

C O L L E G E A N D U N I V E R S I T Y

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**Modern martyrs:
Faith at any cost**

**The Big Bang
Model: An appraisal**

**Ellen White and
Adventist theology**

Narcissus and Samson



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Letters

Salt and pepper are commonly used to enrich or add strong flavor to food. They remind us of the words of Jesus, "You are the *pepper* of the world..." Really? No, Jesus called His followers "the salt of the earth" to emphasize their unique and vital role in society (Matthew 5:13).

Jesus' memorable metaphor relates to three realities of life:

The Christian—like salt—should not remain isolated, but should mix in and throughout to change and improve. When salt and food remain apart from each other, both have bad taste. There is something outside of salt—outside of Christian circles—that is worth preserving and improving.

The Christian—like salt but unlike pepper—should not be an irritant but an enhancer. The slightest carelessness in the use of pepper ruins the taste of food. Salt, even in small amounts, always improves flavor. Our influence and our words can irritate or enhance. Am I—are you—a salt or a pepper Christian?

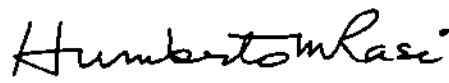
The Christian—like salt—does not call attention to himself or herself but brings out the best in others. Pepper tends to overwhelm the taste of the food with which it is mixed. Pepper shouts, "Look at me! Here I am!" Salt, when mixed carefully with food, never leads people to say, "I like this salt!" Instead, we exclaim, "This salad is perfectly seasoned," or "The pasta tastes great!"

However, in order to fulfill its purpose, salt must retain its distinctive flavor and be different. Tasteless salt is no better than sand—only useful as road filler.

The world can do well without pepper-Christians, but desperately needs more salt-Christians—men and women who mingle with others to preserve, to enhance, and to save.

"The best argument for Christianity," wrote Sheldon Vanauken, "is Christians: their joy, their certainty, their completeness. But the strongest argument against Christianity is also Christians. When they are sombre and joyless, when they are self-righteous and smug in complacent consecration, when they are narrow and repressive, then Christianity dies a thousand deaths."

As the *Dialogue* editorial team made preparations to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the journal, we requested Brian Gray—a respected Adventist designer—to redesign the cover and refurbish its layout. "I wanted to give *Dialogue* a fresh, contemporary look," says Brian, "and also make the text easy to read." We think he has achieved both goals magnificently. So, here you have the first issue of our tenth volume. We trust you will like its new face and continue to enjoy its content.



Humberto M. Rasi
Editor-in-Chief

Encouragement from afar

I recently discovered *Dialogue* through an old issue that contained the article, "Dostoyevsky: A Writer Struggles With Faith" (5:2). I read it at a time when my faith was being tested and felt that the article was addressing and expressing my own struggles. I was particularly moved that the author, Victor Lyakhu, a fellow Adventist writing from Russia, was able to encourage me in spite of the great distance that separates our countries. Thank you, Victor!

Karem Vanessa Cabezas E.
San Juan de Tibas, San José
COSTA RICA

A balanced mix

What a pleasant surprise to discover *Dialogue* during a recent visit to the library of the Centre Universitaire et Pédagogique du Salève. You deserve congratulations for publishing a balanced mix of articles, interviews, and reports that address interests and concerns of Adventist young adults, especially of those involved in advanced studies. Stay on course and may God continue to bless your ministry.

Naomie Dunon
St. Julien-en-Genevois
FRANCE

In defense of Creation

We are pleased to inform *Dialogue* readers that a group of Adventist university students and professionals have established the Creationist Association of Venezuela. We seek contacts with others interested in the subject of origins. Our postal address: Asociación Creacionista de Venezuela; Apartado Postal 47.797; Caracas 1064-A; Venezuela. E-mail address: jescobar@strix.ciens.ucv.ve

Rebeca and Javier Escobar
Caracas
VENEZUELA

Excellent level

Together with this letter you will find a check to renew my subscription for two years. I am impressed by the excellent spiritual and intellectual level of *Dialogue*. The journal focuses intelligently on issues that are seldom addressed in my local church. In addition, it helps me to broaden my vision of the Seventh-day Adventist Church around the world. Congratulations!

Haroldo Omar Frick
Posadas, Misiones
ARGENTINA

Seeking contacts

Due to various circumstances, we have been somewhat isolated from our Adventist brothers and sisters in other parts of the world. In the last couple of years, however, thanks to *Dialogue*, we have begun to establish contacts with university students and professionals who share our faith and hope. Although copies of this journal reach us late, we rotate them among ourselves so that all have a chance to read them. I am a nurse in a regional hospital and as director of the Adventist Professionals Club in my church, I invite readers to write to us. My address: Carretera La Fe #355; Isabel Rubio, Pinar del Río; 24580 Cuba.

Abel Isaías Hernández Z.
Pinar del Río
CUBA

Opportune advise

I want to express appreciation for the opportune advise contained in the article, "Preparing for a Happy Marriage," (*Dialogue* 6:2). Having recently been engaged, my girlfriend and I found the counsel relevant and useful, particularly the self-test on page 8. Let me urge you to continue publishing this type of arti-

cles, which can help us make wise choices in establishing and building up a Christian home.

Daniel Akoka Onoka
Kosele
KENYA

Appreciates poetry

I was delighted to find the interview with Mario Veloso and to read some of his fine poetry (*Dialogue* 8:1). In my country there are no great poets yet; the emphasis is on monetary ventures and rewards. I believe, however, that through poetic compositions Christians can convey God's matchless love to many readers. My desire, as a young man interested in becoming a teacher and a writer, is to establish communication with other Adventists who appreciate poetry, especially in Chinese, English, or Malay. My address: Blk 205 #11-1087; Ang Mo Kio Ave 1; Singapore 560205; Republic of Singapore.

Yan Yong Qulan
SINGAPORE

Thanks for the connections

A few years ago, when I was still a college student, I wrote you appreciating *Dialogue*. In your reply, you sent me a copy of the journal that, providentially, included a report on the "1000 Missionary Movement" (7:1). I then asked the Lord to show me His plan for my life after completing my studies. He gave me clear signs that He wanted me to serve Him as a missionary. And that's what I am now! After completing my training and working for three months in an unentered area in the Philippines, I was sent to South Korea. Here I am, away from family and friends, struggling to share my faith in spite of the language barrier; but Jesus is my constant companion. Holding on to His hand, I can face loneliness and bear all sacrifices. With the power of the Holy Spirit working through us, we have

brought more than 20 new believers to Jesus. My partner and I save one-third of our monthly stipend so that we may be able to build a meeting place.

I strongly believe that Jesus is coming soon. There are so many Adventist young people who could be trained and serve as missionaries while there is time and opportunity! I will encourage each of them to contact the headquarters of the 1000 Missionary Movement, receive adequate training, and join our growing army of young missionaries. Their mailing address: P.O. Box 7; Silang, Cavite; 4118 Philippines. Fax: 63-969-9625 or 63-2-816-2645. And thank you, *Dialogue*, for the connections!

Marites S. Rosalita
Chungku, Taegu City
SOUTH KOREA

Toward a deeper spiritual life

Here is the check for my continuing subscription to *Dialogue* and also for a gift subscription. I am enjoying the content of each issue, particularly articles dealing with Christianity and science, and especially the many letters I have received from exotic locations ever since my name appeared in "Interchange." It's great to see that people of every nation are seeking a deeper and more genuine spiritual life. Thanks for your efforts and best wishes!

Dietmar Tonn
Ottawa, Ontario
CANADA

Write to us!

We welcome your comments, reactions and questions, but limit your letters to 200 words. Write to *Dialogue Letters*: 12501 Old Columbia Pike; Silver Spring, MD 20904; U.S.A. You can also use fax: (301) 622-9627, or E-mail: 74617.464@compuserve.com Letters selected for publication may be edited for clarity or space.

Modern martyrs: Faith at any cost

by Jerry Moon

*A theological and experiential
reflection of Christian witness
in the midst of persecution.*

Since the stoning of Stephen a few weeks after Pentecost, approximately 40 million believers have given their lives for simply being Christians. Of this appalling figure, our century alone has been responsible for nearly 26.6 million martyrs, spread across the globe.¹

John Graz, secretary-general of the International Religious Liberty Association, gives four reasons why so many Christians have died for their faith in this century: (1) There are more Christians today than ever before. (2) "Powerful anti-Christian or anti-religion ideologies have organized systematic persecution" against Christians. (3) "In some areas Christianity has been identified with Western culture and politics, and persecution is revenge." (4) Secularized "Western countries do not defend and protect Christians as they did in the past."²

Nina Shea, human-rights advocate and author of the widely acclaimed book, *In the Lion's Den*, suggests that the strongest anti-Christian persecution in recent years has come from "two political ideologies—communism and militant Islam."³

Not too many Seventh-day Adventists have been martyred, partly because we are a relatively small church, eschew official involvement in politics, and generally "refuse to use violence" to defend ourselves.⁴ Furthermore, in encounters with Islam, however, Adventists have sometimes received a more tolerant treatment than other Christians because Adventist beliefs about lifestyle (non-use of pork, tobacco, and alcohol, and opposition to sexual immorality) provide significant common ground with Muslims.⁵

Although accurate figures are not available, several Seventh-day Adventists are *known* to have recently died for their faith: six in Chiapas, Mexico,⁶ two in Dagestan, Southern Russia,⁷ and an undetermined number in Rwanda.

The biblical meaning of martyrdom

The biblical meaning of martyrdom is rooted in the Greek noun *martys*, a "witness." Other forms of the word are the verb *martureo*, "to bear witness," and the noun *martyria* that denotes the content of the witness or testimony given.

In the New Testament, *martys* designates a witness (Matthew 18:16; Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8), who may or may not actually die for that witness (Acts 22:20; Revelation 2:13; 17:6). The early church recognized both living and dead martyrs, thus adding a second dimension to the definition of martyr. Revelation 12:10* describes martyrs as those who "conquered" Satan "by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony [*martyria*], for they loved not their lives even unto death." The attitude of "loving not their lives" echoes the words of Jesus, "If any one comes to me and does not hate...father and mother and wife and children...and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). Thus the New Testament describes the martyrs as persons for whom witnessing to the power of Jesus was the first priority—even at the risk of life.

The meaning of *martys* as witness gradually metamorphosed into the meaning of one who died for the witness given. Hence the definition: Christian martyrs are "believers in Christ who lose their lives prematurely, in situ-

ations of witness, as a result of human hostility.”⁸

In the early church, death was all too often the result of witness. Of the 11 disciples, all except John met a martyr’s death. John too was treated as a martyr. The Emperor Domitian ordered him deep fried in a vat of boiling oil. Something went wrong, however. John’s body didn’t react to immersion in hot oil as the laws of physics indicated it should have. In frustration, the emperor banished him to Patmos—“on account of the Word of God and the testimony [martyria] of Jesus” (Revelation 1:9).⁹

Thus the New Testament definition of martyrdom emphasizes the quality of a Christian’s absolute commitment to the claims of Jesus. From such a definition we can learn much about martyrdom, not only from those who died as witnesses, but also from those who were willing and ready to die, but who, like John in his oil baptism, survived—not by yielding to the demands of the persecutors, but by some form of divine protection or intervention.

Fellowship With Christ

“God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as coworkers with Him. Not Enoch, who was translated to heaven, not Elijah, who ascended in a chariot of fire, was greater or more honored than John the Baptist, who perished alone in the dungeon....Of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His suffering is the most weighty trust and the highest honor.”

Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 224, 225.

Living martyrs

Christian history includes many examples of such “living martyrs,” persons who willingly yielded their lives and indeed came right to the moment of death, but were amazingly spared. Consider two present examples.

Mr. Wong,¹⁰ a Chinese Seventh-day Adventist, sentenced to 20 years of hard labor for keeping the Sabbath and for continually talking to others about “my Friend Jesus,” survived repeated attempts to “re-educate” him. Even in the labor camp, he seized every opportunity to speak a word for Jesus. Some of those to whom he witnessed became committed Christians, but more often fellow prisoners betrayed him to renewed beatings and torture.

At one point, after 17 consecutive days of torture, Wong grew impatient. How could he convince the prisoners beating him that their efforts were futile? Opening his bloody lips he cried, “You don’t understand!” For a moment there was silence. “My answer is No! Even if Chairman Mao himself were standing here asking me to recant and deny my God, I’d still say No! I can’t deny my Friend Jesus!” Infuriated, Wong’s chief tormentor grabbed his arms, which were tied behind his back, lifted them over Wong’s head and “brought them down to his waist in front, ripping the tendons in his shoulders and breaking both arms.”

“‘It is enough!’ the supervising guard ordered. ‘Stop! If we kill Criminal Wong, we can’t help him develop.’”¹¹ Although Mr. Wong was practically beyond caring whether he lived or died, he cared supremely about being faithful to his Friend Jesus. He “loved not [his life] even unto death.”

Anthony Nemeti, 26, was drafted into the Hungarian Army in 1952. Two days after his induction, Nemeti had his first opportunity to witness: when wine accompanied the meal, he said to his officers, “I cannot drink because of my religious convictions.” His officers

countered: “When you go home you can eat what you like, but here you will carry out your officers’ orders in everything, including what you eat.” Calmly Nemeti explained his convictions regarding diet. The next day he had another opportunity to witness—explaining why he could not help clean the grounds on the Sabbath. For refusing to work on four consecutive Sabbaths he served eight years in prison, and later six more at hard labor in stone quarries and coal mines. But his eagerness to witness is captured in the words, “my opportunity came to testify for my faith.”¹²

Jesus and the Christian martyrs

Many New Testament texts describe the close connection between the sufferings of Christ and those of believers in Him. *Martyrs* with its cognates is applied not only to believers who witness for Jesus, but also to Jesus Himself. Revelation 1:5 calls Jesus “the faithful witness [martyr], the firstborn of the dead” (see also Revelation 3:14). “Early Christians regarded the death of Jesus as a martyrdom.”¹³ In 1 Timothy 6:12 and 13, Paul called upon his young disciple to be a faithful witness (*martyr*) regardless of the consequences, just as Jesus had been. Timothy was indeed martyred in 97 A.D. after he courageously denounced the orgiastic festivities of the goddess Diana in Ephesus.¹⁴

This connection between Jesus’ martyrdom and believers’ martyrdom yields four vital meanings.

First, martyrdom constitutes a dramatic contemporary re-presentation of the cross, “lift[ing] up” (John 12:32) and “clearly portray[ing]” (Galatians 3:1, NKJV) to a new audience the suffering and death of Jesus. Christ is “crucified afresh...in the persecution of His people.”¹⁵ Thus Christians, by their suffering, bear witness to the efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice to a new audience.

Second, martyrdom is one of the most complete examples of discipleship. Paul commended the Thessalonian

Christians for becoming "imitators of us and of the Lord," in that they "received the word in much affliction" (1 Thessalonians 1:6). Peter, who denied ever knowing Jesus, later came to a different understanding. "Beloved," he wrote to persecuted Christians, "do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed" (1 Peter 4:12, 13).

Noble Alexander, locked for 21 days in a steel, five-foot-square "tiger cage," suspended over the filthy subterranean dungeon of a Caribbean prison, was amazed to discover the fulfillment of 1 Peter 4:13 and 2 Corinthians 1:5. "Even during my worst hours in the cage, He [Christ] reminded me that I suffered in His name and for His sake."¹⁶

Third, martyrdom unmasks the real "power and destructiveness" of Satanic evil in an otherwise seemingly civilized world. Satan so successfully hides his true character and methods that when martyrdom does occur, we are likely to blame the persecution on a totalitarian political system, an intolerant rival religion, or one wicked individual (such as Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, or Idi Amin), missing the point that our true opponent is no one but Satan himself (see Ephesians 6:12). This recognition that the real enemy is Satan should take us one step toward showing the persecutors Christ's love for them and their own need of salvation through the gospel.

Deeper meaning of martyrdom and persecution

To many modern Christians, martyrdom seems a cruel, unjust anomaly. Didn't Christ come to bring life "more abundantly" (John 10:10, KJV)? Then how can martyrdom ever be part of

God's purpose, much less "beneficial," for Christians? Paul, however, saw martyrdom as a participation in the sufferings of Christ for the benefit of the church. "I rejoice in my sufferings," he said, because "in my flesh, I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church" (Colossians 1:24). The New Testament reveals several ways in which martyrdom and persecution benefit the church.

First, while the New Testament teaches that believers can "know" that they have eternal life (1 John 5:13) and that believers have in themselves the witness of the Spirit (Romans 8:16), the reality of the fight of faith is that often "our hearts condemn us" (1 John 3:20), robbing us of absolute assurance. Both Jesus (Matthew 7:21-23) and Paul (1 Corinthians 13:3) warned of the danger of a falsely motivated, and hence worthless, religious service or martyrdom. Nevertheless, the strongest promises of salvation in the New Testament are those that apply most directly to persecuted witnesses. "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven" (Matthew 5:12, KJV). "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

Second, martyrdom often leads to new conversions. "The blood of Christians is seed" of the church, wrote Tertullian, the early Christian apologist.¹⁷ How true that has been! In the death of a Christian martyr, Jesus is lifted up, and people are drawn to Him.

Persecution often results in scattering the witnesses, so that the gospel seed is sown more widely. Beginning with the apostolic church (Acts 8:1, 4-6) to our own times, history is a witness that persecution has led to remarkable conversions, powerful preaching, and the establishment of new churches. In one country in our times, Christian witness resulted in baptismal services in the prison water tank and an underground "university" that taught basic academic

subjects as a means to make friends with non-Christian prisoners. The prison officials decided to "break the back" of Christianity at the prison by transferring "members of the prison church to other prisons in the system." When the prisoners first heard the news, they saw it as a "tragedy for God's cause." But the "tragedy" turned into an opportunity: the dispersion of Christians to nine different prisons resulted in the formation of nine new churches.¹⁸

Third, persecution purifies the church by winnowing out the "falsehearted," "halfhearted and hypocritical" professed believers.¹⁹

Fourth, persecution unifies the church. The reflex action of the shaking and sifting that purifies the church is that the faithful who remain are brought "nearer to one another and to their Redeemer" by the very "sufferings which they endured."²⁰ When Anthony Nemeti and another Adventist were thrown into a military prison for their refusal to bear arms or work on Sabbath, they met a third Adventist who in several months' incarceration had been reduced to 92 pounds. All three were kept in separate cells, so they had little opportunity to communicate except at the daily 10-minute walk. At the end of the walk, the third brother quickly put something in Nemeti's pocket and hurried away. Back in his cell, Nemeti took out the gift—a small piece of dried bread and a piece of soap with the carefully scratched words, "Have faith in God."

Several days later Nemeti was transferred to a group cell and met the brother who had given him this gift of bread and encouragement. They rejoiced to be together, but soon were separated for transfer to long-term labor assignments. Just before parting, the brother opened his briefcase and brought out another present—a piece of stringy parsley.

"I did not want to accept it from him," Nemeti recalled, "but he offered it with so much love that I could not refuse. I began to chew on it, and, even

though it was bitter and stringy, the love that God implanted in our hearts made it sweet." Then the two discovered that they were being taken to the same place after all. Even the brutality of the guards could not dampen Nemeti's spirits. "The joy of having my brother with me overshadowed all that."²¹

Fifth, endurance in the midst of persecution strengthens others of lesser power to endure. God often used stronger Christians to strengthen others. Noble Alexander, for refusal to work on Sabbath, was beaten by three guards, each carrying an electrical cable with the end splayed into three parts. "I heard the zing of the cables as the officers snapped them through the air," he recalled. "Again and again, the cables ripped at my flesh. When I fainted from the pain, one of the soldiers dumped a bucket of water on me to revive me. When I came to, the captain asked, 'Are you going to work?'"

"'Not today,' I gasped."

Four times the routine was repeated. Each time he thought he would die right there on the concrete. After the fourth beating, the officer again asked, "Are you going to work today?"

"'No,' I said, unable to speak above a whisper. 'Just kill me and be finished with it.'"

"'Is that what you want—to be a martyr?' He strode past my head, then back again. 'We are not that foolish!'" Then he turned to the others and "snapped, 'He is insane, a fanatic!' and left." His refusal to work on Sabbath prepared the way for new converts among the prisoners to accept the Sabbath. The guards called them "Noble's people" and excused them from working on Sabbath.²²

Sixth, "through trial and persecution the glory—the character—of God is revealed in His chosen ones."²³ Gerardo Alvarez was the head elder of a prison church, whose Christ-centered preaching strengthened men to resist the twin temptations of apostasy and "being devoured by the cancer of hate." One Fri-

day evening as the prisoners were returning from a long, hard day of labor in a mosquito-infested swamp, the sergeant in charge ordered the prisoners to run. "Exhausted, undernourished, and sick with all kinds of diseases," the prisoners could barely walk, let alone run. Furious, the sergeant ordered specially trained soldiers to join the guards in an attack on the prisoners.

"As the crippling blows fell, one of the prisoners in the line lifted his hands and his eyes toward heaven, and in a calm, clear voice, said, 'Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.'...The entire prison population watched as this giant of a man, Gerardo, prayed for his enemies even as they beat him. The old prisoner's hat fell to the ground. A hush echoed throughout the area at the sight of the prisoner's full head of white hair—Gerardo, Brother of the Faith. Then he fainted. Two soldiers picked him up and carried him to his circular, where they left him without any medical attention."²⁴

Here was a witness of faith for the glory of God.

Seventh, in the death of a faithful witness, Satan is defeated, even though to earth-bound eyes the martyr appears to die alone, friendless, and deserted. Death places the victor eternally beyond the reach of the evil one.

That one of the great objects of witness is the defeat of Satan reminds us that persecution and martyrdom can only be adequately understood from the point of view of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. Witness about Jesus and His character is the focal point of that controversy.

A lesson for us

Are we ever tempted to hide our light under a basket for fear of such trivia as the disapproval of professors or the ostracism of peers? Then, look again at martyrs, of the past and the present, those who risked their lives for the sake of their faith.

My own reflection on the spiritual heroics of Christian martyrs of the past and the present fired my imagination and challenged my own commitment to Christ. Up close, I was shocked by the realization that these brothers and sisters of mine who had so far outstripped me in the persistence of their witness and the passion of their devotion to Christ, had done so without any of the educational, economic, or geographical "advantages" that characterize my life.

For me this realization raises a basic issue: Is the activity or lifestyle I call "witness" sufficiently clear and audible to arouse either acceptance or rejection? Or is it simply a culturally marginal expression of private religious preference that threatens no one, disturbs no status quo, hence merits no attention from the dominant social order? If the latter is the case, then it is not witness at all, and will not be recognized as such, either on earth or in heaven.

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The Big Bang Model: An appraisal

by Mart de Groot

*We need more than cosmology
to understand the structure
and the meaning of the
universe.*

Cosmology deals with the structure and origin of the universe. Modern cosmology started in the 1920s when the then-largest telescopes were being used to study the remotest objects in space and to find answers to questions about the structure of the universe. The answers led to questions about the origin of the universe. American astronomer Edwin Hubble's observations (1935) noted that almost all galaxies show a so-called "redshift." This means that the color of the light we receive from them is redder than when it left its source. One possible means of producing such a color change is through the Doppler effect, i.e., the movement of galaxies away from the earth.

To interpret his observations, Hubble needed a cosmological model of the universe. Several models were available at the time. Those by Milne and Lemaitre allowed an expanding universe in agreement with Einstein's Theory of General Relativity. A model by Zwicky was more static but required fewer adjustments to known physics and no introduction of new concepts. It was, therefore, the framework into which Hubble's observations could most easily be fitted. Hubble himself was not too sure of how to interpret his observations and, being reluctant at first to draw the conclusion of an expanding universe, called the redshifts "apparent velocity displacements."

Shortly after, Hubble partly abandoned his earlier reservations and interpreted the redshift through the Doppler effect; i.e., he concluded that most galaxies are moving away from us. Thus the term "the expanding universe" came into being.

The expanding universe

The next step was a simple one. If today the universe is expanding, then, in the past it must have been smaller. Going back into the past far enough, the universe must have had some minimum size from which it expanded. It seemed a logical conclusion to say that the universe had a beginning in time. It should come as no surprise that this idea found favor with Christians who saw that moment in the past when everything started to expand as the equivalent of the "in the beginning" of Genesis 1:1. The question of how long ago this beginning occurred was not so easily answered. It was necessary to measure not only the present speed of expansion but also its variation with distance. The observed relation between distance and redshift is called the Hubble law, and the parameter that describes the expansion of the universe is the Hubble parameter, H_0 . Hubble's first estimate gave $H_0 = 500$ km/sec/kpc with a consequent age of the universe of 2 billion years.

The Big Bang

This caused an immediate problem, because geologists had already postulated the age of the Earth as some four billion years, and it was inconceivable that the Earth, as part of the universe, could be older than the universe itself. The reason for this low estimate for the age of the universe was the limited distance to which galaxies could be observed at that time. As more powerful telescopes came into operation, the value of H_0 could be determined with greater accuracy, with a resultant better match between geological and cosmological time scales. By the 1960s, the situation had

improved so far that the then-widely accepted age for the universe was about 10 billion years.

While other theories about the early history of the universe have emerged over the years, the scientific world in general settled for the Big Bang theory after the discovery of some important evidence in 1965. In its early phases, the Big Bang is thought to have consisted of a very hot and very dense gas of elementary particles first and hydrogen and helium later. In this gas, light emitted from a particle could not travel far before encountering another particle, when its direction and frequency would be changed. Thus, if it had been possible to look at the early universe from the outside, one would have been able to see only its outermost layers; the universe was non-transparent.

As a result of the continuing expansion of the universe, eventually its density had decreased far enough to enable radiation emitted from a particle to travel through most of the universe without encountering another particle. At that moment the universe became transparent. The universe was then about 300,000 years old. This is a very young age; 300,000 years of a total of some 15 billion is equivalent to two hours in the life of a 50-year-old person. Already in the 1940s, Gamow, Alpher, and others had foreseen this situation and had calculated that radiation emitted at that epoch should be able to reach us today unmodified and, thus, inform us about the condition of the universe at that time.

Then, in 1965 two radio engineers working for the Bell telephone company made an unexpected discovery. They found some strange noise reaching their radio antenna and, after analyzing it, concluded that it came from a source of radiation that was uniform over the whole sky and had a temperature of only 3 K. It was soon realized that this was the radiation emitted at the time the universe became transparent. This

discovery provided very strong support for the Big Bang theory and convinced most cosmologists of its validity.

This 3 K radiation, or cosmic microwave background radiation (CMB), seemed to have the same intensity in every direction. This meant that it originated from places at the same temperature and density. This was a problem. In such a uniform medium, how could the present-day structures of the universe—stars, galaxies, superclusters of galaxies—be formed? This structure represents inhomogeneities that should have been present from an early date because once a medium is completely homogeneous, it is impossible to introduce inhomogeneities into it without referring to an outside influence.

Since these early conclusions were reached on the basis of ground-based observations, with all their uncertainties introduced by the passage of radiation through the earth's atmosphere, plans were made for a satellite that could observe from space and reach a higher accuracy. Thus, the COsmic Background Explorer satellite (COBE) was launched in 1990. By 1992 its results had been analyzed and small differences in temperature had been detected when looking in different directions. These small fluctuations in temperature, and thus density, seemed sufficient to explain the formation of galaxies and other structures. As a result, in its broad lines, the Big Bang theory was accepted by the great majority of cosmologists and, with the help of the media, by many other people as well. It is doubtful whether the Big Bang model would have met with such general interest if it had been just a model for the origin of the physical, inanimate universe.

By attempting to explain the origin of matter found in living beings, the Big Bang theory has become involved with the theory of naturalistic biological evolution. Thus, during the first three minutes, when the universe was very hot and dense, it is believed that only the

simplest chemical elements—mostly hydrogen and helium—were formed. When this had been achieved, the temperature had decreased so far that further manufacturing of nuclei of chemical elements—nucleosynthesis—was no longer possible. Therefore, the question about the origin of chemical elements important for life—like oxygen, nitrogen, carbon, calcium, and many others—that are also found in the Earth, becomes one of the most interesting in modern cosmology.

The process of nucleosynthesis

After the first 300,000 years—according to the Big Bang theory—when the universe became transparent, gravitational forces still let their influence be felt. Under this influence, small inhomogeneities started to grow by attracting surrounding matter. Eventually this led to the formation of large clouds composed mainly of hydrogen and helium. These contracted further, and the temperature in their centers rose as a result. When the central temperature in these objects reached a temperature of about 10 million K, nuclear processes were ignited. Hydrogen began to be transformed into helium with the production of much energy that became visible as radiation, and stars were "born." Thus, stars shine because of the nuclear processes in their centers. Although stars are huge, the amount of nuclear fuel—hydrogen—they contain is not limitless. By the time a major proportion of the hydrogen has been used up, the central part of the star collapses, and the temperature increases to about 25 million K. At this temperature, the helium that has so far been inert, can be used as fuel for a next stage of nucleosynthesis that converts helium into carbon.

This process is repeated several times, with each cycle taking less time than the previous one, until the chemical elements up to and including iron have been formed. It then depends on the mass of the star what happens next. If a

star is massive enough, it will explode as a supernova, producing many elements heavier than iron in a very short time. In the explosion, a major proportion of the star's matter is returned to space, where it can form into large clouds from which another generation of stars can be formed. Eventually, and quite likely in more than one place, planets composed of solid matter, including the Earth itself, are formed. At this point, the processes of naturalistic evolution are supposed to have taken over to generate life and develop it into intelligent living beings. So much for the Big Bang.

There is much in the Big Bang model with which Christians can identify. The early universe was dominated by radiation and light, reminding us of what happened on the first day of Creation week. Adam was formed from material available on earth, i.e. from the dust of the ground. The sun, moon and stars were made when many other things in the universe were already there: the fourth day comes after "the beginning." Unfortunately, for the Big Bang that is, there are also many discrepancies with Genesis 1: The first 300,000 years when the universe was filled with light cannot really be compared to the first day of Genesis; life is not created but evolved from inanimate matter; far more than six days are required for the completion of the process, etc.

Scientific and philosophical problems

Apart from the differences between cosmology and Genesis, I perceive scientific and philosophical problems within the Big Bang model itself. These can briefly be listed as follows:

Scientific problems. First, the cause of the redshift is not necessarily the recession of the galaxies. There are other phenomena that can cause a redshift. Among these, the so-called "gravitational redshift" implies unbelievably large masses for the far-away galaxies; and the so-called "transverse Doppler effect" would require very rapid revolution

around a center. Remembering that Ellen White wrote about "suns and stars and systems, all in their appointed order circling the throne of Deity,"¹ one should be open to this possibility, especially since revolution around a center is a wide-spread characteristic of cosmic objects. Finally there is also the idea that through interaction with matter, light would lose some of its energy during its long travel from a faraway galaxy to the Earth. In my opinion, this idea of "tired light" has never received the attention that it deserves.

Second, in the Big Bang theory, the elementary particles like electrons, protons, neutrinos, neutrons, and others, were produced in the very early moments of the universe. According to our best knowledge, well supported by laboratory experiments, such elementary particles are formed in pairs: with each particle appears its antiparticle, made of anti-matter: positrons with electrons, antiprotons with protons, etc. When a particle meets its antiparticle, the two will disappear in a blaze of energy. In the very dense universe, just after particles and antiparticles had been formed, it would have been inevitable that each particle should have met its antiparticle. As a result the universe would have been full of radiation and devoid of matter, except for such particles as neutrons that have no antiparticles. However, there is a lot of normal matter in the universe. Either there must have been some asymmetry in the production of elementary particles—with more normal particles than antis formed, or about half the universe must consist of anti-matter, carefully isolated from the normal stuff. But there is no hint of this.

Philosophical problems. First, although the condition of the universe during the first 300,000 years of its existence is not open to direct observation, we can note its condition at that age from the CMB and, assuming that the expansion occurred also before that time, extrapolate back toward earlier epochs. Going back

in time in this way, we find an ever-denser and hotter universe where we have to apply increasingly less well-understood physical principles in order to understand what is happening. Inevitably, we come to a point in time before which the universe was so dense and hot that even our most-advanced knowledge of theoretical physics can no longer cope with the extreme conditions. We arrive at this point when we are only 10^{-43} seconds from the zero point, the beginning of time and space.

The incomprehensible condition of the universe during this first fraction of a second is called a singularity. One might consider that such a small fraction of a second can be overlooked and that we can now triumphantly announce to have reached the beginning of time. But the problem is that at an age of 10^{-43} seconds the universe is supposed to have already contained a lot of matter and that, as a result, we have not really come much closer to understanding where all this comes from. Some say that this "primordial" matter is the result of a previous phase of the universe when it collapsed after having expanded initially. Thus, one can invoke a universe that goes through repeated cycles of expansion and contraction, with our universe just being the present version. This so-called "oscillating universe" does not really answer the question about its origin. Saying that there has always been a universe either robs it of any purpose, or makes it equal with the eternal God of the Bible. Neither alternative is acceptable to the Christian. Others, being more honest, have pointed out that it is possible to create matter from energy. The obvious question remains, of course, Where did that energy come from? In my opinion, an almighty, all-powerful God is the only real answer.

Second, the development of the Big Bang theory over the past 70 years has been full of philosophical assumptions that, according to the rules of purely sci-

entific reasoning, should not be part of the scientific process. Among these the following should be mentioned. (1) The expansion of the universe is based on a biased philosophy. In his interpretation of the redshift, Hubble adopted the validity of the Theory of General Relativity (not such a bad choice) and the Cosmological Principle—the universe looks the same from wherever it is observed. While this seems a reasonable assumption to make—in fact, the only one that can usefully be made—its validity on any known scale is not, and may never be, confirmed. (2) The Big Bang theory is based on the presupposition that science is capable of explaining everything, of answering all our questions. This is an unprovable assumption, and those who believe in God know that it cannot be correct: Science has no good answers to questions about the origin of love and hate, joy and sadness, truth, beauty, conscience and lots of other human characteristics. (3) Various alternative theories have been rejected, often without a proper investigation into their claims. So-called unscientific theories, i.e., theories that contain elements of philosophy or religion, are rejected out of hand. By taking this attitude, cosmology has condemned itself because it, too, has incorporated certain philosophical, unscientific assumptions. And, worse, cosmology has closed its eyes to what could very well be an essential part of reality and of the universe.

This is best seen in what I consider cosmology's unspoken but very clearly understood dogma that the God of the Bible and of Calvary does not exist, and that whatever god we believe in is one of our own making. Again, for Christians this is unpalatable stuff.

Conclusion

On the basis of the above, we must conclude that modern cosmology, represented by the Big Bang theory, may have its virtues in explaining numerous aspects of the physical, inanimate uni-

verse, but that it is a poor model when it comes to explaining everything, and that it leaves too many of our questions unanswered.

As Robert Jastrow concludes in his book, *God and the Astronomers*: "At this moment it seems as though science will never be able to raise the curtain on the mystery of creation. For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself up over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries."²

So, is it possible to harmonize modern cosmology with the Bible? Should one even try to do so? And, if Yes, how can it be done? Notwithstanding the above critical look, let me state that I admire the scientific method and enterprise. We have learned much about nature that can help us to live more comfortable lives. Furthermore, science is one of God's methods of communicating with us about Himself and His plan for us. "The heavens" still "declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1). But there are at least two problems with this channel of communication. Sin has marred God's handiwork so that it reflects God's character but dimly. And our understanding of nature, and of the One who wants to reveal Himself through it, is incomplete as long as there are still shortcomings in our knowledge about the laws of nature that should help us to interpret God's message correctly. At the same time, let us not forget that we cannot retreat into the ivory tower of theology and explain everything around and about us from the Bible alone.

In fact, it is precisely because our incomplete understanding of both the laws of nature and of the laws of God that we often perceive the two as in conflict. But God is the author of both, and there can be no conflict if things are understood correctly. We need both dis-

ciplines in order to make sense of the universe in which we live. Albert Einstein once said, "Religion without science is blind; and science without religion is lame."³

Exactly how we are to combine the findings of science with our understanding of the Bible in our efforts to obtain answers to our questions about beginnings remains difficult. I believe that God created the universe. "In the beginning" may well mean that He started His creative work long ago. Cosmology, if rightly understood, tells us how God went about the job of preparing a planet with sufficient dust of the right chemical composition to form human beings and keep them alive. Then God rounded off His creation work. In six days He prepared the earth for being inhabited and then created many living creatures among whom humankind was to take a very special place.

The rest of the Bible tells us what happened next and how, despite our rebellion, God's magnificent plan will finally be achieved in those who accept the redemption that is offered through Jesus Christ. The fulfillment of this plan includes the opportunity to learn the real truth about the universe, and I will gladly change my opinion when the Creator tells me He did it otherwise.

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Ellen White and Adventist theology

by Herbert E. Douglass

The Great Controversy Theme

provides the integrating

principle for Adventism's

unique theological edifice.

Ellen G. White and the Seventh-day Adventist Church are as integrated as the union of the Anglo-Saxon languages in the formation of English speech. Others have observed that Ellen White, "during a long life span,...exerted the most powerful single influence on Seventh-day Adventist believers."¹ "Mrs. White was the acknowledged inspiration of the movement....Her ideas established the world of Adventism in its medical, educational, and missionary work around the world."²

James White, her husband, was the remarkably resilient institutional developer and church organizer. Ellen, by his side, emboldened with holy candor and steely commitment, encouraged the emerging Adventist movement with her visions. Her unrelenting optimism and encouragement became the rallying center for an international work that surpasses, in some respects, all other religious affiliations today.

Yet, this administrator/prophet team did their work without appealing to fear or favor. They built up a world church, not a personal empire of power or wealth. Neither claimed reward or earthly comforts.

On the one hand, they fearlessly denounced evils in the social order; on the other, they led tens of thousands to catch a picture of how the gospel brings spiritual and physical restoration in this life. Out of this twin emphasis emerged a worldwide network of healthcare and educational institutions, supported by scores of publishing houses and a worldwide mission outreach. But this twofold emphasis was subsumed under the compelling motivation that they were

preparing a people for the soon return of the Lord.

Ellen White, the indisputable guiding force behind this worldwide program, is considered to be the second most-translated author in history and the most-translated U.S.A. author, male or female. During her 70-year ministry, she wrote approximately 25 million words and 100,000 pages of handwritten manuscripts (60,000 typewritten pages) that include letters, diaries, periodical articles, and books.

Seventh-day Adventists have sought her counsel on about every issue facing the church. Her voluminous writings, well organized and indexed, are read and discussed to a much greater degree than Methodists quote John Wesley or Lutherans the writings of Martin Luther.

The Great Controversy theme

What makes Ellen White the central figure in the development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the foremost contributor to Adventism's uniqueness? Adventist doctrine does not derive from Ellen White; the Bible is its undeniable wellspring. The uniqueness of the Adventist message, however, rests on the integrating, organizing thought of Ellen White. Much that is distinctively Adventist in its rich, systematically developed message indeed derives from Ellen White's over-arching view of the Bible as expressed in her emphasis on the Great Controversy theme. From this integrating principle flows the Adventist linkage of Bible study and piety, the special emphasis on the relationship between physical health and spirituality, and the concept of wholeness in developing educational principles.

What do we mean by the Great Controversy Theme (GCT)? As every student knows, any significant theology or philosophy has an organizing principle. This principle, or paradigm, is fleshed out in its unique theology or philosophy. Ellen White's GCT provided the organizing, integrating principle for her teachings in health, education, history, and science.

For Ellen White, "the central theme of the Bible, the theme about which every other in the whole book clusters, is . . . the restoration in the human soul of the image of God. . . . He who grasps this thought has before him an infinite field for study. He has the key that will unlock to him the whole treasure house of God's word."³ The uniqueness of Adventism is not to be located in some particular element of its theology, but in the overall understanding of this "central theme of the Bible."

The cosmic conflict between God and Satan (the first of God's creation) beggars the mind that such an event could have been contemplated, never mind implemented. The fundamental question remains to this day: Whose plan is best for the universe? God's appeal to angel/human responsibility, or Satan's theory of individual autonomy?

The heart of the conflict

The heart of this conflict focuses on the character of God. Satan has charged that God is unfair, unforgiving, arbitrary, and supremely selfish. God's defense has been both passive and active—passive in that He has allowed time to proceed so that Satan's principles could be seen for all their suicidal destructiveness; active in that He has revealed His character and trustworthiness so that all inhabitants throughout the universe could make up their minds as to who has been right and wrong in the controversy.⁴

Ellen White caught the larger view of the controversy when she wrote: "The plan of salvation had a yet broader and

deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe."⁵

The essence of God's response to Satan's charges has been to demonstrate the fruitage of His plan—"the very essence of the gospel is restoration."⁶ Restoration, not only forgiveness! God's plan (what we know as the "gospel"), shows how serious God is about working sin out of the universe, one person at a time, restoring rebels into grateful, trustworthy sons and daughters.

In clarifying the "everlasting gospel" that the world needs to hear in these last days (Revelation 14:6, 7), the message of Seventh-day Adventists would have to transcend the age-old controversies that deeply divide Christianity. Further, the "everlasting gospel" would have to be stated in such a way that hundreds of millions of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and others could grasp the freshness and simplicity of Christianity.

Ellen White's GCT transcends these traditional tensions, paradoxes, and contradictions. Contending theologies and philosophies are like two circles of partial truths, neither circle knowing how to unite itself with the other into a coherent, elliptical whole. The GCT changes those opposing circles into an ellipse. By using the principle of the ellipse, each circle finds its treasured truths safely preserved, even greatly enhanced. In the ellipse, truth is united in such a way that all of its parts, once in conflict, are seen as needed for mutual survival.

Components of truth

Truth is not the sum of paradoxes. Truth is the union of components, in such a way that when one component is not connected to the other, something

serious has happened to truth. For example, H₂O is another way of saying, "water." Hydrogen or oxygen by itself is very important. But without their proper union, water does not exist. The question of whether hydrogen or oxygen is more important becomes meaningless—if one wants water to drink! The same logic applies to the components in the ellipse of truth.

In philosophy and theology, the two circles are generally known as "objectivism" and "subjectivism." Towering theological and philosophical thinkers can be catalogued in either circle. For example, within epistemological subjectivism (*immanence*—"truth" is found in reason, feeling, research, etc.) we would expect to see Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Bultmann, Hartshorne, etc. In epistemological objectivism (*transcendence*—"truth" coming from outside men and women) we find God's self-communication in the Bible and Jesus, and we can think of advocates in Luther, Calvin, Barth, etc. The history of the Christian Church is the story of which circle is predominant at the moment. Oscillation between the two occurs as one tries to rectify the deficiencies of the other. Overemphasis on transcendence (leading to cold orthodoxy untempered by relevance) invariably awakens the overemphasis on immanence (leading to the hot autonomy of reason and feeling, untempered by revelation).

Today we often refer to the objectivist circle as "conservative," and the other, "liberal." Each circle is emphasizing something correct and timely. Key words for conservatives are: *transcendence, authority, rootage, law, structure, security, and grace*—all good words to hold on to. The historic weakness of objectivism, or conservatism, is often a misunderstanding of the character of God (e.g. Calvin and his sovereign God leading to predestination, eternal hell, etc.) which, in turn, leads to a misunderstanding of "faith". When faith is misunderstood,

“only believe” is heard in some form, leading to human passivity, to “correct doctrine” and the suppression of relevance.

Key words for liberals are: *immanence, responsibility, reason, flexibility, meaning, relevance, and faith*—also good words to hold on to. The historic weakness of liberalism lies in its subjectivity. Pietists, mystics, rationalists, charismatics (and whoever else puts human autonomy “in front” of divinely revealed truths) base their security on reason, intuition, or historical research. Absolutes are rarely appealed to. Faith again is misunderstood, and it describes religious feeling leading to autonomous tests of truth.

Ellen White understood this historic standoff between these two circles: “The progress of reform depends upon a clear recognition of fundamental truth. While, on the one hand, danger lurks in a narrow philosophy and a hard, cold orthodoxy, on the other hand, there is great danger in a careless liberalism. The foundation of all enduring reform is the law of God. We are to present in clear, distinct lines the need for obeying this law.”⁷ Here again Ellen White allows the GCT to determine her transcending solution to the age-old controversy between God’s plan and Satan’s rebellion.

Truth in elliptical form

“Hard, cold orthodoxy” and “careless liberalism” are the end results of letting truth remain in two circles rather than letting truth be truth in its elliptical form. Ellen White transcends these two circles by uniting authority and responsibility, doctrinal security and heart assurance, so that the Seventh-day Adventist Church does not need to fall back into the theological arguments that divide all other churches. The ellipse of truth shows how important positions, traditionally in conflict, are joined by the holy *and*—either spoken or implied.

Ellen White’s GCT became the elliptical framework by which she was able to transcend the either/or arguments that

have separated thoughtful Christians for centuries. In the following examples, note the ellipse of truth that joins twin truths as securely as hydrogen bonds with oxygen to make water:

The relationship between Christ’s work on the cross and the work of the Holy Spirit: “The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. . . . It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world’s Redeemer.”⁸

The relationship between Christ’s role as Sacrifice/Saviour and as High Priest/Mediator: “Satan invents unnumbered schemes to occupy our minds, that they may not dwell upon the very work with which we ought to be best acquainted. The archdeceiver hates the great truths that bring to view an atoning sacrifice and an all-powerful mediator. He knows that with him everything depends on his diverting minds from Jesus and His truth.”⁹

The relationship between believing in Christ and abiding in Him: “It is not enough that the sinner *believe* in Christ for the pardon of sin; he must, by faith and obedience, *abide* in Him.”¹⁰

The relationship between Christ’s free gift of remission of sins and His free gift of His attributes in the development of the Christian character: “[Christ’s] life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ.”¹¹

The relationship between imputed and imparted righteousness: “Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us.”¹²

The relationship between objective authority and subjective responsibility in the

faith experience: “Faith in Christ as the world’s Redeemer calls for an acknowledgment of the enlightened intellect, controlled by a heart that can discern and appreciate the heavenly treasure. This faith is inseparable from repentance and transformation of character. To have faith means to find and accept the gospel treasure, with all the obligations which it imposes.”¹³

The relationship between God’s work and our work in the salvation process: “God works and cooperates with the gifts He has imparted to man, and man, by being a partaker of the divine nature and doing the work of Christ, may be an overcomer and win eternal life. The Lord does not propose to do the work He has given man powers to do. Man’s part must be done. He must be a laborer together with God, yoking up with Christ. . . . God is the all-controlling power. He bestows the gifts; man receives them and acts with the power of the grace of Christ as a living agent. . . . Divine power and the human agency combined will be a complete success, for Christ’s righteousness accomplishes everything.”¹⁴

White’s transcending breakthrough

Because of her grasp of the GCT as it helped her to transcend conventional theological impasses, Ellen White was able to keep the denomination together during the 1888 General Conference Session and the years following. She was able to lift the sights of Adventists as she helped them rise above both objectivists (with their undue emphasis on doctrine), and subjectivists (with their undue emphasis on feeling and human autonomy).

Note how Ellen White contributed to this transcending breakthrough: “While one class pervert the doctrine of justification by faith and neglect to comply with the conditions laid down in the Word of God—*If ye love Me, keep My*

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Narcissus and Samson

by Mario Pereyra

*A study in contrasts between
tragic hopelessness and
sacrificial faith.*

Several thinkers are returning to the ancient myth of Narcissus as an emblem of the values and attitudes that dominate contemporary society. Christopher Lasch, in his bestseller *The Culture of Narcissism*, considers this attitude toward life "one of the main themes of American culture."¹ Gilles Lipovetsky, a French sociologist, defines the present time as "the age of Narcissus."² The trend can be seen even in the names of popular American magazines: from *Life* to *People* to *Us* to *Self*.

In Greek mythology, Narcissus was a handsome and conceited young man who spurned the advances of the nymphs Echo and Aminias. Aminias, hurt in her pride, cursed the young man, wishing that he would never possess the object of his love. One day, Narcissus bowed to drink from a water fountain. Seeing his own face reflected on the water, he fell in love with it. Narcissus was so attracted to his own image that he frequently returned to the water fountain to contemplate himself. Thus he went on languishing until he died. Another version of the legend tells that, seeing himself on the water, he tried to embrace his own image and drowned in the attempt. In that place, according to the legend, sprouted a new flower that takes the name of its unhappy creator—narcissus.

It was Sigmund Freud³ who added the term *narcissism* to the vocabulary of psychology to designate love to the self-image and the stage of development when a child makes his own self the main object of his or her love.⁴ These ideas have given rise to many studies that describe and analyze the distinct profile of the narcissistic personality.

According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)* of the American Psychiatric Association, narcissists are arrogant and conceited individuals who have magnificent fantasies about themselves. They overestimate their success, need to be constantly admired, and always expect preferential treatment. Narcissists are convinced that they deserve more than they receive. They are worried about looking good and keeping themselves young. They are insensitive to the needs and problems of other people. With little tolerance for criticism, they often react with fury to real or imaginary slights. They tend to be male rather than female.

To sum up, narcissists focus on themselves, fascinated with their own personality and their body, "with an atrocious individualism that lacks moral and social values and is disinterested about any transcendental matter."⁵ What we have is a self sitting on its throne, unconcerned about anything else in life.

The narcissists of both sexes display themselves on TV and cinema, proudly exhibiting their attractive curves or their big muscles, boasting about their fantastic prowess. We see them walking on the streets fashionably and seductively dressed, provoking admiration and envy. We find them on beaches displaying their marvelous tanned bodies. They follow the latest fashion, spend a lot of money on perfumes and make-up, and go on varied diets and therapies in order to be more attractive.

Such self-centered individualism seeks only self-satisfaction and pleasure. The desire for well-being and amuse-

ment of self eclipses everything else. Insensitivity and indifference dominate the narcissist's attitude toward the rest of the world and the interests or needs of others. Important philosophical, religious, economical, or political matters arouse only superficial curiosity. God becomes a stranger. The sense of transcendence disappears. What matters is comfort and good looks, preserving the standard of living, and gratifying self. Thus the narcissist lives only in the present and does not care about the past or the future. The philosophy of "do-your-own-thing," "don't-worry, be-happy," and "have-a-good-time" becomes the governing principle in life.

The culture of narcissism

The culture of narcissism is the celebration of physical appearance, the mirror's triumph, and the worship of self-image. Milan Kundera,⁶ the famous Czech writer, coined the term "imagology" to refer to the power of the social image imposed by those who determine fashion and its importance in all aspects of life—in the clothes we should wear, the gadgets we should use, the color combination we should prefer at home, who to vote for or who to applaud in a sporting event. The word "imagology," says Kundera, "helps us to combine in one word what has so many names: advertising agencies, image consultants for statesmen, designers in charge of designing car shapes and gym sets, fashion designers, hairdressers and show business stars, who dictate the norms of physical beauty to those who respect all the different branches of imagology."⁷

And so we arrive at postmodern narcissism: Ideologies are dead and imagology reigns.

Tragic component of narcissism

In spite of its success, narcissism has a tragic component that cannot be overlooked—Aminia's curse: the inability to love another person. Narcissists are in love with the mirror, looking to catch

their own image in others. They are condemned to perpetual dissatisfaction. Life for them is an absurd experience that leaves them with an inner emptiness and suffering; such is "the empty strategy" of narcissism.⁸ The drama of Narcissus, the absence of feeling and transcendence, inexorably condemns the person to loneliness and self-destruction. The myth is implacable and fatal. There seems to be no possible solution.

However, hope opens up, not in self-centeredness and meaninglessness, but in the everlasting Word of God. The theme of the Bible is the opposite of narcissism. It demands the surrender of self and the embrace of the other. Love of God and fellow humans dominates the biblical portrayal of life. Consider, for example, the story of Samson, which could be parallel to the myth of Narcissus in many ways, but shows the tragedy of self-centeredness and the triumph of selflessness.

Samson's experiment with narcissism

Samson was called to rescue his people from submission to a foreign power. God gifted him with extraordinary capabilities and resources, including an uncommon strength never equaled in history. However, he dedicated the greater part of his life to displaying the spectacle of his figure, proudly showing off his ingenuity and powerful muscles. He selfishly looked for sensual satisfaction with women of questionable morality and was terribly bothered when he wasn't satisfied. In a way he was trying to be a Narcissus.

The biblical narrative (Judges 13-16) focuses on six key episodes of his life: (1) a miraculous birth with a purpose; (2) marriage; (3) facing the Philistines; (4) the visit to a prostitute in Gaza; (5) Delilah's betrayal; and (6) captivity, punishment, repentance, faith, and triumph in death.

The story is dramatic and colorful. An angel communicates to Samson's

parents the miraculous birth of the hero. The heavenly messenger gives a series of dietetic and educational requirements, since the child has to consecrate himself to God by the Nazarite vow. The first event to challenge Samson's young life was his desire to marry a Philistine woman, a member of the very people from whom he was to deliver Israel. He simply said that the woman had "caught his eye" (see Judges 14:3). His parents raised an initial objection, but eventually gave in. During the wedding feast, Samson spent more time trying to get the guests' attention with his riddles than courting his bride. When the riddle was revealed, with the help of his bride, he became so violent that he killed 30 Philistines in order to pay the bet. Then he went back home, completely forgetting his bride. His wounded pride was stronger than his esteem toward his wife. Some time later he went back looking for her, but it was too late; she had already married another man. Again, he suffered another "narcissistic wound," reacting with an unusual violence and burning the Philistines' fields. That aggression incited the Philistines to attack the Israelites. The Israelites convinced Samson to give himself up, and he was bound and taken to the Philistines. But Samson broke the ropes, took a donkey's jawbone and killed 1,000 men.

On another occasion, Samson visited a prostitute in Gaza. The Philistines surrounded the city in order to watch the gates and capture him. However, at midnight he got up and lifted the gate and its two pillars onto his shoulders, carrying them far off to the top of a hill. Then Samson fell in love with another woman named Delilah, who betrayed him when he revealed the secret of his power. Delilah cut his hair and the Spirit moved away from Samson. He was captured by his enemies, his eyes were gouged out, and he was thrown into jail and condemned to hard labor. Under such unfavorable and difficult circum-

stances, Samson came to his senses and repented.

Samson's repentance from narcissism

Samson changed the direction of his life by carrying out a truly heroic final act. His captors had taken him to a feast celebrated in the Philistine temple devoted to Dagon. He was exhibited there as the proud symbol of Philistine triumph. Blind and bound, Samson was made the center of ridicule and scorn. Through him, the God of the universe and His people were publicly mocked. At that critical moment, Samson turned to God, asked forgiveness for his self-centered actions, and prayed for strength once again, this time to show that God is God. His prayer was answered. Samson could feel the power of God moving within him. He braced himself against the two central pillars of the building and pushed them hard until they were knocked down. So perished Samson together with 3,000 of his enemies.

What is the meaning of Samson's uncommon life? For certain, his story is enigmatic because of his puzzles and the secret of his strength. Even his name is a mystery. Etymologically it means "sun," even though others connect it with "to serve" or with "strong." What was certainly outstanding was his prodigious strength, meant for fulfilling a divinely ordained mission of deliverance. He understood this in the last moment. Instead of using his strength to "serve," he used it to be "sun," to make himself the brilliant center of the show. It is clear that Samson was not a psychopath or a pure-strength-and-empty-brain man. On the contrary, he was ingenious, sensitive, had a poetical bend (Judges 14:14, 18; 15:16), and repeatedly escaped from the Philistine traps (Judges 16:2, 3). His weak point was women, but he was not a sex maniac. Rather than being defeated by women, Samson was defeated by his own arrogance and narcissism.

There is a key point in this story: the subject of the look. Sight plays a key role from the beginning to the end of Samson's life. He fell in love with the Philistine woman because he said, "she is good to my eyes." The same thing may have occurred with the prostitute of Gaza as well as with Delilah. Was it because of this that his enemies punished him with blindness? That was the turning point. Only at that moment Samson could look inside and recover the sense of his life and mission. Turning to God, he could overcome his narcissism, repent, and change.

The existential paradox

The biblical message returns over and over to this existential paradox: punishment turned into blessing. The basic model is Christ's example. The cross, a symbol of disgrace and humiliation, becomes the emblem of expiation and redemption. Here, the biblical story is contrary to mythology. While the latter ends in tragedy, the former opens the door of hope. The myth takes narcissism to its fatal outcome, while the biblical message never closes the possibility of change.

Had he lived today, Samson would have been the Hercules of the screen. He was the protagonist of an aesthetic play more than a symbol of epic heroism. On the surface, his story begins with high hopes and ends in catastrophe, as in Narcissus's myth. However, the last act in Samson's life was a consecratory one—an act that showed repentance, faith, and sacrificial love for God and His people. Ellen White states: "In suffering and humiliation, a sport for the Philistines, Samson learned more of his own weakness than he had ever known before; and his afflictions led him to repentance."⁹ Only at that moment did he listen to God. Up to that moment, he had lived on the fringe of transcendence, using God at his will (Judges 15:18). It was in the ultimate crisis that he perceived the dimension of faith.

The triumph of faith

In Greek mythology, Narcissus was the god of self-love, interested only in satisfying his own pleasure, completely unconcerned about other people's needs and about God. He symbolizes pride, vanity, conceit, and hedonism. Much of our culture reflects the false values of narcissism. Contemporary society tries to freeze adolescence, exorcize old age, idolize pleasure, and live in the high spirits of charm and seductiveness. But the myth leads to tragedy and self-destruction.

In contrast with this fateful myth, the biblical story of Samson offers an alternative of faith and hope. Surprisingly, but appropriately, Paul places Samson in the gallery of heroes of faith (Hebrews 11:32). Why? What in the life of this character was heroic? It was neither his exploits in fighting the Philistines nor the strength of his government, but in his courageous act of surrendering his life for the salvation of his people. Unlike Narcissus, who succumbed to the charm of staring at his own image, Samson was compelled to stop staring at himself in order to respond to his call to sacrifice. The dark hours of crisis destroyed his pride and made him fulfill the goal of his life, assuming his destiny as liberator in one final act. He chose to die in order to save his people from foreign oppression.

In a world saturated with the cult of narcissism, Samson's story teaches that nothing remains in life when mission is lost. The biblical narrative consistently points that the meaning of life can be found in God and in Him alone—away from self and anchored in faith, hope, and love.

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- Holman, 1997), pp. vii, 1.
4. Graz in interview with Johnson, p. 9.
5. See James H. Zachary, "Inside the Muslim Mind," *Adventist Review*, September 11, 1997, pp. 8-12; Robert S. Folkenberg, *From the GC President*, March 10, 1997.
6. William G. Johnsson, "South Mexico: Baptisms and Bloodshed," *Adventist Review*, March 13, 1997, p. 11.
7. Gadzhimurat Gadzhiyev, 31, and his wife Tatyana were recent converts and zealous evangelists for the local, eight-member Seventh-day Adventist church. They were seized by a mob, beaten publicly, doused with gasoline, and burned to death. The *Adventist Review* called the incident "religiously-motivated" (Robert W. Nixon, Secretary, "Minutes, International Religious Liberty Association Hearing Committee, Fourth World Congress," Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 23 and 25, 1997; Jonathan Gallagher, "World Events Demonstrate Importance of Religious Liberty Congress," *Adventist Review*, August 14, 1997, p. 13).
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20. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 42.
21. Nemeti, pp. 67, 68, 82-85.
22. Alexander, pp. 76, 77.
23. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 576.
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Ellen White

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commandments'—there is fully as great an error on the part of those who claim to believe and obey the commandments of God but who place themselves in opposition to the precious rays of light—new to them—reflected from the cross of Calvary. The first class do not see the wondrous things in the law of God for all who are doers of His Word. The others cavil over trivialities and neglect the weightier matters, mercy and the love of God. . . .

"Many have lost very much in that they have not opened the eyes of their understanding to discern the wondrous things in the law of God. On the other hand, religionists generally have divorced the law and the gospel, while we have, on the other hand, almost done the same from another standpoint. We have not held up before the people the righteousness of Christ and the full significance of His great plan of redemption. We have left out Christ and His matchless love, brought in theories and reasonings, and preached argumentative discourses."¹⁵

Theology does matter. Correct theology matters most. Ellen White became the reason for the Adventist distinctives that join long-separated truths into the coherent, intellectually satisfying, heart-affirming statement that John saw as "the everlasting gospel" in the last days.

Herbert E. Douglass (Th.D., Pacific School of Theology) has authored 11 books and many articles. His latest book, Messenger of the Lord, to be published by Pacific Press, focuses on Ellen G. White as a theological conceptualizer.

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Elizabeth Ostring

Dialogue with an Adventist family physician in New Zealand

Elizabeth Ostring was born in the very south of South New Zealand. Shortly afterwards her parents, Douglas and Elsie Eliot, received a second marvelous gift that was to change their lives forever. A young woman wrote to them and enrolled them into the Voice of Prophecy correspondence course. In their study the Eliots discovered and accepted the teachings of the Bible and soon joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Before Elizabeth was 5, the family moved to Avondale College, in Australia, where her father, already an accountant, studied for a while and then joined the church work as an administrator.

Elizabeth received her early education in Australia and New Zealand. When in 1964 she entered the Medical School at Otago University in New Zealand, she was the only Adventist in her class. Her cheerful disposition and her commitment to Christian values won admiration and support from her classmates, who even shared their notes for the Sabbath classes Elizabeth missed. She graduated on schedule with flying colors, taking with her the ophthalmology prize. She had the distinction of being the second Adventist woman to graduate from medicine in New Zealand.

While on internship in Australia she met and married Roland Ostring, a surgeon. Her career and specialties covered services in Australia, Great Britain, Hong Kong, and now in New Zealand.

The Ostrings served as medical missionaries at the Tsuen Wan Adventist Hospital in Hong Kong for 15 years. Since returning to their homeland in 1992, Dr. Elizabeth Ostring has operated a private clinic in Christchurch. She and her husband are the parents of twins, with a son completing a doctoral program in telecommunications engineering and a daughter in medical school. Elizabeth is a people-oriented physician. "There's more to life," she says and believes, "than anatomy, physiology, and psychology." And that "more" can be found in her commitment to "a God who suffers with His people and brings healing to them." Her life and ministry carry the theme, "Healing is walking in hope."

Dr. Ostring was interviewed while attending a meeting of the Seventh-day Adventist World Commission on Human Sexuality, at the headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.

■ *Was being a missionary part of your goal as a physician working for the church?*

Actually, no. My husband and I were working at an Adventist hospital in Australia. He wanted to get his specialty in obstetrics, and we were planning to move to Melbourne, Australia. Just about that time we received a letter from Hong Kong inviting us to go there as missionaries. Since we had already

planned to go to Melbourne, we decided to write back, thank them, and tell them that in a few years we might consider it. For some reason, however, we never got to write that letter.

A few weeks later, my husband received word from Melbourne that he could not go there, as training positions were being cut in half. It was then I remembered the letter that we hadn't an-

swered. So we contacted the Adventist hospital in Hong Kong, asking if they were still interested in our services. In a couple of hours we got a phone call asking, "Can you come tomorrow?"

We were there six weeks later. We thought it would be a 12 to 15 month assignment. But we spent 15 years there, and we loved the experience! Our twins were also born there, and in the meantime my husband specialized in surgery.

■ *As a family physician, do you get to share the gospel with those who are hurting and cannot seem to get past the pain to God?*

Christianity is dealing with reality. We need to come in touch with hurting individuals. The initial reaction of many people who are hurting is to turn away from God and the church. Sometimes even deeply committed Christians may not come to church because of pain. They become experts with excuses to avoid going to church because of pain—emotional or otherwise.

We need to differentiate between church attendance and relationship with God. My basis for sharing Christianity is by stressing that healing comes from God. The message starts with a call to confess. Confession brings us to realize that God is able to forgive and to heal.

■ *How has your life's work prepared you to the participation in the World Commission on Human Sexuality?*

My work in Hong Kong has made me sensitive to cultural issues surrounding sexuality. Now, in New Zealand, I am involved with a local interdenominational group dealing with sexual abuse

of children and women. I truly enjoy participating in this program, although it is sad to realize there are a lot of hurting people even in the church. In my own family we have experienced an enormous amount of pain and sorrow as a result of a close family member dying of AIDS.

In my experience, God has guided me through suffering and has taught me things that I would have never learned any other way. Now I can reach others whom I couldn't have reached before. This background helps me in what little I can contribute to the work of the commission.

■ *What is the basic objective of the commission?*

We are trying to identify and outline the biblical view of sexuality. We are also seeking to identify the problems our church faces around the world in the area of human sexuality and to find ways to deal with them.

■ *How do you see sexuality portrayed in the Bible?*

God has chosen to use in the Bible the intimate relationship of sexuality between husband and wife as a symbol of the close relationship He wants to have with us. Genesis starts with humanity being created in the image of God, and then comes God's command for Adam and Eve to participate in the creative activity of having their own children. In fact, God created our first parents as sexual persons before He gave them the Sabbath. But the devil likes to take all that is beautiful in God's creation and subvert it. It's no surprise that sexuality is under such direct attack from the devil.

■ *Is there a particular group that the commission is targeting?*

The church has a large number of hurting people. There is an enormous amount of pain, and a lot of it arises from sexual issues, such as family abuse,

etc. I see this in my work every day, particularly with young people. The work of the commission is not only to define sexuality from a biblical perspective, but also to assure the hurting people that God loves them and can empower them to address the root cause of their problems.

■ *If there is one message that you would like the commission to state to young adults, what would that be?*

The pressures on Christian young people to engage in activities ranging from drinking to sex to drugs are enormous. The church often is quick to point out the sin involved, but slow to assure our young people that God loves them, cares for them, is ready to forgive them, and to empower them to live an upright life. Seventh-day Adventists are fairly conservative people and proper sexuality is something we are scared of teaching to young people. We need to emphasize that God made sex and that He meant for us to enjoy it within the parameters He established at the beginning. Sexuality is a beautiful gift and must be handled with care.

The basis of sexuality is the companionship and the communion with a person of a different sex in a monogamous relationship. It isn't meant to be altered from God's plans. It requires that a couple commit to one another and to God. That commitment is the basis of Christian marriage.

■ *What will the commission do to implement the methods established for dealing with sexuality issues in our church?*

We plan to provide resources to key individuals who will distribute them through family ministries programs, schools, and other venues. Some of these resources will be brochures and pamphlets written in a very informative, comprehensive, factual, and easy-to-understand manner. Other materials will also be developed, always keeping our youth in mind.

■ *How do you plan to continue your healing ministry?*

I would like to develop a ministry for single mothers, for whom I carry a personal burden. I am not a highly ambitious person or a crusader. But being in this commission has crystallized in my mind the work that needs to be done in this area. At the same time, I would like to continue dealing with the sensitivities of the family and family practice.

■ *With so many opportunities and challenges you have faced in your career, how would you summarize your philosophy in life?*

Trust God and He will lead you all the way. Once you have made a choice that your life belongs to God, when problems confront you, you have the power of the Almighty to rely on. You will find that the problem either has a lesson for you to learn or has a meaning for someone else—but God always has a way for you to work through it.

Interview by Dixil L. Rodriguez.

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Harrington Fitz Henry

Dialogue with an engineer-evangelist in Jamaica

His mind is sharp. His hands are strong. His heart is tender. With his hands he can fix things, design large plazas, or build attractive town houses. With his mind he can see down, around, and up. With a vision focused so well, he also reaches out to draw thousands of people each year into the kingdom of God. Meet Harrington Fitz Henry—one of Adventism’s leading lay evangelists.

Born in an Adventist family in Kingston, Jamaica, Fitz studied at Kingston College. He was the pride of his family, not just because he was the first of six children, but because even in childhood he showed so much promise. His grandmother, Sister Druss, who is 101 this year, gave him a model of what an Adventist ought to be. But at 17, Fitz, much to the disappointment of the family, strayed from the church to “run the world.” It took another 17 years for God to turn him around and make him one of Jamaica’s greatest soul winners. Evangelism is his blood, his breath, and he gives to it two to four months each year full time, and goes all over the world. So far, his ministry has brought 17,000 people into the truth.

A graduate of Voorhees Technical Institute in Manhattan, New York, Fitz is a mechanical engineer by profession, and specializes in the construction of large commercial buildings, plazas, hotels, warehouses, hospitals, schools, and town houses. In 1996, one of his firms, Global Construction, won in Madrid an International Award for the best constructed plaza in the Caribbean. His buildings are noted for excellence in aesthetics, quality of construction, and completion on time.

No less is Fitz Henry’s passion for evangelism. He gives liberally his time and resources for evangelistic crusades that take him all over the world. He is a builder of people as well as buildings. It is this combination of the best of a professional life with a commitment to public evangelism that makes him an inspiration and a model to many Adventist youth.

Fitz and his wife, Ivy, have five grown children—Denise, Quinton, Colleen, Douglas, and Simone.

■ Brother Henry, what motivated you to become an evangelist?

Evangelism is a spiritual calling from God. Seventeen years after leaving the church, I was incarcerated for something about which I knew the truth, but could not speak it, for if I did, I would be a dead man. I promised God that if He would set me free from the hands of men, I would serve Him for the rest of my life. God not only freed me from

jail, but also gave me this gift which I now use for His glory.

■ To what do you account this overwhelming success in your evangelistic crusades?

The power of prayer. Throughout my preaching career, I have always had a strong prayer team. Although academic preparation and eloquence are important, real success depends on prayer.

■ Tell us about your early years.

My parents are Seventh-day Adventists and I am the first of six children. One of my brothers has been the first elder of the Penwood Seventh-day Adventist Church for more than 20 years, and my grandmother, Sister Druss, 101 years old, still walks three miles to church. Unfortunately, after graduation from high school, I became involved with older professionals who encouraged me to further my education, but insisted that the church was stifling and I would get nowhere. Slowly, I left the church.

■ How did you find your way back?

While in prison I remembered my mother’s words that when I got myself into trouble I would find God. I requested a Bible and three books by Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vols. 1 and 2, and *The Great Controversy*. I read, studied, and began writing sermons. On two occasions, I was reprimanded for doing so, and the third time, the prison officer warned that I would be placed in maximum security, but he never acted. Later, I was given permission to preach and brought three men to Christ—a prison officer and two fellow inmates.

■ In your experience, have you found it difficult to manage two large business enterprises and at the same time give so much of yourself to the work of the church?

Not really. The Lord’s business is foremost in my life. When our priorities are right, the Lord gives us strength to handle other things. God is a big God and He expects us to have a big mind. When we put Him first, He works out the rest.

■ *As an evangelist, how do you maintain the balance between family, profession, and your spiritual life?*

My family knows my commitment to the Lord, and they have accepted my absence and are quite supportive. I have taken very literally the injunction to leave mother, father, and family for the Lord's sake. In business, my philosophy is to make proper provision and preparation, leave the engineers and office personnel in charge and put Jesus in my chair; and He has never failed me yet. So I continue to leave everything in His hand.

■ *Can you recall some of the dramatic experiences you have had as an evangelist?*

One night a gunman came on the platform to kill me. Believing that God would protect me, I said: "In the name of Jesus, stand back!" The would-be attacker simply froze.

On another occasion, as I was interviewing 300 candidates for baptism, a Rastafarian man who had not been attending the meetings before came forward and asked to be baptized. I told him that conversion meant a change of heart and also an outward change. He replied, "So I must cut off my locks!" He agreed and we retreated to a private room and did just that. Today, he is a stalwart deacon in the church.

■ *As a successful businessman, what is your modus operandi?*

I do nothing in business without presenting it to the Lord in prayer, and wait on Him for a clear indication of the direction I should take. This does not exclude discussion of the project with other business associates in and out of the church, but the ultimate answer lies in seeking and following God's will. When we go to Him, He will never fail.

■ *In addition to your business and church*

activities, are you involved in any other organizations?

I serve as a justice of the peace and as an advisor to the Minister of Justice on correctional services. I also serve as chairman of a secondary school board and as coordinator of prison ministries for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Jamaica. I also help out as the vice-president of the Regional Disaster Preparedness Committee.

■ *How do you relate your faith and profession?*

By my lifestyle. I endeavor to maintain a certain level of Christian ethics and behavior in all my operations. My colleagues respect and admire that. In fact, whenever they encounter problems they often seek my advice.

While lifestyle is important, I feel a Christian businessman should also be involved in sharing his faith whenever an opportunity arises. I always begin my business discussions with prayer. I do not accept invitations to social clubs for a drink or anything of that kind. That does not mean I am not social. I am, but in the Christian way. So my colleagues know I am different, and they are curious to know why. That gives me an opportunity to explain my beliefs.

■ *What advice would you give to Seventh-day Adventist youth who may be planning to go into business?*

Whatever the size of the business, plan wisely and plan with the Lord. God wants His people to be prosperous. However, if your business causes you to infringe on the Lord's time or commandments, consider it an attempt of the devil to ensnare you. Seek immediately God's help and guidance.

■ *You have just returned from South Africa after completing the preparations for*

Pentecost '98. Tell us about this exciting evangelistic project.

Pentecost '98 is an attempt to reach an international audience of millions with the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ. The evangelistic series will be held at Vista University, in Soweto, which has a population of more than three million people. The theme for this crusade is, "The King Is Coming." It will focus on health, welfare, crime, and salvation. We want the people of Soweto to hear, to feel, and to get ready for the coming King. The Union of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Africa, along with a group of concerned lay businessmen, have organized this campaign. They are volunteering their skills, services, and means for the advancement and uplifting of the brothers and sisters of Soweto. The five-week campaign will begin on February 28, 1998 and will be transmitted via satellite to other countries in Africa, Europe, Asia, the Middle East, as well as South and North America.

I believe that the end time is upon us. People must be told about it. They must be given a choice to accept Jesus as Saviour and to prepare for His glorious return. Each Seventh-day Adventist should be involved in sharing his or her faith while pursuing his or her own vocation. The harvest is ready, but the laborers are few. Under the power and guidance of God, we will see this gospel exploding in all the world.

Interview by Iris Henry.

Iris Henry is the Director of Education and Women's Ministries for the West Indies Union of Seventh-day Adventists, with headquarters in Mandeville, Jamaica.

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Seeing through the eyes of Jesus

by Rubén Ramos

*“As he went along,
he saw a man blind from
birth” (John 9:1).**

Jesus was in Jerusalem. Probably it was during the Feast of Dedication. The city was crowded with pilgrims from far and near. Priests and Levites, Pharisees and Sadducees, rabbis and lawyers, the simple and the curious were all pressing through the narrow streets of the city of David. There was so much to see: the temple, the palace, the walls, the great gates of the city, and other tourist attractions. There was so much to hear: street preachers expounding the law, the Pharisees arguing over the Jewish heritage, the zealots whispering here and there their favorite moment to throw out the Romans. There was so much to do: worship in the temple, make a wish before history's great mileposts in the city, or simply sit under the shadow of a tree and watch the crowd go by.

Jerusalem had so much to offer to the thousands of visitors during this festive season. But Jesus was no ordinary visitor. His eyes and ears, His mind and heart, were not that of a tourist, attracted by the glitter or the glamour of the city. He was a people person. “As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth.” In that one single sentence, the Gospel writer sets Jesus apart from the rest of the crowd.

Imagine visiting the Washington, D.C. area. What would you see? The White House, the Lincoln Memorial, the Washington Monument, the Smithsonian, and the General Conference building would perhaps make the list. If you had the choice of seeing someone, the President of the U.S. would certainly be one. But surely not the homeless at the Dupont Circle!

We usually see what is important to us. Our focus of attention is determined

by what is in our hearts. Jesus came to this world to reveal God's passion for the shattered pieces of humanity. He came to save the lost, to heal the sick, to give sight to the blind, to raise the dead. That was His obsession. Nothing was more important to Him than bringing wholeness to the broken-hearted, freedom to the captives, preaching the good news of salvation, proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor. In doing so, Jesus was willing to deprive Himself of rest, food, water—and finally life itself. That's why when the entire city was preoccupied with other things, Jesus saw the blind man and came to his rescue.

So, what does seeing through Jesus's eyes mean? Observe these four points:

Vision of compassion

To see through Jesus' eyes means seeing with compassion. Whatever Jesus did was conditioned by His infinite love and compassion. We need to be sensitive and responsive to the less fortunate, as He was. We need to feel what He felt. We need to have a tender heart that can reach out to the hurting. Jesus identified fully with the hurts and the needs of the blind man. When His compassion kindled a response of faith, the blind man's eyes were opened. For the first time in his life, he saw the brightness of the sun, the beauty of nature, and the Lord of healing. Gratitude filled his heart and compelled his lips to break forth in praise and proclamation of what Jesus did for him. He wasn't afraid to give glory to God.

Vision without obstruction

To see others through Jesus's eyes means to discard everything that ob-

structs clear vision. When Jesus saw the blind man, He saw a person in great need, and He sensed an opportunity to reveal God's power. But the disciples saw something else. They saw a theological problem. "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents?" they asked (John 9:2). Often, Christians let theology and doctrine interfere in seeing people for what they are and what they need. Yet theology and doctrine are to focus on who God is and what He really wants us to do for people. Whenever theology lacks that focus, it becomes a hindrance and Satan's well-conceived tool to diminish our vision and destroy our mission.

Vision based on God's revelation

To see as Jesus does demands that we accept the vision God's revelation provides. Look at the neighbors of the blind man. They knew he was blind and helpless from birth. Now they heard the testimony of the man that God had healed him. God met him in person and gave him his vision. The man was a walking vindication of God's power. But the neighbors were not ready to accept God's revelation. They even doubted if he was the same blind man who sat in their neighborhood and begged each day. They sought the opinion of the Pharisees. They preferred the judgment of others over the revelation of God.

The Pharisees had their own cataracts. When they discovered that the healing occurred on Sabbath, they couldn't accept it. Instead they decided that the One who healed on Sabbath broke the Sabbath and hence He could not be from God (John 9:16). The sight of the Pharisees was so dimmed by legalistic interpretation of the Sabbath that they could not see the Lord of the Sabbath. To them Jesus appeared, not as the ultimate revelation of God, but as a man who did not keep the Sabbath. To see as Jesus did is to go beyond the outward rudiments of the law and grasp the in-

ner dimension that the Law is the transcript of God's character.

Ironically enough, the sight of the Pharisees was indeed blindness at its worst. Ellen White explains why: "The Pharisees thought themselves too wise to need instruction, too righteous to need salvation, too highly honored to need the honor that comes from Christ. . . . They clung to the dead forms, and turned away from the living truth and the power of God."**

Adherence to traditions and rules at the cost of rejecting God's revelation cannot help us to see as Jesus did. Once a brother came to see me. He was very concerned that in the church we were not worshipping correctly. I asked him to explain, and he set off a list of things we were doing wrongly. We were not kneeling for each prayer. We were not singing the doxology from the church hymnal. And so on. Obviously, our brother had identified worship with traditions and practices. The principal point is worship—to come before God, to praise His name, to offer our prayers to Him, and to listen to His Word. How we do these may differ, but to see worship as Jesus would see is to accept it as an avenue to praise and glorify God.

If a tradition or a human rule doesn't help us to feel God's passion and prevents us from seeing as Jesus sees, we have to reject it. If not, it will blind us as it did the Pharisees. They became so blind that they couldn't understand even the most basic and clearest logic presented by the blind man. "One thing I do know," he said. "I was blind but now I see!" (John 9:25).

Vision of courage

To see as Jesus did is to see courageously. Witness the reaction of the parents of the blind man. They ought to have been glad. Their son could now see. He need no longer be a beggar. He could work and have a life of his own. The people had their doubts, the Pharisees had their theology, but the parents

had nothing to doubt that their son had become a new person. Yet they could not see as Jesus did. The vision of Jesus was a courageous one. He saw a man in need, and He healed him on the Sabbath day, unafraid of the Pharisees. In doing good, in bringing sight to the blind, there is no place for cowardice. But the parents were afraid and said: "Ask him; he's old enough, and he can answer for himself!" (John 9:21, TEV). They chose the acceptance of others above God's. A person who is afraid to be rejected by other people for telling the truth cannot see as Jesus sees. Sooner or later, darkness will overpower such a person.

The ultimate need

Hence, our ultimate need is to see as Jesus does. As a believer, as a student or as a professional, we must seek earnestly to see as Jesus sees. There are times when we don't know what to do, what to say, what direction to take, but it is comforting to know that Jesus is willing to break through our confusion and our darkness and bring light to our hearts. The Holy Spirit is ready to place eye salve in our eyes to enable us to see properly.

Jesus is the greatest optometrist ever! He has the right prescription for the right vision. In Him, it is all 20/20. He is ready to restore our vision, to enable us to see as He does.

Rubén Ramos (M. Div., Andrews University) is an ordained minister and coordinator of the Adventist work among Hispanics in the Potomac Conference, which embraces the Greater Washington D.C. area. His address: 12521 Marie Ct.; Silver Spring, Maryland 20904; U.S.A.

* Except as otherwise stated, all Bible passages are from the New International Version.

** Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1940), p. 279.

Adventists at the University of California, Berkeley!

by Wil Sutton



Greetings from the Berkeley Seventh-day Adventist Student Association (BSDASA)! Our group is a registered and recognized student group on the campus of the University of California, Berkeley (also known as "Cal").

In December 1996, two Cal graduating seniors, a graduate student, and our former pastor at the Berkeley Adventist Church, Gary Venden, met on campus to pray. We asked God to give us a vision of what He could do through us at

Cal to share our faith with the more than 35,000 students and faculty, and for the power of His Holy Spirit. After praying, we went to work.

Our initial goal was to start a branch Sabbath school on campus, as well as Friday night vespers, and invite our roommates, classmates, and professors to attend. We registered our group with the university administration. Then we went to the Berkeley Adventist Church and asked the church board to help us rent space on campus and buy materials.

We printed flyers and posters announcing our meetings, and we had a banner made with our BSDASA logo. We distributed the flyers in the main university plaza and displayed our posters at the Berkeley church and at the residence hall where we had rented a room for our meetings.

At our first branch Sabbath school meeting three Adventist students and our faculty sponsor, Dr. Marilyn Saavedra, attended. Only four had met for vespers. But we praise God, because from that small beginning our little group has continued to grow, involving both Adventist and non-Adventist friends.

In order to expand our outreach on campus and nurture our new members, we presented a report and a proposal to the Northern California Conference executive committee in April 1997. During the summer, the conference voted to grant the BSDASA a small stipend.

We truly have felt God's guiding presence among us. As many as 32 have attended our Friday night vespers, with regular attendance around 15 to 20. In October, we went to Pacific Union Col-

lege to present, during the church program, a mission report on our activities and plans. Four non-Adventist students who fellowship with us not only joined us for the weekend trip, but also shared their testimonies with the worshipers during church service. At the end of 1997, just before the final exams, 21 tired members of our group met to pray and study the Bible together.

Nineteen members—including two Catholics, a Baptist and a Presbyterian—participated in our leadership retreat at Lake Tahoe, California (see photo). There, Ron Pickell, the Adventist chaplain at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, shared with us strategies and tools to witness for Christ on campus.

There is so much to tell you, but not enough space! BSDASA members have conducted worship services at the Berkeley Adventist Church and at Cornerstone Christian Fellowship churches. The group has also sponsored World Hunger Day events and distributed food among our needy neighbors near the Berkeley Church. We have placed ads about our meetings in the campus newspaper and started mid-week Bible studies. In September we established a BSDASA website that already has had 1,000 visitors.

Our vision is to start a church on the Cal campus and to purchase a house near campus to serve as a center for our nurture and outreach activities. Pray for us at Berkeley and for God's ministry at public university campuses everywhere. You can visit our website at <http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~sdasa> and contact us at our e-mail address: will@serendipite.com

Wil Sutton, *Student coordinator*

Serving the community in Mexico City

The Mexican Association of Seventh-day Adventist Professionals (APA), organized in 1996 in the Central Adventist Church of Mexico City, continues its activities with several programs that nurture the faith of its members and serves the community in practical ways (see report in *Dialogue* 8:3).

Through an Open School program in the nation's capital, the APA provides continuing education to adults interested in obtaining their elementary, secondary, or pre-university diplomas. In May 1997, APA representatives offered a seminar on smoking cessation in the city of Tuxtla, sponsored by the Secretary of Health of the State of Chiapas. The event, which included radio and television interviews as well as press releases, coincided with World Non-smoking Day.

Our plans for the future include literacy programs for adults, increased contacts with university centers, and a regular lecture series on Christianity and science.

We welcome contacts with similar associations and entities. Our address: Asociación de Profesionistas Adventistas; Sadi Carnot No. 12, Col. San Rafael; Mexico D.F.; Mexico.

David García y Poyato, *President*



Students in the continuing education program offered by APA.



Leaders of APA meet with the Secretary of Health in Chiapas.

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Creation and a logical faith

by Ed Christian

If we do not accept Creation, then faith in Christ is mere wishful thinking

I don't have much faith in logic as a solution to the world's problems, but I do want a logical faith. I don't demand that my faith correspond to "scientific logic" as presently conceived, but I do expect it to be consistent throughout.

I am speaking here of the interior logic of Scripture and doctrine, of course. I want to believe what the Bible teaches, but I also want that belief to be logical—I don't want to believe "cunningly devised fables" (2 Peter 1:16, KJV).*

I refuse to believe any "Christian doctrine" I can't support to my satisfaction from the Bible. However, I also refuse to give up any biblically supported Christian doctrine, even if it is unpopular or called "unscientific." To do so would be illogical.

I have a friend, a campus chaplain at my state university, who has an illogical faith, even though he thinks it will help him reach logical young college students. He believes, he says, in the existence of God, in Jesus Christ as his Saviour, in the virgin birth, in an afterlife—but he does not believe in Creation. In my eyes, this renders his faith illogical nonsense.

Many supposedly logical Christians share this chaplain's illogical faith. I would like to explain why it is biblically and doctrinally illogical to not believe that God created life on earth in six literal days."

I am assuming, as the basis of discussion, that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, given to us through words cho-

sen by men, but doctrinally inerrant in the original autograph. If it is not, if it is merely the human speculations of godly writers, then we have no logical or authoritative basis for faith and doctrine, whatever we believe.

Here's the problem: Many Christian doctrines are based partly on texts which also clearly, unmistakably say that God created us. Whether they say so or not, the texts assume that Creation happened in six days—the Bible writers had no other theories on the topic. Thus, logically, if God did not create us as the Bible says He did, then these texts, wrong in one part, may well be wrong in any other part. How can we argue that a phrase identifying Jesus as Saviour is inspired, but the next phrase, identifying Him as Creator, is mere legend? Such an arbitrary approach to inspiration is illogical self-deception.

Examine the following statements and the supporting texts. If these Scripture passages are accepted as authentic and inspired support for doctrine and faith, then as a Christian, I have no other logical alternative but to affirm the validity of their implication that Genesis 1 is a God-inspired and true account of God's creation of life on earth in six days.

If God did not create us, we have no logical ground for belief that Jesus is the Messiah, the Saviour, and the Son of God:

"This is what the LORD says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: . . . I am the LORD your Holy One, Israel's Creator, your King" (Isaiah 43:14, 15).

"Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:3).

"Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live" (1 Corinthians 8:6; see also Hebrews 1:1–3, Colossians 1:15–20, 1 Peter 1:18–20).

If God did not create us, we have no logical ground for belief in the return of Christ and the end of evil:

"Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (Revelation 14:7, KJV).

"Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. . . the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more" (Isaiah 65:17–19).

"Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world"" (Matthew 25:34).

If God did not create us, we have no logical ground for belief in the Ten Commandments as the law of God:

"For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy" (Exodus 20:11).

If God did not create us, we have no logical ground for belief in the sanctity of marriage:

"'Haven't you read,' he replied, 'that at the beginning the Creator "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh"? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate'" (Matthew 19:4-6).

If God did not create us, we have no logical ground for belief in being born again, in regeneration:

"Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (Colossians 3:9, 10).

If God did not create us, we have no logical ground for belief in life as a gift of God:

"When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth" (Psalm 104:29, 30).

If God did not create us, we have no logical ground for belief in the revelation of God to the world through nature:

"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse" (Romans 1:20).

"First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, 'Where is this "coming" he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.' But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and with water. By water also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for

the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men" (2 Peter 3:3-7; see also Isaiah 41:17-20).

If God did not create us, we have no logical ground for belief in the existence of God as ruler of the universe:

"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being" (Revelation 4:11).

If God did not create us, we have no logical ground for belief in the omniscience of God:

"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13).

If we don't believe that life was created on earth in six days, as Genesis 1 teaches, then it is of course illogical to believe that Adam and Eve ever sinned, as Genesis 3 teaches. If we evolved, even by "theistic evolution" or "by design," then death has always existed on earth. God, if there is one, becomes a God of "tooth and claw," offering us "survival of the fittest" rather than "salvation by faith." If death has always existed, then death did not enter the world as a result of sin. Therefore, if we evolved, there can be no such thing as sin that leads to death, so there is no need of a Saviour from that sin, but we also have no reason to hope for an end to death. If Christ is identified as the Creator by John and Paul but they were wrong, then we have no ground for hope that they were right when they wrote that He died for our sins, was resurrected, ascended to His Father, and is coming back to save us and re-create what He originally created.

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:19, KJV).

I don't think we can have it both ways. If we accept that God created the world the way the Bible teaches it, then it is logical to look for His return. If we

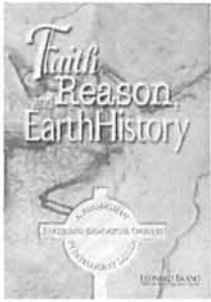
do not accept Creation, then faith in Christ is mere wishful thinking, the Body of Christ a mere social club.

Ed Christian (Ph.D., University of Nebraska) teaches English and the Bible as Literature at Kutztown University. This essay is adapted from one of his Old Testament Literature handouts. His postal address: Department of English; Kutztown University; Kutztown, Pennsylvania 19530; U.S.A. E-mail address: christia@kutztown.edu

Notes and references

- * Bible passages marked KJV are from the King James Version; all others are quoted from the New International Version.
- ** I specify "life on earth" because I agree with Richard Davidson that the Hebrew text of Genesis 1 demands a six-day creation of life, but suggests that God created the "unformed and unfilled" world and the universe in the timeless ages before the creation of life here. See Davidson, "In the Beginning: How to Interpret Genesis 1," *Dialogue* 6:3 (1994), pp. 9-12.

Books



Faith, Reason, and Earth History,
by Leonard Brand (Berrien Springs,
Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1997;
332 pp.; paperback).

Reviewed by James Gibson.

Designed as a textbook for college courses dealing with origins, the book is an outgrowth of more than 20 years of teaching courses in the history and philosophy of science. The author, Dr. Leonard Brand, served until recently as chairman of the Department of Natural Sciences at Loma Linda University and is a distinguished scientist, active in scientific research with implications for creationist theory.

A good textbook on origins should address at least three major topics: the nature and philosophy of science, the biological evidence, and the paleontological/geological evidence. Approximately one-third of the book is devoted to each of these topics.

I consider the book a success. The author presents the ideas lucidly, with illustrations to support his arguments, but without getting bogged down in details. He presents controversial material in a thoughtful, non-polemical manner. His arguments are clear and well thought out, setting a good example in respecting opposing viewpoints.

The first six chapters deal with philosophical issues such as: the methods and limitations of science, key developments in the history of science, the influence of naturalism on science, and the relationship of faith and science. I was pleased to see the author's use of the problem of reconstructing a broken vase as an analogy of historical science (pp. 4, 5). Chapter 3 takes up the Galileo affair and makes the point that the conflict was not so much between science and Scripture as between old science and new science. The church had made the mistake of incorporating science into its theology. When science changed, the church was left in an untenable situation.

The nature of scientific hypotheses is examined in chapter 6, with the point that it is no more scientific to state that God did not create life than to state that He did. Science cannot test hypotheses concerning God's involvement in nature.

The next six chapters deal with biological issues, including the origin of life and its diversity, the nature of biological change, and the theory of sociobiology. In addition to a lot of familiar material, the author presents much that is new. Sociobiology is seldom included in creationist textbooks, and its inclusion here is welcome. Another significant contribution is the chapter on biological change from a creationist's view-

point. The author also includes a chapter outlining the case for conventional evolutionary theory, followed by a review of the same evidence with a creationist interpretation of the data.

The final five chapters address the geologic column, with a concluding chapter summarizing the position of the author. Creationists have always struggled with the issues raised by the geologic column, and Dr. Brand offers no simple solutions. Instead, he analyzes the various types of data and attempts to outline where there may be misunderstanding, where further testing might be especially useful, and where creationism must simply rest on faith in Scripture.

The book format is non-intimidating, with wide margins, numerous illustrations, a helpful glossary, and a short index. A section on cosmology would have been helpful. I would highly recommend Dr. Brand's work as a textbook for college courses on origins and a resource book for creationists.

James Gibson (Ph.D. in Biology, Loma Linda University) is Director of the Geoscience Research Institute. Before joining the institute, he spent 13 years as a teacher in California and West Africa. His mailing address: Geoscience Research Institute; Loma Linda University; Loma Linda, California 92350; U.S.A. E-mail address: jgibson@ccmail.llu.edu



What Is a Person?

by James W. Walters (Urbana and Chicago:
University of Illinois Press, 1997; 187 pp.;
hardcover).

Reviewed by Miroslav M. Kiš.

What is a person? What constitutes protectable human life? Are *persons* and *humans* equivalent terms? These questions are neither simple nor trivial, particularly since technology and medical science have pushed back the limits of our knowledge, and economics has imposed a limit on our capacity for medical treatment. Health practitioners, and potentially all of us, may face the issue of a scarcity of resources and availability of care. According to Walters, the problem is particularly acute in the neonatal intensive-care unit when a severely disabled newborn competes for resources with other newly born babies.

The problem is all the more serious when the decision makers belong to the "physicalist" camp. According to Walters, the physicalist model holds that all humans are sacred, because all human life deserves a categorically privileged, moral status.

Walters challenges his readers by proposing a "personalist" approach, where personhood alone determines moral status. "The personalist model is premised on the idea that intellectual and emotional capacities are the basis for valuing individual life" (p. 9). Its moral claim rests primarily on the use of higher mental functions. If humanness as a criterion requires respect and protection for all human beings, personhood as a criterion is more selective. Walters sees several advantages in personalism:

1. *Personhood is a well-defined measure.* "Possession of self-consciousness [is] a necessary and sufficient condition to be a person of full moral status" (p. 2).

2. *Personhood presents a sliding scale of human value.* "The more nearly an individual human or animal approximates a life of self-consciousness (such as yours or mine), the greater the claim of that individual to maximum moral status" (p. 4). This means that not all humans are persons, and that not all persons are equally so. Fetuses, newborns, Alzheimers patients, the permanently comatose patients do not and cannot function as persons. Their personhood is contested and that may imply "diminished moral standing" (p. 9).

3. *Personhood underscores the importance of "evolving moral status"* (p. 69). A permanently vegetative patient does not have the same claim as a newborn baby. The difference is potentiality. The baby is a "proximate person" or, as Mary Anne Warren suggests, an "actual future person" (p. 67). The baby will reach full personhood if its moral status evolves unhampered.

What is a Person? is a philosophical treatise. The reader should pay particular attention to the introduction and the first chapter. Instead of rejecting or accepting conclusions uncritically, it would be well to examine the author's presuppositions. Here are some:

1. There are no "objectively 'best' ideas and...all ideas... are conditioned by the accidents of history" (p. 10). (This clearly reflects the worldview of postmodern thinking.)
2. Ontological terms are inadequate to describe human nature. The concept of personhood is preferable.
3. In personalism full moral status is not created, but rather evolves (p. 69) and must be evidenced by a functioning mental capacity (p. 31). The image of God is not a given; it must be "developed."
4. "Religion does not possess a definitive answer to the difficult issues raised by bioethics" (p. 17).
5. The basis for the personalist approach rests on the "dominant ethos" of Western civilization.
6. The moral agent stands as a measure of moral respectability (p. 4). (Possible danger for bigotry?).

This book poses a challenge to a great variety of readers. The author deals courageously and provocatively with one of

the most complex ethical dilemmas facing all of us, and especially Bible-believing Christians. I wonder if future elaborations of this subject will bring us closer to the biblical stance or move us in some other direction.

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An excerpt from Dr. Walters' book was published in *Dialogue* 9:2 under the title, "Is Koko a person?"



The Lamb Among the Beasts: Finding Jesus in the Book of Revelation,

by Roy C. Naden (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1996; 300 pp.; hardback).

Reviewed by Dragutin Matak.

Roy C. Naden is a gifted author with profound insights. From his background as a pastor, evangelist, musician, university professor, and one who knows his Lord, he brings fresh insights to the understanding of the Book of Revelation. His audience is "college students and lay people who have an interest in apocalyptic writing" (p.12).

Without wasting time on extreme interpretations or immersing the reader in elaborate discussions understood only by trained theologians, Naden focuses on John's main concern: Jesus the Lamb, the hope of the world. This Christ-centered approach to the Apocalypse makes the book a landmark in Adventist understanding of prophecy. The author points out that Revelation is not primarily about beasts, dragons, and false prophets. The primary emphasis of the book is the Lamb, the champion of His people, who promises and produces vindication for them.

Thus, in chapter 1 the resurrected Jesus promises "I will return"; chapters 2 and 3 portray Jesus supporting His churches; Jesus is worshiped by all heaven in chapters 4 and 5, proclaimed in chapter 6, attacked by Satan in chapters 8, 9 and 12, adored by the church in chapter 11; in chapter 13, Jesus is mimicked in a parade of satanic opposition; in chapter 14, Jesus commissions the church; chapters 15 to 18 describe the wrath-filled Jesus who judges Babylon, and the last three chapters picture the victorious Jesus with the redeemed forever.

Naden begins his commentary with a clear set of interpretive principles based on the "the historicist point of view"

(p. 11). For example, “most of what we read is couched in symbols,” Naden says, “and is not meant to be understood literally” (p. 49). Hence references to historical events and people are to be viewed as symbolic of worldwide issues and events. Another example is that numbers are to be seen as symbols of predictable qualities: 3 for unity, 7 for rest, 10 for completeness, 12 for the kingdom, etc. And the most important clues are taken from Matthew 24 and 25, and the Book of Daniel.

One approach Naden uses skillfully that is particularly helpful to readers concerns the most difficult passages, such as the plagues and the millennium. Naden sets out more than one possible interpretation, gives their strengths and shortcomings, and leaves it to the reader to take a position. Such openness not only allows, but also invites the reader to study and evaluate prayerfully the meaning of the text.

Although the treatment is comprehensive, the author seems squeezed for space in his masterly treatment of the Apocalypse. However, he succeeds in his aim: “To help us see and hear Jesus and in this way to find security in Him.” *The Lamb Among the Beasts*, I am sure, will enjoy a long and productive life. I highly recommend this work.

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Le cri du ciel: Etude prophétique sur le livre de l'Apocalypse,

by Jacques B. Doukhan (Dammarié-les-Lys, France: Vie et Santé, 1996; 287 pp.; paperback).

Reviewed by Roberto Badenas.

Osahara, members of the Solar Temple Community, and others who have used the visions of Apocalypse to lead naive followers into lives of fear, irrationality, and death. Even Hollywood and pulp fiction take an extraordinary interest in the Apocalypse as they try to use its vision into money-making ventures that exploit the gullible and feed the curiosity of those fascinated with the future. And the grave issues of today—the AIDS epidemic, ethnic carnage, the uncertainties in the Middle East, the crisis in the ecosystem, the approaching millennium—add more intensity to the study of Revelation.

But the Book of Revelation is not meant for speculative interpretations or eccentric manipulations. It's a serious book with a serious message for people who live in the end time. That's us. *Le cri du ciel* (The Cry From Heaven) comes at the right moment. Even as the millennial fever seems to affect the entire globe, the book trumpets the call of Revelation: Jesus is coming, and that event demands meaningful and living discipleship of those who await His coming.

With that serious theme as his core, Dr. Jacques Doukhan—a teacher at Andrews University—proposes a biblically sound and life-challenging interpretation of this perplexing book. Doukhan is an Hebraist and a specialist in apocalyptic literature, having already published a book on Daniel. He has the advantage of looking at biblical issues from both a Jewish and a Christian perspective. It is this dual perspective that constitutes the most original feature of the book—its interpretation of the seven series in Revelation in the light of the annual cycle of the seven Jewish feasts: the seven churches are linked to Passover, the seven seals to Shabuot, the seven trumpets to Rosh Ha-Shana, the seven signs to Yom Kippur, and so on.

Doukhan's approach is original and perhaps controversial, but at least it leads us back to Scripture. The author deserves to be read, for he bases his interpretation on the principle of linkage: Just as God guided Israel to a deeper understanding of His plan of salvation through the annual festivals and the events of its history, He is now guiding His people to the final consummation of His plan. The emphasis on God slowly and surely bringing His purposes to fulfillment and the need for us to always watch and be ready is never outmoded.

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The Book of Revelation is one of the most misunderstood books in the history of biblical interpretation, often generating excesses of speculators and visionaries. Our own times have had their share of these eccentrics: David Koresh, Shoko

For eternity I shall offer applause

by Pat Grant

"I'll make a deal with you. You come to church once, and I'll never bother you again about religion."

If you have ever doubted the awe-inspiring, indescribable lengths that God will go to save anyone—keep reading. Man, have I got a story for you. It's about how God reached me through the eyes of a little boy named Cedarric Collins.

My brother A.J. and I were living in a small apartment in Seattle, Washington. We were attending college and trying to finish our education by working nights and studying days.

A.J. went to church regularly. He had found Jesus during his time at Auburn Adventist Academy. As for me, I had rebelled against my parents since their divorce, and been on my own for a few years prior to joining A.J. "Hey Pat," he said while we were sitting in the kitchen, "would you like to go to church with me?"

"Look," I said, "I have told you a million times, if you want to go to church, that's wonderful, and if you believe in God—terrific. But this religion thing is not for me, so back off."

"All right," he said. "I tell you what—I'll make a deal with you. You come to church with me once, and I'll never bother you again about religion."

A melodic offer

The offer was melodic. A.J. was relentless in trying to convert me. Every week it was the same question from him with the same answer from me. Now here was an opportunity to never hear again my kid brother drone on about how he's going to miss me in heaven. "You've got a deal," I shouted. "I go once and you never bother me again, agreed?"

"Agreed."

"One condition," I added. "If I go, I go as I am," pointing my finger at him. "I'm not going to be any different from what I normally would be."

"Agreed," he said again.

Sabbath morning came and I was ready. I remembered one thing about church people; if you didn't look like them, they left you alone. I had earrings in each ear, and to complement the presentation I wore my torn Levi jeans, black biking boots, and a matching biker's jacket. I left gritty stubble on my face and a gritty countenance.

"Let's go," I said to my brother. A.J. wasn't overly surprised when he saw me. "OK," he replied, "let's go."

When we arrived at the church, there were a few people who shook my hand. I wasn't stupid—I knew these people had been prepped for my arrival. But overall, what I thought would happen did happen. The church just didn't know what to make of me, and they left me alone.

As the sermon began, Pastor Roscoe Howard asked the church to turn in their Bibles to a passage. The rustling of rice paper pages began to fill the room as members were finding the book and the chapter. I sat quietly with my arms crossed against my chest and my back slightly slouched in the pew. There was only 30 minutes left and I would be free from my brother's nagging!

While the others were turning their Bibles, I didn't have one, nor did I want one. Suddenly I felt a tug on my jacket. I turned and faced a little curly haired, light-skinned young boy no more than 10 years old. "Hi," he said to me. "My name is Cedarric."

"Hi," I snapped back. I then quickly turned toward the pastor again, trying to make clear that I was not interested in getting to know anyone. The tug came again. This time I scowled and said, "What"?

"What's your name?" he asked, un-abashed.

"Kid, if I tell you my name, will you leave me alone?" I said rapidly.

"Maybe."

I was prepared for adult attempts at conversion but I found myself helpless against this curious, little, nosy kid!

"My name is Pat," I said. I looked closely at him and whispered, "Now listen carefully to the sermon. You might learn something."

Cedarric then turned away from me and faced the front. He pulled out one of those ball-point plastic pens. From my side view I saw little fingers tightly pressed around the pen and a tongue hanging out of his mouth in determined concentration. He was writing something in his Bible, and I knew his attention was away from me. But the writing soon stopped, the tongue was back in his mouth, and he turned toward me again and nudged my shoulder with his Bible.

"It's for you," he said as both our hands held the book at the same time. "I wrote your name in it," a big toothy grin flashed.

I looked at the Bible, then held it back out to him, "I don't want this, kid. You keep it."

Cedarric began shifting away in the pew. "No, really, it's for you," he said.

I didn't want to make a scene in front of everybody over why I didn't want this Bible, so the exchange was made and we both sat quietly.

The service ended and I made a sprint for the door. I was in the car waiting for my brother.

"Whadya think?" he asked.

"I hated it," I said. "I told you, if you believe, that's great, but it's not for me, and I want no part of it. I've kept my

end of this deal. Now I never want to hear any conversion stuff from you anymore." The rest of the ride home was silent.

When we got home, I walked in carrying that Bible. I didn't know what to do with it. I wanted to throw it, but it had my name written in it in little kid chicken scratch. So I placed it on top of the fridge. When I returned in the evening and sat in the kitchen to eat something, the Bible was still there. I felt bothered by it, so I threw it in the living room. When I went into the living room to watch TV, there it sat again.

The questions kept coming

Over the next four days, that Bible moved from place to place to place in our apartment, depending on which room I was in. On Thursday night, I was sitting on my bed. It was one of those nights when the air stood still and you could see the street lights filter through the rain drops on the window. All was quiet, and I just lay there. I looked over, and that Bible was sitting on my dresser. It cast a shadow on the wall in the dim light of the bedroom. I gazed at it and the thoughts started unfolding in my mind:

Does He really exist?

Where did I come from, and where am I going?

Is all there is to life—the garbage I have lived through these past 22 years?

If Jesus Christ doesn't exist, if He is no more than just a myth, why do I hate Him as much as I do?

What possesses a kid to give me his Bible when I looked the way I did?

The questions kept coming as I sat there. I had been running all my life. From what? I didn't believe, so why run? I had to get some answers, and now was the time. I walked across the kitchen to my brother's bedroom.

"Look," I said to him sternly. "Don't flip out on me, don't get all excited, or even think this really means anything, but I have a few questions I need an-

swered. I guess I would like to ask your pastor about them."

A.J. looked back at me, grinned and said, "Sure." A year and a half later, I was baptized.

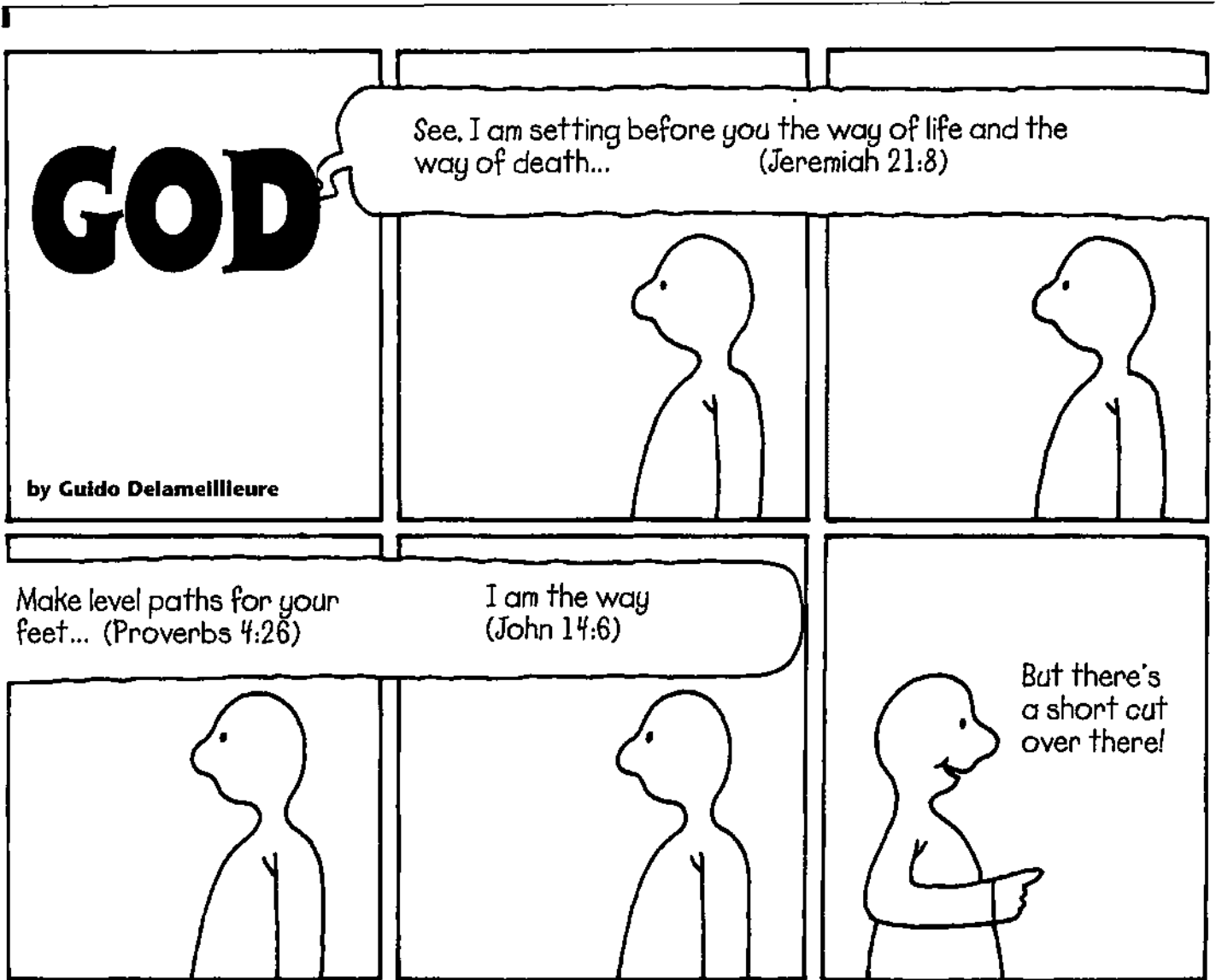
Being the glimpse of God

Even now as I sit to write this story and go over it again, I am awed at the length Jesus would go to save me. I am amazed at how much He really loved me when I hated Him. It has changed my life forever.

A little while after I was baptized at the Emerald City Adventist church, I made a small presentation. I told my story to the entire church as the "Amens," and "Praise Gods," echoed through the sanctuary. I called Cedarric up front and talked about the power one person can have when they live by faith and not by sight. I handed him a present. It was a brand-new, black leather-bound Bible with his name in gold letters imprinted on the front. "Thanks, Cedarric," I told him. "Thanks for being the glimpse of God that changed the way I saw Him forever."

*Just one soul forever can be
Praising God for eternity
If you will move by spirit and not by sight
And leave fear with the devil who's the
founder of fright.
My life now witnesses till the end
Of a loving God and a forgiving friend.
How did it happen? Why now do I live by
His laws?
It's because Jesus forgot I was a lost cause.*

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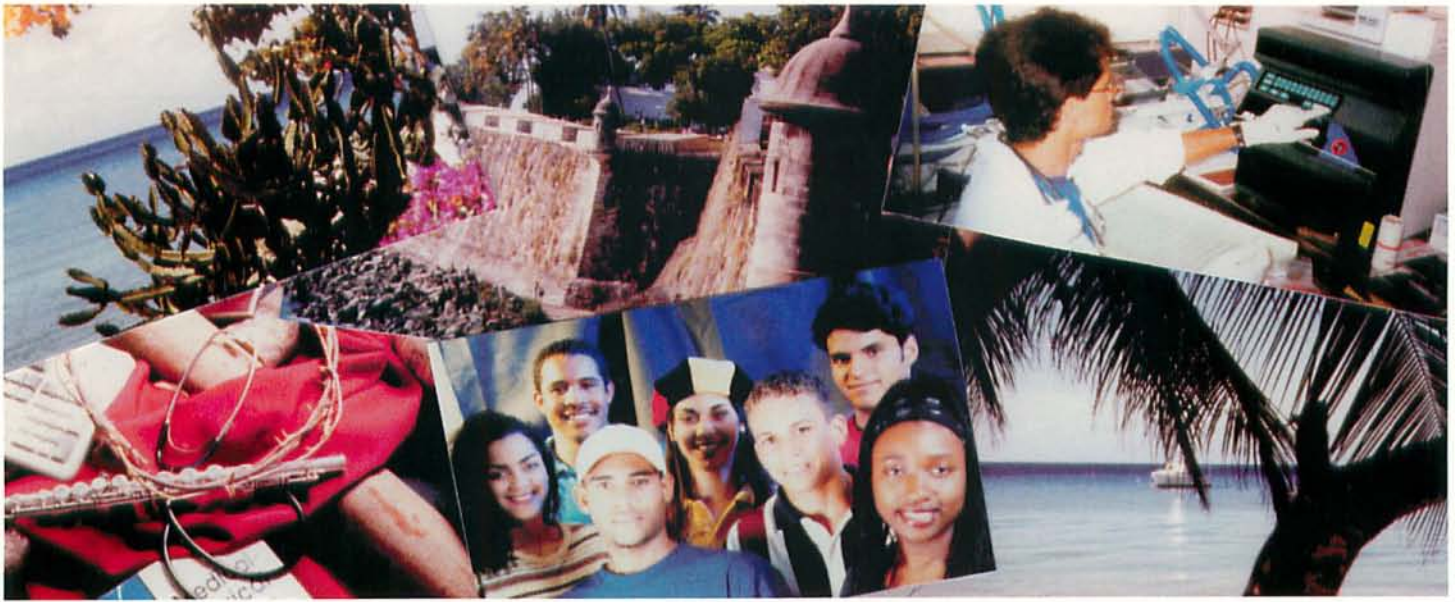


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**God made mankind upright,
but men have gone in search
of many schemes.**

—*Ecclesiastes 7:29 NIV*

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