Russia. What impressions will you take back with you to St. Petersburg?*

I was surprised to find so much openness and friendliness. My brothers and sisters in Christ welcomed me to their churches, schools, and homes. They treated me as if they had known me for years! Although I had come from far-away Russia, they truly made me feel as a member of the Adventist family. I will never forget their Christian love and kindness. 🙏

Interview by **Humberto M. Rasi**

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“Pray continually”
—1 Thessalonians 5:17*

Is it possible to pray continually? I believe it is. No only that, it should be the ultimate goal of every Christian interested in pursuing a relationship with God. But how do we achieve this ultimate goal? How do we persist in this prayer journey? Three steps would put you on the road: understand prayer, make prayer a daily habit, and grow in prayer.

How to Pray

Methodology for Modern Life

by
Kris
Coffin
Stevenson

Understand prayer

Paul’s urging that we pray continually does not mean that we should spend the entire day on our knees. What the apostle is advocating is a lifestyle that is so much in tune with God that prayer becomes as natural and as essential as breathing. It is indeed God’s will for us: “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

To understand prayer, study carefully from the Scripture what prayer is and what it involves. Take one step at a time. Learning to understand another person takes time. And how much more to get acquainted with God! Persevere, for “perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:4). Ask God to help you learn how to pray and to have faith. He will answer you. “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5). Ask a fellow Christian who

has experienced the power of prayer. Above all, begin and keep praying, for prayer is just talking to God as to a friend.

Make prayer a daily habit

Prayer is to the soul as food is to the body. Your spiritual life cannot survive without prayer. Make it a habit to approach God as often as possible. Practice the power of prayer everyday. Growth in prayer is not a result of theoretical study, but of getting on your knees. Here are some suggestions to help you develop a regular prayer habit:

Find a good place. Just as you may have a special place for studying school subjects, select a place free from distractions in which to study God’s Word and to talk to Him.

Have a regular time. Find the most convenient time when you can be alone with God. It can be anytime, as long as it is a regular appointment that you long to keep with your Maker. Decide the length of time you want to spend in prayer and stick to it.

This is where most people have trouble. When they aren’t able to fulfill the time obligation that they intended, they get discouraged and experience guilt. You must realize that a regular prayer time with God is a habit that must be created, a pattern of activity that must be set up, just as you discipline yourself to form other good habits. It takes time, and it is subject to the “emergencies” of life that steal time away from all of us. Try not to beat yourself emotionally when you don’t accomplish your goal, but don’t give up. You will find that it gets easier with time.

Structure your prayer. There are many different methods to structure your prayer. Choose one that works best for you, or try different approaches, depending on your mood. Here are some that have worked for others:

- **Keep a journal.** Jot down your thoughts, feelings, and needs. Make an entry for others who may have requested you to pray for them. Record your joys and concerns, as well as your answered prayers. Such a journal will not only help you structure your prayers, but will also serve as a kind of diary of your spiritual journey.

- Sing, play or hum praise music to express your prayers to God.
- Use Christian meditational ideas to help you focus on God. With the help of a concordance, see what the Bible says about meditation.
- Adopt a prayer format using the acronym ACTS: A=Adoration; C=Confession; T=Thanksgiving; S=Supplication (asking for God's help for you and others).
- Find inspiration in nature. Look out the window, take a walk and as you enjoy nature, connect your thoughts with the God of nature.

Grow in prayer

Once you have established a close and vibrant relationship with God through prayer, you might want to try some of the "graduate" level methods of prayer that will help you "pray continually":

- Have a conversation with God. Consecrate your "inner voice" to God, and turn your inner commentary into a conversation with Him. Talk to Him about the activities of the day as they occur and immediately turn over all worries to Him.
- Set up formal times of prayer. Daniel prayed morning, noon, and night. Besides your regular prayer time with God, it is good to get in the habit of praying at certain other times to help turn your thoughts back to Him.
- Consecrate daily acts. Everything you do can be done to the glory of God, if you dedicate each activity to Him.
- Use "breath prayers." These are short prayers like "Lord, Jesus Christ, have mercy on me" that can be mentally said in rhythm to your breathing pattern. This method can eventually make prayer a part of your very soul as the prayer expands to fill your subconscious.

Be assured that God will continue to lead you on if you persevere in understanding the mysteries of communication with Him.

Be My God: A Proposal

I am asking You to be my God. However, there are certain qualifications. First, I wish it understood that I love myself more than I do You. My family and friends are also more important to me, which is understandable, I am sure, when You consider that I have known them so much longer than I have You.

Second, if it comes to a crisis with respect to any basic decision, of course, I will consult my own wishes rather than Yours. Some of Your ideas seem very strange to me, and if I am to make a name for myself in the business in which I am employed, I cannot be tied down to Your set of values. I'm sure You understand how I feel.

Third, I am reserving my right to my own time. I am a very busy person and cannot be expected to spend time in communion with You day by day. Whatever time I have left over from my business must be primarily spent with my family and friends.

Fourth, a word about my property. You must understand that it belongs to me exclusively. I find it hard to say goodbye to my money. You own the cattle upon a thousand hills, as well as extensive mining assets, so I can see no reason for You to make any claims on my property or money.

Fifth, I cannot bear sickness, tears, or sorrow. So please do not expect me to enter into fellowship with You in suffering. I have no desire to become involved in service to others. Bear Your own cross, and leave me out of it.

However, I do want You to be my God. As such, You will have the full responsibility for providing me with salvation, for showering me with blessings, and for answering my prayers. This will free me to give full attention to myself, my family and friends, my possessions, and my business.

Under the above conditions, I could enjoy having You as my God, and I feel sure we could have some nice times together—maybe on weekends, if I'm not too tired. Will You accept? If you do, please begin construction at once on my heavenly mansion. And go ahead with preparation for the marriage supper of the Lamb. I'll plan to be there—if I'm not too busy.

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Finally, I offer my prayer: Lord, give me the wisdom to learn, the courage to try, and the perseverance to continue. 🙏

A free-lance writer, Kris Coffin Stevenson lives in Beltsville, Maryland, U.S.A.. She will soon publish through Pacific Press a practical book on prayer.

**All Bible passages are quoted from the New International Version.*

Suggested Reading

Too Busy Not to Pray, Bill Hybels.
God's Joyful Surprise, Sue Monk Kidd.
Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home, Richard J. Foster.



Be a Friend, Win a Soul

by
Benjamín
Del Pozo

Friendship evangelism is Jesus evangelism: Recognizing the worth of others, meeting their needs, and winning them to the Saviour.

Evangelist Fernando Vangioni had never seen a face like that. Shattered in spirit, broken in mind, betrayed by others, bitter toward God, and hostile toward all people—there she was: young, but marred by abuse, beautiful, but lost in hopelessness. If Vangioni was shaken by her isolation and hostility, he was shocked by her story. She had gone from her village in South America to New York City to turn her life around, to rise from poverty and scale new heights in the world's premiere city. But little did she realize that behind the neon lights was hidden the worst kind of darkness—a darkness that destroys the inner soul of a person. The concrete jungles of the city crushed her, manipulated her to become a part of its wickedness, and numbed her to all sense of self-worth and dignity. But God leaves deep down in one's heart a spark, and one day she decided enough was enough, and came home. But the bitterness remained. She still felt hostility toward God, the church, and people. Who would ever return the radiance of her youth? Who would give back to her the beauty of hope and the meaning of life? Lost she felt, and lost she was.

Vangioni, one of South America's leading evangelists, looked intensely at her face. Not all is lost, he told her. God is love, he assured her. But she was angry and lonesome, and spared no words to tell the preacher that she had no use for God and did not need a sermon. The evangelist didn't want to preach. He wanted only to be a friend: to listen, to cry, to empathize.

"May I pray for you?" he gently asked her.

"Pray, if you like," she said.

The prayer was no ordinary recital of nice words. The evangelist conveyed in prayer a God who cares, loves, and listens. As he prayed, tears welled in his eyes. It looked as if he was petitioning the entire heavenly host to send a rescue team to help this young girl rebuild her life. Prayer over, he said she could go home now.

"I won't go," she said. "Nobody felt for me like you have. I am now ready to listen to your sermon. I want to know about your God." She turned around and thanked the lady who brought her to the meetings and introduced her to the evangelist.

That's friendship evangelism.

Friendship. Care. Concern. Compassion. These are the initial components of true personal evangelism. Where there is friendship, the soil is fertile for the seed to grow. Say "Hi!" with a smile, and you've got someone who feels you really care. And who knows? That simple "Hi!" could be the start of a soul-winning journey.

Friendship evangelism is person oriented

Billy Graham was once asked, "Which is more important? Mass evangelism or one-on-one evangelism?"

"One-on-one evangelism," replied the great evangelist. "In my judgment, there is no such thing as mass evangelism. It is a misconception." I was stunned by that statement, coming from one who has preached to millions around the world. No evangelism can take place without reaching out to the individual. Mass evangelism requires the foundation of personal evangelism.

Until recently I was a resident graduate student at Biola University in southern California. I often wondered how I could reach my fellow students with the gospel. Should I confront them with the truth? Should I preach to them with confidence and boldness? I had the required scholastic qualifications—an M.Div., and a D.Min. on the way. As an assistant pastor at a nearby church, I could preach fairly well. But presentation of the truth itself is not enough, perhaps not even to start the process.

I realized this when my roommate Mark dashed into the room one day and announced, "I want to be baptized." I had been studying the Bible with Mark for some time. We discussed the great issues that truth involves. We talked about God. And I was delighted that he had made a decision to make Christ the center of his life. But what he said surprised me. "You have been like a brother to me, and you have accepted me as I am, and I want to become a Christian." Accepted him as he was? I reflected back to the first time I met him in the university dorm. I was taking a warm shower. He came in with a bucket of real cold water and poured it on me, just to make me mad. If that wasn't enough, he hid all my clothes and towels, and left me in the shower to test my patience. Mark could have been my worst enemy, but I decided to make him my best friend. Friendship led to sharing our joys

and concerns, our faith and dilemmas. A search for answers led to the Bible. And now Mark is a member of God's family.

Friendship glues people together.

Did you know that 80 percent of those who leave the church do so because they feel lonely and friendless? Only 20 percent leave for doctrinal reasons. The same percentage holds good for those who should the church. If these figures are right, should we not put our emphasis on this kind of person-oriented evangelism—friendship evangelism?

Friendship evangelism involves a passion for Christ

Passion for those without Christ is a key element in friendship evangelism. But Christians cannot be true friends to their neighbors unless they and God are friends. Without a carefully cultivated friendship with Jesus, it is difficult to be genuine friends to those around us. If we have Jesus, He removes our fears and prejudices, and creates in us an attitude of openness and acceptance. He enables us to be friendly and to extend friendship to those who do not know Him. "Apart from me you can do nothing," Jesus said (John 15:5, NIV). But "all things are possible" if we abide in Jesus (Matthew 19:26). All means *all*. He will change our hearts and make us see every human being as a beautiful and worthy individual for whom He died on the cross.

Friendship evangelism meets real needs

Friendship evangelism meets the needs of others. Sometimes meeting a need is more effective than a Bible study. Percy was a member of my Sabbath school class at the Anaheim Adventist Church. He did not show any reaction to what we studied from the Bible. He never responded to my sermons. At home he always argued with his mother about the validity of some church doctrines. He never came forward to be baptized. One day he left a message on my answering machine. "Pastor, can you give me a ride to the Department of Motor Vehicles this afternoon at three? I need to take the test to get my driver's license. Thank you!" I picked him up at school and drove him to the test site. It took quite a chunk of my time. But I was glad to do it. However, he failed the test. Several attempts later, he got the license. Not long after that he told me, "Ben, my mother and I want to be

baptized. And I want you to baptize me!"

That Sabbath, the church was packed. The baptism brought joy to the entire church family. The church knew how long it took Percy to make his decision. What led him to that point? Sure enough, the prayers of many, the preaching, and the study of the Bible must have had their impact. But is it possible that friendship that meets a need may have also had its role?

Our words, actions, and love create opportunities for the gospel to become real in the lives of people. Then they are ready to respond to Jesus. Some people will refuse to listen to a single word about our Lord, until they're sure we will be friends regardless—even if they reject the gospel. Your circle of friends is likely to be your most effective area of ministry.

Friendship evangelism is Jesus' evangelism

Friendship evangelism is easier done than said. It is so simple that even a child can understand it. It is the Jesus way of winning souls—like He did with the Samaritan woman, Nicodemus, and Zacchaeus.

Jesus wants us to love each person as we love ourselves, but just saying, "I love you" is not enough. We need to spend time with people to show our love and care. We need to respect them for what they are. We need to be compassionate and helpful. We need to be like Jesus.

You might say, "I can't do it. I am not a pastor. I have not been to a denominational college. I have no training in religion. I can't be an evangelist. I hate witnessing." I understand such feelings. I have had them too. But if you have met the Lord, you have deep down in your heart an urge to share Him. And that sharing can be done just by being a friend.

Once Jesus said, "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" (Luke 12:49, NIV). He was speaking, of course, of the fire of His gospel, the power of His love. He invites us to take this fire first into our lives and then to share it with others. 🙏

Born in Perú, Benjamín Del Pozo writes from southern California, where he serves as associate pastor of the Hawthorne Seventh-day Adventist Church.

What...

Continued from page 18

sight (1 Peter 3:3, 4). Courage to dress, not to glorify ourselves, but to glorify God by dressing modestly, decently, and soberly.

Our outward appearance is a constant silent witness of our Christian identity. May it always tell the world that we live to glorify God and not ourselves.

Samuele Bacchiocchi (Doctor of Theology, Pontifical University of Rome) teaches Theology and Church History at Andrews University. He is the author of many books, including The Marriage Covenant, Wine in the Bible, The Advent Hope for Human Hopelessness, and From Sabbath to Sunday. The second of these books was reviewed in Dialogue 2:3.

**Except where noted, Scripture passages in this article are from the Revised Standard Version.*

Notes and references

1. This article is adapted from my book *Christian Dress and Adornment* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Biblical Perspectives, 1994). The book may be purchased from local Adventist Book Centers or by mail (US\$13.00, postpaid) from Biblical Perspectives, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan, 49103, U.S.A.
2. William Thourlby, *You Are What You Wear* (New York: New American Library, 1980), p. 52.
3. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1948), vol. 3, p. 376.
4. Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Nashville: Southern Publ. Assn., 1954), p. 415.
5. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1873). In a similar vein, J. Ridderbos writes: "These prohibitions are designed to instill respect for the God-given order of creation and for the distinction between sexes and kinds it presents" (*Deuteronomy* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Regency Reference Library, 1984], p. 135). See also *The Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville, Ten.: Abingdon, 1981), vol. 2, p. 464; *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1992), vol. 3, p. 135.

Challenges Ahead? The Numbers Say "Yes"!

by F. Donald Yost

Table 1
Growth in Membership by Millions — 1848-1994

Showing the approximate number of years required for the Adventist Church to increase its size by a million members:

From a few to 1 million	107.1 years (1848-1955)
1 million to 2 million	14.7 years (1955-1970)
2 million to 3 million	7.9 years (1970-1978)
3 million to 4 million	5.1 years (1978-1983)
4 million to 5 million	3.3 years (1983-1986)
5 million to 6 million	2.7 years (1986-1989)
6 million to 7 million	2.3 years (1989-1991)
7 million to 8 million	2.4 years (1991-1994)

Table 2
Membership by Continent: 1960 and 1994 With Projections to 2000

Continent	1960	Projection to:	
		1994	2000
Africa	241,575	2,715,415	4,161,680
Asia	171,712	1,414,675	2,052,477
Europe	190,800	318,674	348,866
North. Amer.	332,400	822,261	964,771
Mid. Amer.	111,861	1,248,290	1,910,700
Oceania	56,060	280,508	372,692
So. Amer.	140,717	1,582,735	2,425,994
World Totals	1,245,125	8,382,558	12,237,180

In the mid-1990s, only five years away from the third millennium after Christ, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is 8.5 million members strong, is present in all but 28 countries of the world, and is engaged in dynamic efforts to plant new churches where there are none. As a body of Christ's disciples, it recognizes that both faith and funding are essential to fulfill Christ's commission: proclaiming the gospel in all the world.

If you were to visit my office today, you might ask some questions about what I wrote five years ago in *Dialogue* and what our worldwide church looks like now.*

How large is our church now?

At the time of my 1990 article, our membership was approaching 6.5 million. How many people was that? If those members would have stood one meter apart, in a line, the line would have stretched from Moscow to Rangoon, Myanmar (Burma).

But this is a growing church. In the past five years our church family has increased by about 2 million. So if you and I had been standing there in Rangoon in 1990, at the growing end of the line, we would have seen a new Adventist stepping into place, one meter from the last one, every 1 minute and 19 seconds! Despite losses in that globe-girding line because of apostasies, missing members, and deaths, the end of the line would have advanced at that rate day and night into northern Thailand, down the Malay peninsula, and into Singapore, by July 1995.

During 1994, on an average, our church received by baptism or profession of faith 1,725 new members a day or 72 every hour!

Table 1, "Growth in Membership," outlines our church's growth by millions since it formed as a fellowship in about 1848. Since 1986 it has taken an average of about 2.5 years for the church to grow by one million.

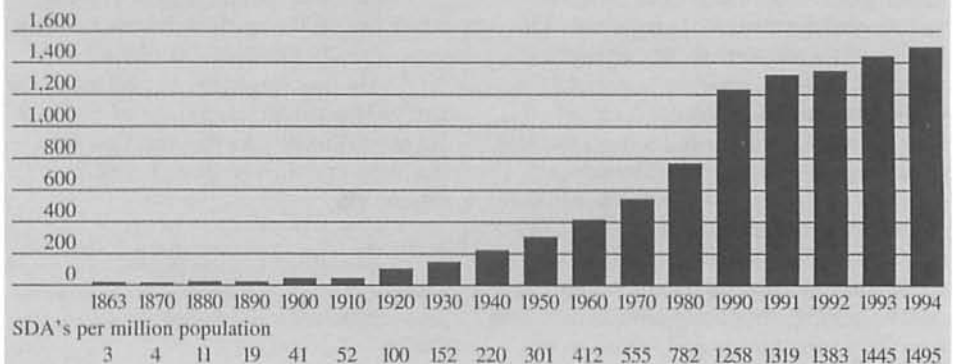
How do we measure "the church"?

Usually we measure the church by the number of its members. Records kept by each congregation are the source of the information that eventually reaches the Office of Archives and Statistics at the General Conference. The world membership is the sum of the entries in the church clerk's (secretary's) record books for all congregations.

Church growth may also be measured by the number of congregations, the number of geographical locations where the church is established, the number of organizations, institutions, and employees, or its financial resources. These measures—these statistics—all appear in our *Annual Statistical Report*.

Let's consider another measure. Jesus said of His followers: "You are the salt of the earth." How "salty" is the world today? The answer is seen in Graph A, which portrays the relationship between Adventists and the world's population. In 1863, when the General Conference was organized, there were about three Adventists for every one million persons in the world. Because Adventist membership has increased at a faster rate than the general population, by 1920 we were "100 parts per million." At the end of 1994 the "saltiness" of earth's population—as far as Adventists are concerned—was 1,495 members per million, or one Adventist for every 669 persons.

Graph A
SDA's and World Population 1863-1994



Our challenge is that the "salt" is not evenly distributed. In some places the ratio is less than 20 per million. There the Adventist flavor is hardly detectable.

Just how are Adventists distributed throughout the world, and how has that distribution changed in recent years?

Let's take a look at church membership by continent. For Table 2 I have used the United Nations list of countries as my guide, but I have divided the U.N.'s "North America" into two subcontinents—Northern America (north of Mexico) and Middle America (Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean).

In 1960, Northern America led in church membership with 332,400 or 27 percent of the total. Africa had 19 percent. Because the church grew more rapidly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Middle and South America) than it did in Northern America and Europe, the membership balance shifted dramatically.

In 1994 Northern America was home to less than 10 percent of Adventists, while Africa was home to 32 percent. The final column lists my projections for continent-by-continent membership at the close of this century. At that time, if recent growth rates continue and Jesus does not return, our world membership will be about 12 million, with the following distribution:

Africa	34.0%
Asia	16.8%
Europe	2.9%
Northern America	7.9%
Middle America	15.6%
Oceania	3.0%
South America	19.8%

In which countries do the largest number of Adventists live?

Table 3 lists the 10 countries with the largest memberships. An amazing fact emerges from these figures. More than half of all Adventists live in these 10 countries! The other half live in the remaining 226 countries of the world.

Rwanda, scene of terrible strife and suffering, appears on our list. Adventists have not escaped the bloodshed. In this nation, where every 27th person was an Adventist before the war, we are quite sure that hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Adventists lost their lives. The member-

ship figure given is not current; no report was received for 1994.

Five years ago you said that funding a growing church would be increasingly difficult, for many new areas are not self-supporting. What is the latest word on tithe and offerings?

There are more and more members who are able to give little, and proportionately fewer who can give much.

Table 4, Total Tithe and Offerings Per Capita, presents amounts given to the church by the average member, expressed in the dollars of that year and also in 1950 dollars. The first column lists per capita figures in current dollars. A significant change occurred around 1980. Per capita giving declined from a high of \$202.19 in 1980 to \$168.66 in 1994.

Inflation is a factor in these figures. It distorts decade-to-decade comparisons. The second column removes inflation as a factor. Here we see an almost uninterrupted decline in purchasing power per member over the years shown.

We cannot deny that the costs of building churches and schools, providing salaries for ministers and teachers, and supplying materials for members is much less in some countries than in others. Just the same, resources are becoming more strained each year. This condition, this dilemma, is on the hearts and in the prayers of church leaders throughout the world. Will human poverty prohibit the Holy Spirit from effectively acting to extend the kingdom of Christ? Of course not! The inexhaustible riches of Christ are awaiting the call of faithful stewards.

Are there still opportunities for Adventist university students and young adults to become involved in the church's mission?

The numbers say Yes. Pioneer work in unentered areas still calls. You may be the special person able to share your faith with colleagues in school or the professions. Providing even minimal services and houses of worship for the millions joining us is a daunting challenge. Open hearts and open wallets were never more appropriate.

The statistics I have shared with you fairly shout: "Pray together, lift together, give together, work together!" The impossibilities of one generation become the possibilities of the next, and

Table 3
Countries Having the Largest SDA Membership

Country	1994 Membership
United States	775,447
Brazil	707,922
Philippines	627,595
Mexico	409,827
Kenya	369,426
Peru	340,880
Rwanda	285,440*
Zaire	277,904
Zambia	229,107
Zimbabwe	209,015
Total, 10 countries	4,232,563
% of World Membership	50.5%

* 1993 membership

Table 4
Total Tithe and Offerings Per Capita — 1950-1994

Year	Current and Constant Dollars	
	Tithe+Off. Per Capita (Current)	Tithe+Off. Per Capita (1950 US\$)
1950	73.60	73.60
1960	83.66	68.00
1970	112.69	69.86
1980	202.19	59.07
1990	180.70	33.29
1994	168.66	27.39

the possibilities of that generation become the accomplishments of the next!

Although I cannot predict what resources—members, money, and institutions—the church will have 10 years from now, I can predict that until the Lord comes, His kingdom on earth will prosper as each one of us embraces the gospel and takes its saving message to every town and barrio on earth. 📖

F. Donald Yost (Ph.D., Syracuse University) is director of the Office of Archives and Statistics at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

() "Seven Adventist Trends," Dialogue 2:2 (1990), pp. 8-10, 23-25.*



Anticipating the Advent: A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists by George R. Knight (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1993; 128 pp., paperback).

REVIEWED BY JOHN MATTHEWS.

George Knight, as a church historian, has a gift for focusing on the essential and forging a theme. He has done this well in a stimulating and readable work on the core and the flow of Adventist history called *Anticipating the Advent*. Currently a professor of church history at Andrews University, Knight does not presume to present a “contribution to knowledge” but rather gives a “summary of the high points of Adventist history” (p. 5). The contribution comes in the author’s adept way of making history an inspirational discourse for the building of “the body” of the church. The book presents the story of a people on the march toward a prophetic destiny. In that sense, the book is a valuable introduction to denominational history for the uninitiated and a good refresher for those who need reminding about the origin and destiny of Adventism.

Knight divides the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church from its Millerite beginnings to the present into eight periods or “eras.” He highlights the significant features of five periods in the 19th century: early doctrinal and organizational development; the process of denominational maturation leading to the establishment of institutions and a growing sense of mission; and the revival and reform that followed the 1888 General Conference. Knight’s three periods in the 20th century encompass the reorganization of the early 1900s; the rapid worldwide expansion of the church; and the challenges facing the church as a mature denomination.

Periodization of history is hazardous. There is a danger of compartmentalizing information into disjointed segments. Knight has carefully avoided this danger by showing how each successive era is built upon progress made during the preceding period. In fact, the main strength of *Anticipating the Advent* is the manner in which Knight has attempted to draw aside the curtain so that the reader can catch a glimpse of the irresistible onward march of the Adventist movement. The author unashamedly points to the prophetic significance that can be read into the narrative by those inclined to do so.

Knight is usually a “stirrer” whose books propose new ways of looking at old issues. He asks provocative questions because he is interested in stimulating ideas and encouraging new insights. If there was any disappointment in reading the book, it was that there is little of the usual “spice” that he is so adept at using. In this book, Knight stayed away from controversial issues. Considering his stated purpose, this was to be expected. It is just that his purpose on this occasion seems almost out of character. The problem is, of course, with the expectations of the reviewer rather than with the admirable achievements of the author.

Knight designates his audience as new converts, study groups, students and others interested in denominational history. The reviewer concurs and suggests that all who read this book will find it a profitable experience.

John Matthews (Ph.D., Andrews University) is the associate president of Mission College, Thailand.



O Desafio da Torre de Vigia, by Azenilto G. Brito (Tatuí, São Paulo, Brazil: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 1992; 261 pp.; paperback).

REVIEWED BY NILTON D. AMORIM.

There is a knock at the door. You open it and see two smiling persons. They seem very pleasant, and they want to study the Bible with you. You let them in. After an exchange of pleasantries, one of them begins the study. You hear some strange interpretations. You try to correct them. The arguments become aggressive. Your guests start quoting verses, and you look them up. They start referring to Greek, and you look baffled. Greek or not, what they say is not what you know to be the truth.

Who are these strangers with their odd theories?

They are Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Aggressive in personal evangelism, committed to what they believe is the truth, sacrificial in giving of their means and time, Jehovah’s Witnesses are among the fastest-growing religious bodies in the world. From Bombay to Buenos Aires, from San Francisco to Sydney, they are on the march for their kingdom.

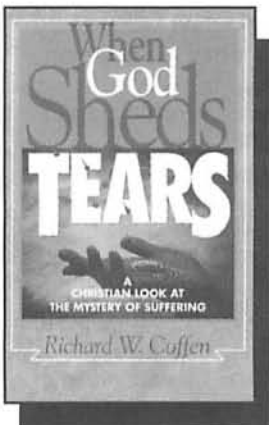
But how do you deal with these Watchtower watchpersons? Shun them? Avoid them? Ill treat them?

In this book, written in Portuguese, Brito suggests a more positive way. Know them and then confront them with the real truth. A Brazilian teacher and editor, the author knows his subject well. He aims to equip Christians to face Watchtower witnesses with confidence and not be overtaken by their argumentation.

Written in a simple style, the book follows an outline form. The first six chapters provide a historical and doctrinal tour of the Watchtower kingdom: its beginnings, its developments, its shifting interpretations, doctrinal inconsistencies, unfulfilled predictions, and chronological and historical manipulations. The last two chapters confront the Watchtower theology, particularly such issues as the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus, last-day events, and lifestyle issues, including blood transfusion. The author provides a wealth of information that could be used in understanding Jehovah's witnesses and sharing the real truth with them.

The outline format does not lend to clarity. At times the author presupposes familiarity with the teachings of the Watchtower Society. Although he insists that "sympathy and not hostility is what we should have for these people" (p. 9), he uses such expressions as "brainwashing" and "heresy" in describing their position, creating a negative atmosphere around the book. Except for this, the book is a useful tool to understand, to meet, and to witness to Jehovah's Witnesses.

Nilton D. Amorim (Ph. D., Andrews University) is presently a pastor at the Ontario Conference, Canada.



When God Sheds Tears: A Christian Look at the Mystery of Suffering, by Richard W. Coffen (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1994; 127 pp.; paperback).

REVIEWED BY JERRY JOUBERT.

If you are looking for a comprehensive answer to the problem of suffering, then you will be disappointed in this book. The author does not set out with this task in mind. A book editor for more than 24 years and a seminary graduate, Richard Coffen is fully aware of the complexities of the problem. So he has taken a pragmatic "logic and Scripture" approach (p. 58) by attempting to deal with those myths and glib answers given in good faith to defend God, but which often produce horrendous results. The author challenges himself to show that "it is not God who causes pain and suffering" (Ellen G. White, quoted in p. 58). Each chapter deals with a myth, indicated in the chapter title. A typical myth is to respond to suffering by saying, "It is God's will." Coffen proceeds to show why this cannot be true.

Coffen is reluctant to make categorical and emphatic statements. He rather asks rhetorical questions and then answers with a statement, usually from Ellen G. White. For example, he argues that what God *wills* is also what He *wants*, and then asks, "But is *death* what God wants?" Islamic belief, according to

Coffen, would say *yes*, but what would the Christian say? He turns to Ellen White: "He [God] has no delight in seeing His creatures suffer" (p. 32).

Coffen makes a helpful distinction between *punishment*, *discipline*, and *consequences* to explain why "bad things happen to good people, and good things happen to bad people" (p. 44). He does not see pain and suffering as God's method of discipline, because then "the real heroes down here are not Florence Nightingale, Albert Schweitzer, and Mother Teresa, but Torquemada, Hitler, and Amin!" (p. 56). This, says Coffen, would portray God as "an abusive parent" (p. 56). Much rather, he sees God's method of disciplining as His "prophetic word" (p. 56).

Another myth generalizes "that the victims of disaster, disease, and death are suffering for Christ" (p. 78). Sufferings, the author suggests, are not to be equated with what is said in the Beatitudes, "'Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me'" (Matthew 5:11, NIV).

Although Coffen sees the Great Controversy theme as helpful in understanding how God allows Satan to demonstrate his intentions in the universe, he warns that it would be futile to lay the entire problem of sickness and suffering at Satan's feet. Satan is responsible, but he does not compel people to make life choices that result in suffering.

One chapter does not fit the style and content of the rest of the book. Under the title, "Yes, but..." the author discusses the Trinity, the idea of a personal devil, and suffering. The author himself seems to be aware of this when he says, "You may not care to read this chapter—and that's OK" (p. 58).

Coffen writes with ease. His style is readable. He uses human-interest stories to illustrate his points. And he speaks to real-life situations. Anyone whose life has been touched by pain and suffering will find the book valuable, especially after the experience. However, I would not use it as a pastoral tool to comfort and encourage someone experiencing emotional suffering. The book's approach is too cognitive for that.

Jerry Joubert, a doctoral candidate in pastoral care and counseling at Stellenbosch University, is chairman of the theology department at Helderberg College, in Somerset West, South Africa.

An excerpt of this book was published in Dialogue 7:1 (1995), pp. 9-11.

The road has been long; the journey has been rough; the struggles have been many. Yet through it all, I have seen God bid me come higher, holding on to His unmistakable guiding hand.

I grew up looking to the snow-capped peaks of Kilimanjaro. From our Tanzanian village of Suji, the mountains seemed insurmountable, reaching to the skies. Born in an Adventist home,

The Journey Must Go On!

by
Mishael
S. Muze

privileged to be raised by Christian standards, I had more than the mountains on which to focus my life. Early in my childhood, my parents taught me that nothing in life mattered as much as faith in God and reliance upon His Word.

I wanted to be a teacher, like my father. My mother, a gifted homemaker, knew exactly how to motivate her children. But our village had nothing more than a primary school. So as a teenager I was sent to a teacher-training school 1,000 kilometers away. By 18, I was a primary school teacher. My father was not satisfied. He urged me to study further. I left home for the nearest Adventist school, Bugema Missionary College, in Uganda. The cost was high, the environment new and strange, but Adventist education was worth pursuing, and it made all the difference in my life.

After completing my education there, I returned to my village to teach science and mathematics. When my students achieved the number two position in state government examinations, I knew I could make it as a teacher. Even as I breathed the fresh air of success as a teacher, I could feel the rumblings of strange winds from another direction. The winds of freedom were blowing across the African continent. Tanzania was no exception. Political leaders were conscious of the need for trained national leadership. The Tanganyikan National Union sponsored

me to study abroad, and I chose Emmanuel Missionary College, later to become Andrews University, in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Armed with a bachelor's degree in mathematics, I was ready to return in 1964 to serve a free Tanzania. But the government offered to extend the sponsorship for a graduate program in education, and I joined the California State University at Fresno. Two blessings awaited me there: I got my master's degree and I met Siphwiwe, soon to be my wife.

I returned to Tanzania in 1966, married, and began my government educational career. For the next 20 years, I worked for the state, using the opportunity to be a witness for my faith and to influence peers and policies for the good of Adventism.

Test of loyalty

My first test of loyalty came in my first appointment as a teacher at a public (government) secondary school. I told my headmaster about my faith as a Seventh-day Adventist and requested Sabbath privileges. The headmaster had no power to grant such requests, and he sought advice from the Ministry of Education. The assistant director of the ministry gave permission so long as the syllabus was covered by holding classes on other days. I rejoiced. But my joy was premature, as the director of education insisted that no such special privilege was possible. "If one is granted Saturday off," he argued, "another may ask for Friday, also on the basis of religion." I explained my position to the director. Getting nowhere, I told him I would have to resign my position rather than disobey my God. To my amazement, the matter was dropped. I learned a valuable lesson: The God who commands also enables.

After several years of teaching, I was appointed headmaster (principal) of a Lutheran Secondary School at Mwenge. Wherever we served, my wife and I made our work a means for witness as well, usually by starting a branch Sabbath School. We did this at Mwenge, targeting our witness to the town of Singida. Eventually a church was organized there.

As the head of Mwenge school, I had an opportunity to experiment with an educational philosophy that had been incubating in me over the years. Under the inviting title, "Education for Self-reliance," I aimed to transform Mwenge into a model institution where staff and

students would not only implement the routine curriculum, but also adopt self-reliance as a goal for the institution and its community. The experiment succeeded so well that the then-president of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, visited the school and commended its accomplishments. Regional and national media covered the school's activities as well.

Not long after this, I received a presidential appointment to be the district director for development. The job had prestige, power, and a good salary, and one should think twice before turning down a presidential appointment. But I loved the classroom, and reluctantly declined the offer. Unexpectedly, my action created a backlash: misunderstanding that I harbored negative attitudes toward the government. The result? I received a governmental reprimand and a demotion.

However, I had learned early in life that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). A few years after my demotion, I transferred to the University of Dar es Salaam as a lecturer, an opening that eventually led to the completion of doctoral studies.

A national responsibility

In 1978 came another presidential appointment, this time to be chief education officer. The job involved supervision of more than 80,000 teachers and heading a number of departments, with 10 directors answerable to me. I did not expect this appointment, for I thought I was under disfavor for declining the previous presidential appointment. But God has a way to change things when we follow His directions. I accepted the new offer and served in that national responsibility for seven years.

The new office provided me with opportunities to improve the quality of elementary education in the country. Upon my recommendation, the government adopted a five-day week for primary schools, an action that delighted Seventh-day Adventist teachers and students. I traveled widely to many countries in Africa, Europe, and Asia. Wherever I visited, my profession became an avenue to let the light of Christ shine. Sabbath and my Adventist lifestyle became conversation starters with colleagues from many countries.

A tug at my heart

But then came a sudden knock. Or should I say a tug at my heart? While attending the General Conference session in 1985 at New Orleans, I had a chance meeting with Roland McKenzie, then principal of Solusi College in Zimbabwe. Just a joke, perhaps, but I remember telling him that should he need a teacher at Solusi, he did not need to look too far. Dr. McKenzie must have taken me seriously. Or perhaps God did. Soon I received a call to join the Solusi faculty.

From the village at the foothills of Kilimanjaro to Solusi, the road is long and twisted. My village is where Adventism began in Tanzania. Solusi is the Battle Creek of Adventism in southern Africa. I took it as an honor to join Solusi College. In 1987 I became part of that great historic institution. After serving for a few years as professor of education and mathematics, I was appointed the first black African principal of that college.

My journey was nearly complete. All the pieces of the puzzle were coming together. The twists and turns of my professional career, the jobs I had held, the friends I had made, the governmental influence I had gained—everything seemed to jell with a purpose. My agenda for Solusi became clear: it should become a university. Upgrading of facilities, negotiations with authorities, prayer and hard work of a dedicated faculty and students led to Solusi's gaining a university charter from the Zimbabwe Government in 1994.

However, three years before that, I moved to Kenya to be the vice-chancellor of the University of Eastern Africa, near the town of Baraton. Within months, tragedy struck. The companion of my life for 25 years, Siphwe, was suddenly called to rest. I cried out, Why? Why should this have happened to us?

Suffering often raises questions. And there were many in my mind. A statement from Ellen White brought me much courage and comfort: "In the future life the mysteries that here have annoyed and disappointed us will be made plain. We shall see that our seemingly unanswered prayers and disappointed hopes have been among our greatest blessing" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 474).

How true! Our disappointments turn to become God's appointments. That is the lesson I have learned in my long journey of faith, work, and witness. Two

years ago the Lord led me to meet Ruth Sihlangu, former head of the nursing sciences department at the University of Zimbabwe. My remarriage has not only helped in my emotional recovery, but together Ruth and I have clasped God's hand to continue the journey that He has set before us. 🙏

Mishael S. Muze (Ph.D., University of Dar es Salaam) is the vice-chancellor of the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton. Address: P. O. Box 2500, Eldoret, Kenya.

Letters

Continued from page 4

Christian hope. Please list my name in "Interchange" and keep this great project going!

ELVIRA SAN JUAN
Universidad Adventista de Chile
Chillán, CHILE

Support to stand tall

As one of the founders of "Princeton Seventh-day Adventists," an association of Adventist students attending this university, I was delighted to learn of AMiCUS and *Dialogue*. This is an answer to our prayers, for we really need support to stand tall for our beliefs among a group of students who hold to everything from Atheism to Zen Buddhism. Enclosed you will find a list of our members with their addresses. We will appreciate receiving materials to study during our small prayer meetings and any other ideas or materials you can offer us. Can you help us locate an Adventist chaplain who would be willing to work for us and with us on this campus? We want to grow in grace and also to share our faith with our peers.

Thanks, in advance!

Keith Wilkerson
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey, U.S.A.

Readers interested in establishing correspondence with Adventist college and university students or professionals in other parts of the world.

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If you wish to be listed here, send us your name and postal address, indicating your age, sex, marital status, field of studies or professional degree, hobbies or interests, and language(s) in which you would like to correspond. Address your letter to: **Dialogue Interchange:** 12501 Old Columbia Pike; Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; U.S.A. Please print clearly. The journal cannot assume responsibility for the accuracy of the information submitted nor for the content of the correspondence that may ensue.

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