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**Adventists
in the 21st century**

**Fossils: The story
they tell us**

**Why do some
churches grow
and others don't?**

**Tolstoy and the Bible:
A complex relationship**

**Can we believe in
miracles?**



Volume 13
Number

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College and University

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Living on a higher plane

Pastor Anthony Alexander had every reason to be bitter. For two years, a jail cell in Sri Lanka was his home. Alone, away from family and loved ones, and wrongly charged with supporting terrorists, his future looked bleak, his life seemed uncertain. In spite of all these, Alexander's faith in God did not weaken nor did his hope dampen. Years before he had chosen to live on a higher plane, and that choice came to his help now. He turned his jail cell into witnessing arena, and each day he studied the Bible with a group of jail mates. Before he was declared innocent and released, many of the men with whom he studied chose to climb up to the higher plane and were baptized.

Adversity is common in life. Financial, social, intellectual, and spiritual difficulties confront us from every corner—in the family, on campus, at work, even in the church. Competing values and confusing choices vie for attention.

At times like that, Paul's counsel bids us come to the higher plane: "Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things" (Colossians 3:1, 2, NIV). What does the apostle mean?

First, Paul challenges all of us to set our affections and interests "on things above." Live on a higher plane, he tells us. Focus on what really matters and lasts. Don't seek an education or practice a profession just to achieve renown or accumulate riches. Climb higher and discover the joy of friendship with Jesus.

Second, Paul challenges us to set our minds on heavenly things. Raise your sight from the mundane and temporary, he encourages us. Any educational endeavor that concentrates just on the intellectual is incomplete. Character and ethics are essential. Engage your mind in the deep truths of the Scriptures. Learn to see reality from God's perspective. Be ready to serve others.

Paul, a well-educated man, made his radical choice: "What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:8, NIV).

Rubbish is a strong word. Isn't that a challenge for us? Paul was willing to set aside everything—fame, power, success, pleasures, riches—in order to become a faithful follower and a friend of Jesus. Many today seek an education and a degree just to live a comfortable professional life. What a contrast with the life of the Saviour!

Jesus did not have a beautiful wardrobe, but He offered us robes of righteousness.

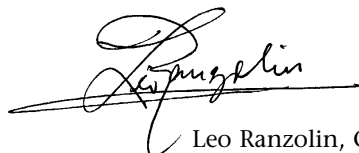
Jesus did not possess jewelry, but He Himself was the Pearl of great price.

Jesus did not have any money, but He gave us access to all the treasures of heaven.

Jesus did not own a house, but He promised His followers eternal mansions.

Jesus never received a diploma, but He was the Truth.

While on earth, Jesus showed us how to live on a higher plane. That's the only living that provides meaning and purpose to life. Look up. Climb higher. No matter what you do here on earth, keep your focus on the eternal.



Leo Ranzolin, Chairman
AMiCUS Committee

More Adventist lawyers needed

I read with profound interest Karnik Doukmetzian's article "Do we need Adventist lawyers?" (*Dialogue* 11:3). I loved it! In my country, Uganda, there are many Adventist students majoring in various fields, but we rarely hear of any pursuing law. In fact I can think of only one active Adventist who is in the legal profession. He serves as the church's counsel and advocate, while employed by a British firm.

The growing complexity of legal issues faced by Christians in general and Adventists in particular face demands that more bright, honest, and committed members of our church study and eventually practice law.

Jerry Wesonga Awori, Jr.
awjerry@hotmail.com

Remnants of Noah's ark?

After reading David Merling's article, "The Search for Noah's Ark" (*Dialogue* 11:3), I agree that our reaction to reported sightings of remnants of this ship should be cautious, and that we should take into account facts that can be verified through multiple direct and careful observations. However, I question the author's "common sense" conclusion that the wood of the ark must "long ago have decayed" (p. 5). My reasons are: (1) The wood used for the construction of the ark was of high quality and durability. Ellen White states that it was "cypress, or gopher wood, which would be untouched by decay for hundreds of years" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 95). (2) The wood was thoroughly covered by pitch, inside and out (Genesis 6:14). (3) The ark rested on the Ararat mountain range which, according to Merling, "is snow-capped year round with permanent glaciers" (p. 6). This would have contributed to its preservation. (4) There is no record that Noah and his family dismantled the ark. Noah took 120 years to make the ship, and it would not have been easy to break apart. I en-

Letters

courage Dr. Merling and other archaeologists to conduct field explorations that could provide evidence to substantiate the reliability of the biblical narrative on Noah and the ark, and report on its findings.

Roberto Cesar de Azevedo
Brasilia, BRAZIL

The author responds:

Azevedo has overlooked a few points. First, he quotes Ellen White statement that the ark "would be untouched by decay for hundreds of years" (emphasis mine). Note that she does not say "thousands of years." My conclusion is that after thousands of years the ark has decayed. Second, not all the mountains of Ararat are "snow-capped year round." In all of ancient Urartu (eastern Turkey, biblical Ararat) there is only one mountain that has a peak covered by snow all year. Even accepting the possibility that "Mount Ararat" is the biblical site, we know that glaciers are dynamic bodies of compacted ice, which would have more likely crushed the ark than preserved it.

A question: If God found the future of the ark to be of so little consequence that He included it in neither the Bible nor the writings of Ellen White, why are so many Christians and Adventists making the finding of its remnants of such import? Finally, "Mount Ararat" has been and continues to be one of the most studied mountains on earth. Every month I receive scores of reports updating me on the status of the search for Noah's ark. When I learn anything reliable, I will certainly report it widely. In the meantime, I believe we should concentrate our efforts in presenting to the world Christ and Him crucified.

David Merling
Horn Museum
Andrews University, U.S.A.

Improve the distribution

I am studying statistics at Universidad Pedro Ruiz Gallo. I am also a youth leader in my church. Recently an Adventist pastor introduced me to *Dialogue*. I find the articles stimulating,

and, after reading the journal, I share it with my friends at the university. Even non-Adventist students like the content! Could you send me the list of articles published in earlier issues? Also, can you do something about regular distribution of *Dialogue*?

A challenge we face as Adventist students is the temptation to attend classes or take examinations on Sabbath, because we fear falling behind in our studies or even failing. Pray for us that we remain faithful to our convictions and also succeed in our careers.

Jenny Espinoza
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The editors respond:

By airmail you will receive the index to the first 10 volumes of Dialogue (1989-1998). If you find a particular article useful for a youth meeting, let us know, and we will send it to you. In order to keep the cost of the journal low, we mail packets of Dialogue to the union education or youth ministries director on the basis of their orders. They, in turn, organize the distribution of the journal within the union territory. Contact one of them and request that your group of university students be listed among those who receive Dialogue free. We pray that God will give you and your friends the courage to honor the Sabbath. Remember: God always honors those who honor Him.

Providing Adventist answers

I want to thank the editors of *Dialogue* for the very valuable help the journal has provided me, as a chaplain and pastor, in addressing topics not usually covered by other Adventist publications. The balanced editorial approach selected—which is at the same time scholarly and accessible—allows me to offer an Adventist perspective on questions relating to science, philosophy, religion, culture, and lifestyle frequently raised by university students, patients, and professionals. *Dialogue* makes me

proud to belong to a church that not only believes what the Bible teaches but also seeks Bible-based answers to the new and complex issues of our time.

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Catalogue still available

Several years ago, in the article titled "Making the most of your college and university experience" (*Dialogue* 6:3), readers of the journal were offered free copies of a catalogue published by the Institute for Christian Teaching. The catalogue included a listing of essays written by Adventists on how to approach several academic and professional fields from a Christian-biblical perspective. Is the catalogue still available?

Sheilian Bueno de Oliveira
Lavras, Minas Gerais, BRAZIL

The editors respond:

The Institute for Christian Teaching Catalogue lists more than 400 essays and articles in English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish. It can still be obtained free by requesting it from the editors of Dialogue. See page 2.

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.

Adventists in the 21st century

by Russell Staples

Our effectiveness as witnesses depends on the decisions we now make, the patterns of discipleship we now build into our lives, and the vision of the world we develop.

The 57th session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is now history. Toronto brought us a sense of fulfillment. We were encouraged by the reports of membership growth in many places, by the enthusiasm of young people joyfully reaffirming their faith, and by concrete plans to witness to the hitherto unreached. How our founding ancestors would have rejoiced and marveled at the vast gathering of more than 60,000 enthusiastic believers from almost every corner of the globe and at the news of a world membership of more than 11 million!

Missiologists marvel at the growth of the Adventist Church, at the breadth of its global outreach, and even more at the stability and faithfulness of the communities it forms. This is enormously encouraging. However, even as we rejoice at what has been accomplished, we are constrained to see the world as God sees it—the needy, the unreached, and the unfulfilled—and be challenged in our own discipleship in the light of eternity.

Upon you, the young people, rests to a great extent the responsibility for the future witness of the church, whatever profession you are preparing for or are now engaged in. Your time to be involved and to lead has come, whether in positions of lay leadership or in direct connection with the gospel ministry. Your effectiveness as a witness will depend on the decisions you now make, the patterns of discipleship you now build into your life, and the vision of the world that you develop.

Dramatic global changes

As far as Adventist mission is concerned, we need to note 20th century's four striking demographic phenomena:

Staggering global population growth. World population has increased more in just 25 years during the past century than in all the centuries prior to 1900. (See table.)

Urbanization of the world. This has been accompanied by dramatic changes in almost every dimension of the human social situation.

The global spread of Christianity. Not until the early 1940s did Christianity become truly global. The close of the past century saw more than three and one-half times as many Christians as at its beginning.

Astounding growth in Adventism. The church has grown from about 76,000 to 11.5 million during the 20th century. It is now 150 times larger than it was when our pioneers set out on the missionary road.

Christians among the peoples of the world¹

As we consider these statistics, we must avoid two temptations. First, triumphalism. The distance to go and the work yet to be done, rather than what has been achieved, should control our thinking and keep us humble. Second, figures are impersonal and the contemplation of statistics tend to depersonalize the equation. We need to remember that each person among the billions is one whose life is of inestimable value before God and whose feelings are subject to the same forces as our own.

Challenges of numbers and cities

The first great challenge we face is that of numbers. While the number of world Christians has grown dramatically from one-half to two billion during the past century, the number of people unreached by Christianity has grown from one to four billion. This is therefore no time for small thinking. But neither is the solution to be sought solely in mass media programs. Members of various cultural and religious groups of the world must be approached in ways that appeal to and engage them personally. Dedicated and competent scholars are needed who can enter deeply enough into the experience of persons in such groups to feel the pull and force of their religion and provide satisfying Christian answers. This is an enormous challenge, which will require much serious study and personal contact. The way is now more open than before because there are Adventists in these societies whose lives are a testimony to the power of the gospel and whose experience is a source from which much can be learned.

The second is the great multifaceted urban challenge. It is here that the greatest opportunities are to be found and perhaps also the greatest failures of the church. Half of the people of the world now live in large cities—the wealthy and the desperately poor, the intelligentsia and the illiterate, the thought leaders of society and the drifters, the cohorts of vibrant Christians and the strongholds of those most opposed to Christianity. Challenges of all kinds abound.

Largely because of who you—the readers—are, we will focus upon a few of the more intellectually oriented aspects of this challenge.

The intellectual challenge

In general, not enough attention has been given to provide Christian answers to the quest of the contemporary generation for meaning in life. There are sub-

tle signs of spiritual hunger—of an intellectual quest for transcendent truth that gives meaning and shape to human existence. Over the last generation, patterns of thought have had a broadly based shift—from the rationalistic positivism of modernism to a general sense of the limitations of human thought and knowledge—that provides both new openings and challenges. The post-modern mindset is characterized by an awareness of the vastness and complexity of reality, of the inadequacy of our physical and theoretical apparatus to plumb the depths of it all, and of the tentativity of all human knowledge. There is no longer brash confidence regarding laws of reality and exact objective knowledge. This new mindset opens up new avenues for the discussion of concepts of a transcendent deity and of a relationship between God and human beings.

Adventist theology provides a positive foundation for such a discussion because of:

- Its belief in a loving God, which emphasizes both divine transcendence and immanence. God controls all that is and yet is active in human history and close to each of us. The latter is given special meaning in that “God gave His only begotten Son to become one of the human family *forever* to retain his human nature.”²
- Its Christian realism regarding sin and evil in this world, but which

stops short of asserting that the image of God in human beings was destroyed at the Fall. In addition, it upholds an optimistic view of the human potential for achievement and development in this life through God’s grace.

- Its combining of the sovereignty of God in salvation with an emphasis upon human responsibility. It thus rejects the doctrine of divine determinism in salvation in favor of an affirmation of the freedom of the human will.
- Its balance between a bright eschatological hope and the value of life on earth now—similar to the balance between God’s work of creation (celebrated in the Sabbath) and His work of salvation.

Here is a challenge to young Adventist academics and professionals: Translate these great theological themes of Adventism in a way that establishes dialogue and shares the gospel with the intelligentsia of this age.

The challenge of the heart

But there is more to the challenge of meeting urban thinkers than the intellectual elucidation of the message. Religion is as much a matter of the heart—relating to emotions and experience—as of the mind. This finds its general expression in the corporate worship of God. I recall listening to a college professor telling why he left an evangelical church and became an Episcopalian. “I

Year	1900	1939	1970	1990	2000	2010	2025
Population (millions)	1619.9		3696.1	5266.4	6055		7824
Christians (millions)	558.1		1236.3	1747.5	1999.6		2616.7
Percentage of Christians	34.4		33.4	33.2	33		33.4
Adventists	75,767	.5m	2.5m	6.69m	11.5m	19m	

Growth of Cities

Mega-cities (over 1 million)	20	161	330	410`	650
Urban poor (millions)	100	650	1,273	2,000	3,050
Urban Slum Dweller (millions)	20	260	520	1,300	2,100

was tired," he said, "of being endlessly harangued and admonished and told what to do. I wanted to worship the Lord with all my senses, in quietness and beauty, and in congregational participation in prayer, confession and creed, but my group just did not know how to worship."

Some who have joined the Adventist Church have expressed dissatisfaction with the worship experience among us. Matters mentioned include: failure to adequately cultivate a sense of entering the divine presence; insufficient congregational participation in prayers, confessions of faith, and Scripture reading; not coming to the Lord's Supper with depth and seriousness, etc. If we succeed in bringing members of the urban elite into the church, will they find the warmth of fellowship and the depth of experience in worship that they are seeking?

The urban multicultural challenge

It was once said that the sun never set on the British empire, but now the world is in London—and in every other large city. The tragic irony of the situation is this: Now that we all live together, there is less mutuality and understanding than previously. In this new situation, the mission field that was once halfway around the world may be our neighbor next door. Another irony: The Christian who would cross the ocean on a missionary commission is hardly concerned enough to cross the street to visit the Jain, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, or the secularist neighbor. And this in spite of the well known fact that in general new immigrants are more likely to respond positively to overtures of friendship and help and are less impeded by the constraints of kith and kin in making a positive response to the gospel than within their traditional society.

In the past many churches have seemed to cherish, even to defend, a mono-cultural style of congregational

worship. With the new multi-ethnicism of the cities, this attitude is a challenge to overcome. But if we bring immigrant seekers or other ethnic groups into the church, will we welcome them into a truly warm fellowship without requiring them to become just like us? The gospel confers an identity upon us that transcends all cultural and parochial identities, but we know from experience that even though we genuinely accept this in our hearts, each of us is so shaped by the culture of our society that practical adjustment is not easy. Anthropologists and sociologists suggest that a congregation would benefit enormously by having a Christian social scientist explain the functions of culture to groups within the church, defuse conflict-generating circumstances, and suggest ways of maximizing a truly Christian sense of harmony. Here is a significant challenge to budding young social scientists among us.

More personal concerns

We have noted briefly some of the external challenges facing the church. But we will fail in our duty if we do not consider two major intellectual and cultural influences that can subtly infiltrate the thinking and worldview of the Christian disciple in contemporary society. These are secular humanism and institutionalized individualism.

Secularism refers to the intellectual tendency to regard the physical cosmos as all that there is, and to deny that God is active in human history. The presuppositions of contemporary academic life are largely based on secular humanism. The Christian disciple must recognize this pattern of thought for what it is and not be influenced by it. The alert Christian student should recognize the shallowness and limitations of this worldview and consciously affirm the immense depth and value of Christian theism. It may be helpful to read books by evangelicals who consciously counter these trends.³

Second, our tendency toward self-centeredness makes all of us vulnerable to the institutionalized individualism of our times. Many young people want to hang free and do their own thing—that is, until calamity strikes. And contemporary society, with its achievement orientation and film star complex, encourages them in that direction. But unencumbered individualism offers an empty self. It assumes that the upwardly mobile person may have to leave home and friends and church and whatever else impedes progress in order to achieve position and means in an impersonal world of intense competition. Scholarly literature is replete with evidence of the destructiveness of such individualism to family and society and finally for the self. Many are rediscovering that the life worth living is life in community.

One of the great personal challenges faced by each of us is to recover the profound community outlook in which the church as the biblical people of God was formed. The Christian faith is most intensely experienced within a relationship with others, and the most eloquent witness of the regenerating power of the gospel is that of a loving and caring community of Christian believers.

Our pursuit of academic degrees and professional success should lead to an experience that seizes the joy of witnessing to the truth of the gospel, fosters ever clearer concepts of the greatest truth of the universe, and affirms the warm fellowship of a rejoicing Christian community.

Russell Staples (Ph.D., Princeton Theological Seminary) has served the Adventist Church for more than 50 years as pastor and teacher in different parts of the world. For 30 years he has been connected with the Seminary and the Institute of World Mission at Andrews University. This article is adapted from his book, Community of

Continued on page 35.

Fossils: The story they tell us

by Carlos F. Steger

The study of fossils in South

America affirms the history of a

global catastrophe.

One of the most significant evidences evolutionists offer in support of their theory of origins is derived from paleontology.¹ Paleontologists study animal and plant fossils—remnants or traces of organisms that existed in the past, such as a skeleton, footprint, or leaf imprint. As a science, paleontology is linked both to geology—because it studies fossils embedded in the layers and rocks of the earth’s crust—and to biology, since it examines ancient life forms now fossilized.² Although fossil finds are often used to support the theory of evolution, we will show that fossils cry out in support of the biblical story of a universal flood. Our examples are mostly taken from South American fossil findings, an area of the world in which I have conducted considerable research.

The study of fossils is an ancient science. The Egyptians and the Greeks identified fossils of marine animals. Leonardo da Vinci defined fossils as the remains of organisms from the past, and Alessandro, his fellow countryman, explained their presence in the mountains as caused by the emergence of the marine bed.³ During the 16th century, Gesner published a catalog of the first European fossil collection. Discoveries of fossils and explanations regarding their origin followed one another from the 17th century on.⁴

Etymologically, *fossil* means something dug up or extracted from the earth. The term is also applied to all evidence of life from the remote past.⁵ An organism turns into a fossil only under certain circumstances:

1. The organism must experience

rapid burial in order to be isolated and thus escape destruction from mechanical, chemical, and biological factors in its environment. All fossils are thus an evidence of that burial.⁶

2. The organism must be preserved by mineral salts, generally calcium or silica, dissolved in the sediment that buries it.⁷

3. This mineralization is produced by the pressure caused by the sediment, making the salts penetrate the organism.

In certain cases, the organism may be completely preserved by freezing, by enclosure in resin (amber), or by being buried in an asphalt pit or a peat bog.⁸

Originally, paleontology focused its attention on fossilized organisms, either complete or parts of them. In recent times, however, the interest of paleontologists’ investigations has broadened to include various manifestations of ancient organisms, such as their interior and/or exterior molds, burrows, excrements (called coprolites), footprints, and tracks, as well as all other evidence indicating not only the presence, but also the direct action of an organism. An example of this are the now-petrified marks left on the mud by plant remains being dragged away by water.⁹ Some authors even include ripple marks and traces of raindrops in this category.

Caution needed

One persistent risk in the study of fossils needs to be pointed out. In cases where only parts of the organism are found, or the organism has been altered by the fossilization process, scientists



The author (left) uncovering the fossilized cranium of a whale.

find it necessary to reconstruct the represented organism in order to interpret the fossil, comparing it to present organisms and/or similar fossils. This task is subject to the presuppositions and the imagination of the one who performs the reconstruction, therefore cannot be totally objective or reliable.¹⁰

The same applies to the classification of fossils. Many authors recognize that their classification systems, besides being artificial, presuppose the acceptance of a personal worldview.¹¹ Because of this subjective element in interpretation and/or reconstruction and the incomplete information available, we can expect errors in researchers' conclusions. In addition, there have been cases in which the investigator has succumbed to his or her "paradigm," falsifying facts, specially in the field of paleoanthropology (the study of human fossils).¹²

Stratigraphy and fossils

During the 18th century, W. Smith proposed characterizing geological formations by the fossils found in them. This principle is applied in paleontology and geology.¹³ Although an uninterrupted succession of fossils and rocks cannot be found anywhere in the world, scientists created an ideal geologic column

correlating fossils and sediments from different places, mostly from Europe.¹⁴

To characterize each "period" in the geologic column, "guide fossils"—peculiar fossils found in that layer—were used. A striking characteristic of the geologic column is the sudden emergence and disappearance

of some of those "guide fossils," without evidence of their direct ancestors or descendants.¹⁵

The stratigraphic column may be interpreted on the basis of two theories or models: uniformitarianism (or actualism) and catastrophism (or diluvialism), to which we now turn our attention.

Uniformitarianism as a model

Several Greek philosophers held to the theory that current natural phenomena helped explain events from the past. In 1788, J. Hutton adopted this idea in developing his theory of the history of the earth by affirming that he did not observe "any vestige of a beginning, nor any prevision of an end."¹⁶ This theory, applied to geology and paleontology, is known as uniformitarianism or actualism. It proposes that all phenomena may be explained as the result of forces that have operated uniformly from the origin of life to the present time. Let us evaluate this model in view of the paleontological evidence.

Scientists who adhere to uniformitarianism ignore the origin of the representatives from most of the current "phyla" in the Cambrian period—the first period in the Paleozoic era—and call their sudden appearance "the explosion of life."¹⁷ That is why current tax-

onomy, which facilitates the classification of fossils based on evidences of small change in nature, is applied by paleontologists. Some authors propose a phyletic series (the ancestral history) of some animals, such as the horse. But it is difficult to base them on the fossil record. There are always "missing links," according to S. J. Gould.¹⁸

Gerald Kerkut points out that the *Seymouria*, a supposed "link between amphibians and reptiles, [was] unfortunately found. . . 20 million years" after their appearance.¹⁹ According to some paleontologists, the gaps are notorious.²⁰ Thus the archaeopteryx, formerly considered a "link," is now recognized as a bird.²¹

Since paleontology does not provide evidence of the gradual evolution of organisms proposed by Darwin, some paleontologists have adopted S. J. Gould's ingenious theory of "saltatory evolution" or "punctuated equilibria," which proposes that evolution has occurred in unexplained but progressive "jumps." Others are still trying to demonstrate the progressive effect of accumulated small variations.²²

The standard interpretation of the fossil record confronts four unique challenges:

1. The constancy of some life forms throughout the geological eras, called homeostasis. There are plants and animals that have not changed since the Cambrian or later periods, such as the opossum, which has remained without variation since the Cretaceous until today. Among plants are the cycads (that resemble palms), which have remained the same since the Carboniferous.²³
2. The reduction in size or the loss of complexity in several organisms, which reveals devolution or evolutionary regression rather than increase in size or complexity. In some cases, when an atrophied part remains, it is designated a

“vestigial organ or member.” Such is the case of the horse, as shown by the remains of its ancestors.²⁴

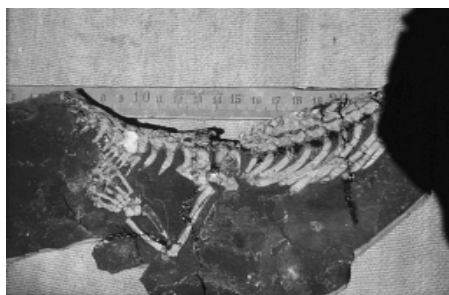
We can also mention the bird *Argentavis magnificens*, from La Pampa, Argentina, and the penguin in the Antarctic as examples of animal size reduction in relation to their prehistoric ancestors. The *Megatherium* (giant sloth), the *Glyptodont* (giant armadillo), and the *Carcarodon megalodon* (giant shark), the terror of the Tertiary seas, are other examples of reduction in size.²⁵

Fossil records of many invertebrates reveal an “evolutionary decrease in diversity,” which “may only be justified by an evolutionary decline.” That is the case of cephalopods, crinoids, and brachiopods.²⁶

3. Plants or animals thought to be extinct millions of years ago have been discovered to still be alive today. Some authors designate them as “living fossils,” for example, the *Coelacanth* fish, and the *Ginkgo biloba* tree.²⁷
4. Finally, there are fossils that oppose the commonly accepted theory. Instead of vertebrates’ ancestors having cartilaginous skeletons, they have just the opposite in the case of *ostracoderms*.²⁸

Catastrophism as a model

The concept of a universal catastrophe, such as the flood described in the Bible, is present in many traditions from every continent.²⁹ Are these traditions a mere coincidence? Or do they point to a real cataclysmic event vividly remembered through many generations? Some authors, such as Derek Ager, affirm that the earth’s sediments were deposited in and by water, by a catastrophe. These authors further suggest catastrophic events as the cause of sudden appearances and disappearances of organisms in the fossil record, although most of



Partial skeleton of a Mesosaurus from Sao Paulo, Brazil.

them do not accept the idea of a global catastrophe.³⁰

In the late 1600s, T. Burnet published a book about the world’s origin and its destruction by the Flood, earning Isaac Newton’s praise. Great naturalists from the 19th century such as Cuvier and D’Orgigny also defended the Flood theory. Trying to adjust the biblical record to the scientific knowledge of their day, they presented interpretations that discredited the Bible in the scientific world.³¹

Much of the evidence of the fossil record, which is only possible due to a rapid burial, can be explained through H. W. Clark’s “ecological zonation theory.” This theory presumes the burial of organisms in their respective habitats as the waters swept the earth, thus producing the succession of fossils.³²

Conventional geology affirms that as a result of the bascular movement of the continents, which raised and lowered them, marine ingressions covered most of South America.³³ We suggest that these “ingressions” could have been part of the catastrophic event known as the biblical flood. This would explain the presence of ammonites (marine invertebrates) at altitudes of thousands of feet in the middle of the Andes Mountains going up through Cajón del Maipo, near Santiago, Chile, or on the other side of the Andes in Neuquén, Argentina.

Many fossils provide evidence that they did not live in the place where they were discovered.³⁴ The orientation of

tree trunks and the absence of root systems in petrified forests of the Patagonia, in Southern Argentina, reveal transportation prior to burial. The most probable agent of such transportation is water, as demonstrated by Harold Coffin’s study of the Mount St. Helens catastrophe in the United States.³⁵

The same can be applied to the ecology of animal and plant life within the same geological period. Fossils of animals and those of plants that should have served as their food frequently do not appear together, as expected. This can be seen not only in North America, but also in South America, as in the case of dinosaurs in Patagonia.

The best explanation for big charcoal and oil deposits are the catastrophic events that produced the accumulation and later burial of immense quantities of plants and animals.³⁶

At La Portada, nine miles north of Antofagasta, Chile, there is an enormous accumulation of marine shell fossils. It is a “shell bank” with an average thickness of 165 feet, and an extension of many miles. Its most probable cause is the action of water followed by a rapid burial. But does this occur today? Some investigators affirm that “shells cannot permanently accumulate on the sea floor,” and they add, “the question frequently raised about why so little is preserved,...had to be why anything is preserved at all.”³⁷

The anguished position at the moment of their violent death, revealed by many fossilized animals such as the fish of the Santana Formation of Brazil, offers undeniable evidence of catastrophism. Another evidence is the exquisite preservation of small fish and insects from the same formation in the state of Ceará, Brazil, with all the details of their delicate structure.³⁸

Tridimensional animal fossils, which are very rare, give evidence of a live burial or a burial immediately after death. A study of some fish from the Santana Formation has revealed para-

sites (copepods) in their gills. Investigation showed that the petrification of some specimens had to have started while the animal was alive.³⁹ The same phenomenon is seen in trilobite fossils from Jujuy, Argentina, and between La Paz and Oruro, in the Bolivian Altiplano. At the Quebrada de Humahuaca, in Jujuy, and at the Tunari Mountain, in Vinto, Cochabamba, Bolivia, the preservation of "cruzianas" (trilobite tracks) is even more remarkable.

Another evidence of rapid burial of living organisms is the closed and petrified oysters found along the small streams near Libertador San Martín, in Entre Ríos, Argentina, and in many places in the Argentinian Patagonia.⁴⁰

Mesosaurus' delicate, articulated skeletons can be found in the limestones from the state of Sao Paulo, Brazil. According to uniformitarian geology, each layer of sediments required one year to deposit, but the diameter of many of these small dinosaur bones exceeds the width of one layer. If the uniformitarian model is accepted, one needs to accept also that the fragile bones of the Mesosaurus were exposed to destructive agents for one year without being disarticulated or degraded before the next sediment was deposited—an unreal scenario.

Kurtén points out: "Many whole skeletons of these dinosaurs [Hadrosaurus] have been found in a swimming position and with their head pulled back, as if agonizing."⁴¹ This, again, provides support for the catastrophic model.



Fossilized fish from NE Brazil.

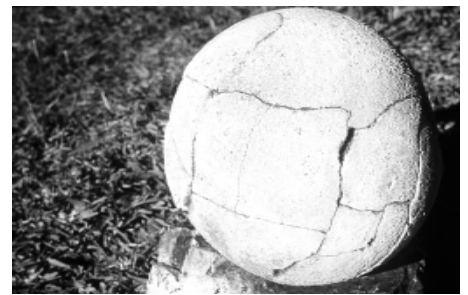
Conclusion

What story do fossils, including those found in South America, tell us? They speak of catastrophic burial by water in many areas of the world, thus contradicting the uniformitarian model. A growing number of modern geologists concur with this view, although they may not accept the theory of a universal flood. Those of us who rely in the biblical story of a universal flood find in the fossil record abundant evidence that the surface of the earth once experienced the convulsions of a catastrophic destruction.

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Why do some churches grow and others don't?

by Daniel Julio Rode

Although only God can generate true membership growth, here are 10 factors researchers have found to work across cultures.

Church growth scholars admit that it is difficult to explain precisely why some congregations grow and others don't. Church growth is complex, and there is no way to reduce that complexity to a simple formula.¹ However, church growth specialists such as Peter Wagner, Christian Schwarz, and Ken Hemphill have studied this phenomenon in different countries and cultures, and have developed various models relating to healthy, growing churches. An analysis of these studies and field observations indicates that these congregations have taken 10 specific initiatives.

1. Have a trained and visionary leadership

Growing churches have visionary leaders. These leaders are optimists who "precipitate," concentrate, and lead all church activities toward God's vision for that congregation and toward what produces growth. They generate enthusiasm. They are agents of change who know what the church and the community need and how they can meet those needs, using the gifts the church members have. They are trainers.

Schwarz's studies show that pastors of growing congregations recognize the potential of their laity. Such pastors do not need to be superstars. They just have to be people who train other believers for service.²

Kirk Hadaway, a researcher and critic on church growth, says: "No unusual abilities or gifts are required to pastor a growing church. One does not have to be a dynamic orator or a master of administration. On the other hand, one

must be committed to reaching the lost and to developing members. A pastor must also have vision. Growing churches are different in character, and that character can be described as 'life.' Often all a pastor must do to bring a congregation to life is to supply a spark and nurture the flame."³

2. Develop ministries according to gifts, evangelism according to needs

The Holy Spirit bestows upon members various gifts. The leader's role is "simply, to help church members to find out and recognize the gifts God has given them, and to find a service according to those gifts. When believers live in consonance with their spiritual gifts, they do not work by their own efforts, but the Spirit of God works in them. In this way, completely normal Christians can have an extraordinary performance."⁴

One study revealed that 68 percent of members in growing churches said: "The tasks I perform in the church agree with my gifts." In congregations that do not grow, only 9 percent agreed with that statement. The same study also showed that in growing churches, voluntary co-workers received more training than in churches that do not grow.⁵

Charles Chaney, a church-growth expert, says that wherever spontaneous congregational growth has occurred, biblically and historically, the reason has been that the laity was "mobilized and motivated to a spiritual ministry."⁶ Gottfried Oosterwal points out that one of the basic factors behind the worldwide growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the mobilization of lay

members and meeting the needs of the people they minister.⁷

Robert Schuller has employed this principle for more than 35 years in the Crystal Cathedral of Orange County, California. This church has implemented an evangelism program focused on meeting the needs of people through more than 150 ministries. Schuller says, "The secret of church growth is to meet the need and supply for it."⁸

McGavran, forerunner of the church growth movement, states that growing congregations have about 60 percent active members: 20 percent in direct evangelism and 40 percent in internal work, but focused toward growth.⁹

3. Spread the contagion of spirituality

Christ's method for evangelism is spreading the "testimony" (Matthew 24:14).^{*} The "boldness" to preach the gospel was one of the marks of growth of the primitive church (Acts 4:13, 31; 13:46; 14:3; 19:8; 1 Thessalonians 2:2).

Many groups with erroneous doctrines register high growth basically because of their enthusiasm to spread their message. "Enthusiasm by which faith is lived...nearly always parallels the enthusiasm for one's own church," and this produces growth. Members of 76 percent of growing congregations, according to Schwarz, said: "I am enthusiastic with my church," but only 33 percent said so in decreasing churches.¹⁰

4. Follow biblically based priorities

Growing churches have their priorities arranged in biblical order: relationship with God, relationship with the home church, and commitment to church work. In church work, evangelism is the priority, and then comes social involvement.¹¹

The basic reason why conservative churches grow is their priority of evangelism over social work. Besides, these churches are more strict and serious with regard to their membership.¹² Fur-

ther, according to Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, who analyzed church growth in the United States from 1776 to 1990, churches stopped growing when they "rejected the traditional doctrines and stopped doing serious demands on their followers."¹³

5. Adopt functional structures

Structure affects church growth. Specialists note two types of structure: functional and traditional. Schwarz observes: "Our research succeeded to demonstrate and certify that the sickly phenomenon of traditionalism...is in a markedly inverse relationship with both the growth and the quality of the churches."¹⁴ Fifty percent of the members of decreasing churches said, "I consider our church as traditionalist," but only 8 percent said the same in growing churches.¹⁵ Traditions are good only when they are based on the principles revealed by God's Word. What hurts the church is not Bible-based traditions but traditionalism that prevent the church from making the necessary changes to continue growing.

Consider the apostolic church. The need to better serve the widows made a change of structure necessary. The result was that "the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). After studying the biggest congregations of the world, John N. Vaughan stated that "almost every large church has become large because it took courageous steps to reorganize along the path to growth."¹⁶

6. Plan inspiring worship services

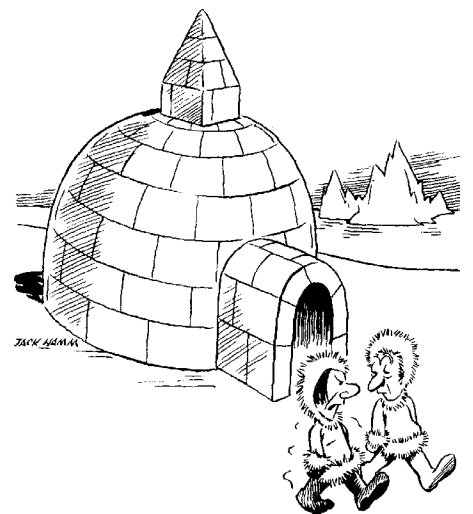
Schwarz's studies have shown that growing churches have "inspirational worship." "The question if worship has meant an 'inspired experience' is in direct proportion to its quality and quantitative growing." In growing congregations, 80 percent of their members said that the worship in their churches has

been an inspiring experience; but only 49 percent said the same in decreasing churches.¹⁷

7. Develop a program of cells

If one point stands out as the most important in church growth, it is the principle of multiplication of cells. Schwarz's study has shown that the more decisive the practice of cell groups, the more rapid the church growth. In growing congregations, 78 percent of members stated that their churches "encouraged conscientiously the multiplication of cell groups through division," while in decreasing churches only 6 percent stated the same.¹⁸

The greatest miracle of Pentecost was not the baptism of 3,000 people, but that the new believers "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42). One reason for their perseverance was the establishment of "home churches." This approach was decisive for survival in time of persecution. "During the time of persecution, the concept of small groups in the home blossoms and the church grows spiritually and in number."¹⁹ Ellen G. White states: "The formation of small compa-



"No one spoke to me... that's the coldest church I was ever in."

nies as a basis of Christian effort has been presented to me by One who cannot err. If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members, but for unbelievers. If in one place there are only two or three who know the truth, let them form themselves into a band of workers."²⁰

8. Be friendly

Friendship is an important factor affecting church growth.²¹ Its absence causes apostasy and its presence encourages the return of those who have been away. Recent studies in growing Hispanic Adventist congregations of Southern California revealed that the motivation for the opening of a new church or ministries is friendship and the spiritual level of the founder members. The friendship was like magnetism to bring and to retain the new members.²² Win Arn suggests that new members should find at least seven new friends in the church during the first six months.²³ Eighty percent of apostasies happen during the first year. New members test their new friends, the love they receive, and the groups they have left outside the church. These factors are important in their decision to remain or to leave.

"Growing churches have a higher 'love quotient' than those stanching or decreasing churches."²⁴ This "love quotient" generates joy and good humor. Laughter among believers have a meaningful relationship with church quality and growth. In growing congregations, 68 percent of the members testified, "in our church we laugh a lot." In decreasing churches only 33 percent said the same.²⁵

9. Make disciples

The move from membership to discipleship is an important factor in growing congregations. The more effective the disciple-making process, the stronger the church growth is. It doesn't matter which method is used in making disciples, so long as it is motivated out of

love and service to create new ministries and churches. "The single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches."²⁶

10. Value differing human aspects

"People like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers."²⁷ "Churches around the world and throughout history have grown basically among one kind of people at the same time, and this indicates that they will continue to grow in this way until the Lord returns."²⁸ Growing churches are made up of a fairly homogeneous group, or have valued all the groups inside the church. The early church succeeded in avoiding this difficulty with its mission to all ethnic groups (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2, 10, 15). Valuing all human groups was crucial in the growth of primitive Christianity. "It may be taken as axiomatic that whenever becoming a Christian is considered a racial rather than a religious decision, there the growth of the church will be exceedingly slow. As the church faces the evangelization of the world, perhaps its main problem is how to present Christ so that unbelievers can truly follow him without traitorously leaving their kindred."²⁹ To raise this issue is not to support racism of any kind. For Spirit-filled Christians, the question is not homogeneous or heterogeneous churches, but church growth that fosters mission with purpose, fellowship with love, and evangelism with sustained nurture.

Conclusion

Any congregation in search of growth must not ignore these 10 characteristics. The main point is that there is no one single factor that leads to membership growth, but the harmonious working of several characteristics to achieve a single purpose.³⁰

Growing churches know that only God produces true growth (1 Corinthians 3:6). The natural church growth

will continue to be a supernatural work as the growing of a plant. Human planning and activity have their place, but the decisive factor will continue to be the mysterious and powerful work of the Holy Spirit. "'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts'" (Zechariah 4:6).

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Tolstoy and the Bible: A complex relationship

by Victor Lyakhov

What factors led this famous writer to first embrace and then reject the Bible as an inspired book?

A moral philosopher. A social reformer. A political critic. A great writer. A self-renouncing mystic. No one fits these descriptions as well as Leo Tolstoy, perhaps the greatest novelist Russia has produced. Tolstoy (1828-1910) wielded the pen not to entertain but to probe the inner soul, not to simply chronicle the great events of his time but to bring a moral passion and a spiritual judgment on those events.

Leo Tolstoy was born at Yasnnaya Polyana, about 100 miles south of Moscow. Both his parents died while he was young, and he was raised by relatives. After receiving his early education from foreign tutors, he entered the University of Kazan in 1844, but was bored with his studies. He returned to his family estate and devoted himself to personal study of the inner meaning of life. Before he was 30, he published his reflections in a quasi-autobiographical trilogy: *Childhood* (1852), *Boyhood* (1854), and *Youth* (1857). These works set the tone for his future writings: the study of a person's inner world, the moral mandate of life, a hidden common logic in everyday life, a strong criticism of the social and moral foundations of society. In 1863, he published the highly praised short novel, *The Cossacks*.

Tolstoy's greatest work was the epic, *War and Peace* (1863-69). It re-creates the life of different Russian social groups during the Napoleonic war of 1812. Besides being a chronicle of history, the novel addresses a number of religious-philosophical ideas, including individual freedom. It rejects the "great man" theory of history, arguing that heroes have no great impact on the course

of history. What influences history is the moral and the spiritual fiber of individuals, frequently the common people.

Tolstoy's second masterpiece, *Anna Karenina* (1875-1877), depicts the tragedy of a Russian princess who falls victim to her passions and leads a life of infidelity, eventually ending in suicide. The novel exposes the false foundations of secular society and aristocracy's hypocrisy toward moral issues. From the end of the 1870s, Tolstoy experienced a deep spiritual crisis and felt the need for moral improvement. Besides a thorough self-examination, he launched a steady criticism of the social and religious foundations of Russian society, including the state and the Orthodox Church.

Religious themes marked some of his other works, such as his novel *Resurrection* (1899), and short stories, "The Power of Darkness" (1888), "The Death of Ivan Ilyich" (1886), "The Devil" (1889), and "The Kreutzer Sonata" (1891). A master psychologist and a skillful literary craftsman, he engaged his readers in a deep quest for the real meaning of life, focusing on such issues as love, jealousy, sex, death, and family.

Tolstoy's inner agony and moral self-examination came to full play in his essay "My Confession" (1882). He then developed an individualistic view of Christianity, different from the Orthodox Church, in works such as "What I Believe" (1884) and "The Kingdom of God Is Within You" (1893). The latter work not only taught Christian love and forgiveness, but also non-violence in the face of evil.

His continuing struggle to achieve high moral standards led Tolstoy, in his

old age, to leave the comforts of his home seeking to live an ascetic life. Eventually, his health broke down and on November 7, 1910, he died almost alone, away from home. His body was buried on his estate. No religious rites marked the funeral.

Early struggles

Tolstoy's life, beginning with childhood, was marked by a series of inner crises. In "My Confessions," he admits that although he was baptized and brought up in an Orthodox family, by the time he was 18, he did not believe anything he had been taught. He writes: "To judge from certain recollections, I had never believed in earnest; I had confidence only in what I was taught and what the grown persons confessed in my presence; but this confidence was very brittle."¹

One childhood incident affected him profoundly. When Tolstoy was 11, his friend and classmate Volodia shared the latest news from the school: "There is no God. Everything we are taught in family and school is fiction." Could the news be true, pondered young Tolstoy. By the time he was 16, he had stopped going to church, and lost interest in prayer and fasting. Like many young people with no distinct religious orientation, Tolstoy embraced the philosophy of "natural instincts," and later confessed he had spent 10 years immersed in fornication, drinking, violence, murder, and many other transgressions. In 1851, he joined the army. His experience led to *The Cossacks*, a short novel chronicling the war in the Caucasus region, which won him fame throughout Russia.

Tolstoy retired from military service in 1856. Notwithstanding his frivolousness and recklessness, he spent a great deal of time in contemplation. At critical moments as, for example, when he was a guard with the Cossacks, he often prayed and begged God to protect him.

In 1857 he began to travel throughout Europe, meeting men of great learn-

ing and seeing progress everywhere. However, a chance witness of capital punishment gave him a rude shock. He questioned whether material progress could ever lead to a true understanding of life. The very idea that prosperity could bring inner peace seemed absurd to him.

After returning from Europe, Tolstoy opened a school for peasants' children on his estate at Yasnaya Polyana. He was concerned about the plight of the poor, and tried to improve their lives through education. The early success of his teaching methods led him to publish a pedagogical magazine outlining his educational theories. But soon he concluded that he had no right to teach children, because he did not know what to teach them.

The family man and the search for God

In 1862, Tolstoy married Sonya Bers. At first the two had a happy marriage, which seemed to have saved him from deep internal distress. Although he enjoyed life with his wife and children, he began to worry about increasing his income. His former striving after perfection gave way to trying to make it "as comfortable as possible for me and my family."² This period, lasting some 15 years, was perhaps Tolstoy's most creative time: he produced the masterpieces *War and Peace*, and *Anna Karenina*. Soon, however, Tolstoy was in a spiritual crisis again. He had happiness and love, well-being and glory, but found himself in a blind alley. "My life came to a standstill," he wrote. "It was as though I had just been living and walking along, and had come to an abyss, where I saw clearly that there was nothing ahead but perdition. And it was impossible to stop and go back, and impossible to shut my eyes, in order that I might not see that there was nothing ahead but suffering and imminent death—complete annihilation."³

To find a new, better faith, Tolstoy renewed his quest for God. He started

attending church, and following all the rituals. He rejected Besukhov's theory that "life is everything—life is God." Instead, he submitted himself to the traditional imperative: "God is everything. God is life."

However, he found it impossible to accept an unquestioning faith. The Orthodox religious services (especially the Eucharist), worshiping of icons and relics, and belief in miracles deeply embarrassed and provoked him. More and more, Tolstoy believed that Christianity, overloaded with false weights of history, had lost its apostolic simplicity. So he set out to refine Christianity from all its burdensome and alien elements, and to discover the true teachings of Christ. Thus he wrote in 1880, *An Examination of Dogmatic Theology*, an analysis and a critique of the dogmas of the Orthodox Church, a step that would eventually lead to his being disfellowshipped.

A year later, Tolstoy published another critical work, trying to reconstruct the Gospels as he understood them. Like in his earlier works on religion, Tolstoy discarded what did not agree with his discernment and retained what he thought would contribute to a better understanding of the world.

Tolstoy's relationship to Christianity, especially to the Bible, has always posed a dilemma for Christians. On the one hand, he was a spiritually sensitive person seeking to live by high moral standards. On the other, he rejected traditional Christianity and attempted to create a new religion. He denied Christ's divinity and equated Him with Socrates, Buddha, Confucius, and other sages. He even sought to rewrite the gospels.

How, then, shall we understand Tolstoy's contradictions? Before trying to give an answer, we should remember that Tolstoy, in his pursuit of an educational approach, turned to the teachings of the Bible.

Tolstoy the educator

Tolstoy's early appreciation of, and

approach to, the Bible is best seen in his educational work and pedagogic methods. In the 1860s, he felt that the Scriptures had a positive contribution to make in the education of children. "Without the Bible the development of a child or a man is unthinkable in our society," he wrote, "just as it was unthinkable in Greek society without Homer. The Bible is the first book for the first reading of children. The Bible, both as to its contents and to its form, ought to serve as a model of all manuals and readers for children."⁴

Tolstoy not only insisted on the inclusion of the Bible in the school's curriculum, but was also determined to give it a special place. For example, he argued that the Bible provides the child with a cosmic history—"holy history," he called it. From that cosmic overview, the child should be helped to understand Russian history. "There is no book like the Bible," he wrote, "to open up a new world to the pupil and to make him without knowledge love knowledge. I speak even of those who do not look upon the Bible as a revelation. At least, there's no production that I know of, that unites all the sides of human thought in such a compressed poetical form as is to be found in the Bible. All the questions from the phenomena of Nature are explained by this book; all the primitive relations of men with each other, of the family, of the state, of religion, are for the first time consciously recognized in this book."⁵

Tolstoy believed that the Bible owed its influence to its powerful poetry and narratives. "The lyricism of David's psalms acts not only upon the minds of grown pupils, but everybody for the first time learns from this book the whole charm of the epos in its inimitable simplicity and strength. Who has not wept over the story of Joseph and his meeting with his brothers? Who has not narrated with a sinking heart the story of Samson bound and deprived of his hair, as he, taking vengeance on his enemies,

himself perishes under the ruins of the fallen palace, and a hundred other impressions, on which we have been brought up as on our mothers' milk?"⁶

Tolstoy insisted that the Bible contains a unique potential for training moral people. He stated that nobody ever could produce a book that could compete with the Bible, especially in its narratives about the origin of the world, of humanity, and of history. Hence his plea that Bible should be translated into simple language, without reducing its authority. He condemned tinkering with the Scripture. "The omissions in the Sacred History are quite unintelligible and only impair the character and beauty of the Holy Scripture."⁷ Tolstoy was against any translator omitting what seemed unsuitable or irrational. Enigmatic passages such as those found in Genesis should not be omitted: "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters"; "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life"; creating Eve from Adam's rib; the saying that the finished Creation was "very good"; and the expression "the evening and the morning was."⁸

These passages and other difficult ones did not cause Tolstoy to doubt the authority of the Bible. He wanted the Bible to tell the holy history without any interference. "I neither changed nor omitted even one single word. . . . How understandable and clear everything is told in the Bible, especially for the child and along with that how strictly and seriously!...I can not imagine for myself, how education could be possible without this book?"⁹

With such positive views about the Bible as Tolstoy held during his experiments in education, what changed him so radically during the latter part of his life? Part of the answer is to be found in his humanistic preoccupation with what he called "the religion of life."

Tolstoy the humanist

At the basis of Tolstoy's latter ap-

proach to religion lay a humanistic understanding of life—that humans have within them the capacity to understand the meaning and purpose of existence. Within every human being, Tolstoy believed, there is a higher and a lower nature. The latter often gets individuals and communities into mischief. But if the higher nature unites and fellowships with a greater power—namely, God—human beings can live life to its fullness.

Through two decades of Tolstoy's life one can follow his steady movement toward a self-made mystical humanism. After much study and meditation on the New Testament, He claimed to have found the essential principle that characterized the life of Jesus—"Resist not evil." From the reading of the Bible, he formulated a five-part commandment that one needed to obey to have an optimum life. The parts are: Do not be angry; do not lust; do not bind yourself by oaths; do not resist one that is evil; be good to the just and the unjust.

As he began fashioning his own religion, Tolstoy dismissed the Old Testament as "the strange faith of the Jews," even though he had used some of its great stories in his pedagogic experiments. Even in using the New Testament, he was selective and tentative. He had no place for the Book of Revelation, dismissing it as carrying tales of "nonsense." Only the Gospels interested him, but even there he felt certain portions needed corrections.

Tolstoy became increasingly fascinated by the biblical portrayal of Jesus' life of simplicity and love. Feeling an inner call to such a life, he renounced his worldly belongings. This brought frequent quarrels with his wife, who reminded him of his responsibility for her future and the well-being of their 13 children. Tolstoy solved the problem by deeding his property to his wife and living a simple life with his peasants.

In "The Kingdom of God Is Within You," Tolstoy argued that God is within

the heart of each individual and will reveal Himself in each individual striving for perfection. From this he derived a philosophy of history that is largely determined by the moral development of individuals. The world will eventually reach its blissful state through this growing moral perfection of individuals who observe the supreme law of love and abjure every form of violence.

Tolstoy the complex person

Viewed from any angle, Tolstoy is a complex individual—difficult to dissect or analyze. During his early pedagogical activity, he saw a need for the Bible in guiding young minds. Later, when he lost interest in education, he could not reconcile the pomp and the pride of the church with the call of the New Testament to live a simple life. He thought of himself as a nominal Christian, living according to the ethic of the Bible, as he understood it. Eventually he rejected

the miracles and the divinity of Christ. This led him to develop a gospel of his own, purified of everything of what he thought was supernatural and false. Here, again, one can sense the humanist at work, as Tolstoy declared that we can accept only those things that “are told by the reason because it was given to man directly from God.” Therefore, the only authority in questions of religion and faith should be the human, and not God. This understanding brought Tolstoy to the point of creating a new, personal religion, based not on divine revelation, but on the mind.

So, how are we to understand Tolstoy’s relationship to the Bible? The question begs another question: Which Tolstoy? If we think of Tolstoy the educationist, we certainly see someone who believed that the Bible had a positive role to play in the development of young people, revealing how to live a moral life, close to God. If we think of

Tolstoy the mystical humanist and the absolute moralist, we meet a person of complexity—torn within, tossed about, searching for a place to rest but never arriving, placing confidence in the human ability to know the eternal Mind, and asserting that no one can attain perfection.

Almost a century after his death, Tolstoy still impresses us with the sheer force of his literary genius and his persistent struggle for moral perfection. However, his rejection of the Bible as a divinely inspired book led him to fashion his own personal religion, ultimately rejecting Him who declared “I am the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6, NIV).

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by Norman H. Young

Can we believe in miracles?

As I read the Bible, I find many stories of miracles—events that seem to be caused by factors beyond the scope of human power. Being a Christian, I accept the authenticity of those stories but, as a science student, I find them contrary to the observable laws of nature. How can I integrate my faith in God, my trust in the Bible, and my growing knowledge of science?

—An Inquisitive Reader

There are a number of assumptions and questions rolled into this one statement. Let's deal with them in order. *First, the fact of miraculous phenomena mentioned in the Bible.* Theologians from David Strauss to Rudolf Bultmann have tried to interpret Christianity without miracles, but the questioner is correct—the biblical record contains many events that are inexplicable by our common experience. Hence, one cannot deny the miracles and read Scripture with integrity. This is especially true of the Gospel accounts about Jesus.

For example, there are 20 miracle stories and various summaries of healings found in Mark that make up approximately one-third of its content. So the Bible reader is soon confronted with the phenomenon of miracle. Some of these, like the stilling of the storm (Mark 4:35-41), might be classified as a miraculous "coincidence," and thus not "contrary to the observable laws of nature." However, many of them, such as the spontaneous cleansing of a leper, or walking across a storm-tossed lake (Mark 1:40-45; 6:45-52) are events outside of our normal experience. And there is little doubt that these accounts go back to acts of Jesus; they are not later mytho-

logical inventions of the early church. As Graham Twelftree has demonstrated, a Jesus without miracles is not the Jesus of the Gospels, nor the Jesus of history (see Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker* [Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1999]).

Second, how do we describe a miracle? The questioner suggests "events that seem to be caused by factors beyond the scope of human power" and events "contrary to the observable laws of nature." The word "law" in this definition can be misleading. A law of nature is really a shorthand way of describing what the great bulk of people have observed under the same conditions most if not all of the time. If we ask where these observable consistencies of nature—its "laws"—came from, we are confronted with one alternative: they either just are, or they come from a supreme intelligence. The questioner accepts the latter. But once one accepts the reality of God, the possibility of miracle shifts to another plane.

Once the wisdom of God is considered the indispensable ingredient to provide the universe with meaning and rationality, and to give us minds with which to discern the laws of nature, then extraordinary activity by God in the world cannot be debarred on logical or even empirical grounds.

I say "extraordinary" rather than "supernatural" for I believe that God is not only present in the miraculous events of the Gospels, but also in the common affairs of life. He is as much present when we bury our dead as He was when Jesus raised Lazarus from the tomb. In the case of a miracle, it's the

mode not the fact of God's activity that is different.

Third, how do we integrate faith with science? Miracles must be consistent with the character and purposes of God. They are not just wonders to be screened on some "That's Incredible" TV show. Why does God on occasion reveal His presence by temporarily making an exception to the usual rhythm of nature? It must be because the event is consistent and purposeful within the divine pattern of action. Miracles for the Christian are never arbitrary, trivial, or capricious events. Miracles are anchored in faith.

In the Gospels, faith is both the preparation for and the product of Jesus' miracles. The resurrection of Jesus is, of course, the supreme miracle of the gospel and is indeed the basis of Christianity. The grounds for believing in it are cogent, but no amount of evidence can convince those who at the outset assume the impossibility of such an event. Science at its best engenders a spirit of humility as well as inquiry. Humility in both faith and science is the best attitude for harmonizing the two spheres of understanding.

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Phetsile Kholekile Dlamini

*Dialogue with the Swaziland Minister
for Health and Social Welfare*

Phetsile Kholekile Dlamini is a child of Adventism. Born second in a family of five, she grew within the embrace of a faithful Adventist family. Although her father was a simple farmer, he knew the value of Christian education and the worth of a strong religious commitment. Phetsile adopted both values as she began her formal education at the Mbukwane Seventh-day Adventist School—the first Adventist school in Swaziland. In 1970 she completed a B.Sc. degree at the University of Lesotho, and then proceeded to the University of Ghana to study medicine.

Armed with a medical degree, she went to Natal, South Africa, in 1975 to complete her internship. Her first official post came in 1976 at the Hlathikhulu Government Hospital, Swaziland, and soon after she became its director. She also directed 22 rural clinics.

Thereafter Dr. Dlamini continued her specialization and obtained a master's degree in pediatrics in 1985 at the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa, and in 1986 a Fellowship Degree with the College of Physicians (pediatrics) in South Africa.

Following her return to Swaziland in 1987, she began a private rural practice, bringing health and healing to thousands of infants and children. Six years later, recognizing her professional stand and community service, the Parliament of Swaziland secondarily (i.e., without standing for election) elected her to this august body. In 1996 Dr. Dlamini was appointed as the Minister for Health and Social Welfare.

■ *Dr. Dlamini, what motivated you to become a medical doctor?*

My parents. My father had faith in me that I could be a doctor. When I was nine years old I already knew I wanted to be a doctor. Although poor, my home had a caring environment. Even today my 85-year-old mother spends a lot of her time helping others. She enjoys caring and sharing, and she has passed that trait on to her children.

■ *What memories do you have of your formative years?*

Many happy memories. Although my father died in 1963 when I was 16, we children had love and emotional security in our mother and grandparents. Family always meant to me a place of

happiness. We were a close-knit family, and that's an irreplaceable bond. Poverty became the biggest challenge as my mother worked very hard and long hours just so that we could have food and afford schooling.

She got up at three in the morning, cooked the morning porridge, and then walked 20 miles to buy vegetables, carry the load on her head, and sell them from place to place. She would return home at sundown with about US\$2 as her earnings. During school holidays I worked in the farms in neighboring South Africa. That meant long hours, odd jobs, and little money. Life was tough, but we were never short of one thing—happiness and a confidence that God would see us through.

The beautiful thing is that all this hardship made me resolve to study hard so that I could have a profession of my own. Walking barefoot in winter or having only one pair of shoes with holes only served as motivation to finish school faster no matter what.

My mother was a great factor in my life. Her prayers always assured us that suffering is only temporary and being faithful to God is more important.

■ *Tell us a little about your Adventist background.*

I was born into a second-generation Adventist family. My grandfather allowed the first Seventh-day Adventist minister in Swaziland—Pastor Hlubi—to set up in 1920 a mission school in the family fields where the Mbukwane Mission is today. My mother was among the first students in that mission school. My grandmother used to tell me how, when they became Adventists, they had to shave off their Swazi globular hairstyles and exchange their skin aprons for Western clothes. As I think back, I feel Jesus loves us just as we are—with our national identity and in our poverty.

I was baptized in 1960. Jesus has been my constant friend in life's ups and downs. Nothing can separate me from His love. I think it is important not just to belong to the church but to know Jesus in a very personal way.

■ *Did you anticipate becoming the Minister of Health?*

No. But I know that God has a plan for His children. I am convinced that God planned that I should serve Swaziland in this way at this time in history.

My challenge is to do everything well, but in a humble and honest way.

■ *Does your present position as a government minister cause tension with your Adventist beliefs?*

I experience no conflict between my political office and my faith. We have freedom of worship in Swaziland, and I am fortunate that the Head of State grew up in an Adventist home, so he is very sympathetic to Adventists. The head of government and indeed all my colleagues know that the Sabbath is my day of worship. I have no problem in observing the Sabbath.

■ *Do your cultural traditions conflict with your religious principles?*

Some but not all our cultural practices clash with religious principles. I avoid those that do and keep the ones that enhance my beliefs. For example, one cultural habit in our country is the regimen system that encourages young boys and girls, under the guidance of older people, to learn to live a pure life before marriage and to have courtship without engaging in physical contact. Under this tradition, there was wholesome courtship and no teenage pregnancies and the moral degeneration we see now. Another aspect of Swazi culture is respect and care for the elderly. So I support aspects of our culture that do not clash with the demands of my faith.

■ *What aspect of Adventism appeals to you the most?*

Adventist emphasis of service to God and the community. This is the way of Jesus. He was there for the ill, hungry, and lonely, for the sophisticated and the simple. He attended to the needs of all. It is important that we emulate Him and serve with humility. To say that we love God while we remain indifferent toward the needs of our neighbors is not acceptable for a Christian. The vertical and the horizontal dimensions of the Ten Commandments need to govern our life's

worship and service.

■ *What led you to choose a political career?*

Actually, I did not choose a political career, but found myself in it by the people's choice. In this I sense a call to public duty, and God has allowed me to serve the people in this particular way.

■ *Dlamini is a name of royalty in Swaziland. Are you related to the royal family?*

I am distantly related to the royal family. My great-grandfather (Makhahleka) was brother to King Sobhuza II, father to the present King Mswati III. But more importantly, by God's grace, we are all royal in that we are the children of the King of kings.

■ *What does the Seventh-day Adventist Church mean to you?*

The church is the body of Christ. That means that I am a part of that body, just as hands or mouth are part of a body. As parts, all of us need to work within the church in order for the body to function well. The Adventist Church means a lot to me, particularly in its nurturing and witnessing ministry. The family atmosphere within the church is always exhilarating. Wherever I am I feel at home with my brothers and sisters in the faith. The music, the singing, the Word—they all keep us united in worship, fellowship, and service.

■ *New reports indicate that HIV/AIDS is widespread in Swaziland, and a recent survey revealed that an estimated 22 percent of the population is infected with this dreaded disease. How is your ministry dealing with this scourge?*

Swaziland is one of the Southern African countries that is heavily affected by HIV/AIDS. We see many young adults die, leaving a lot of dependents and orphans. In my department we are teaching that people should live responsibly. Youth should not engage in premarital sex, and married couples should be faithful to one another. While moral

responsibility is paramount in preventing the disease, we are faced with the issue of caring for those who are already ill. The sick and the orphans are placing an enormous strain on our health services. We hope the church's youth ministry can intensify its work of motivating the youth to live a healthy and godly life, both before and after marriage. We also need the church to assist in providing spiritual and emotional support and health care to those affected or infected.

■ *Can a young Christian achieve success without compromising his or her beliefs?*

Why not? Daniel did it. Joseph did it. The important thing is to be well anchored in Christian principles and ask God to help guide the way even when it is difficult at times and even when one does not have all the answers.

■ *What counsel would you give young people who face many challenges today?*

My counsel is simple. Be strong in your faith. Be close to Jesus. Develop principles of living that would be in harmony with the ideal Jesus sets before you. Don't let anything cheapen your body or mind. Listen to God's call early in your life. Let Him mold you early. Sometimes the molding process may be painful, but the end result is an outstanding, fulfilled life of service to God and His church. Don't follow your peers blindly. Follow Him who will not fail you; He knows and understands and cares for you at all times.

Interview by Percy Peters.

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Ebenezer Chambi

Dialogue with an Adventist physician, health educator, and community leader

Born in Peru, Dr. Ebenezer Chambi developed early in his life a sense of community and an inclination to service. His family was active in the local church. Throughout his educational experience, he was guided by a commitment to help others. In 1970, he completed his pre-medical studies at Union College (now Peru Union University) located near Lima, the capital. Although he wanted to study medicine in his homeland, the then prevailing political situation made this virtually impossible. His older brothers had moved to Mexico to pursue their medical training; so did he.

Completing his medical degree from the Autonomous University of Guadalajara, Mexico, in 1975, he did his residencies in Puerto Rico and Los Angeles, California. After completing the latter, Dr. Chambi joined a research team to study epilepsy.

Currently, he is practicing general medicine at the Chapel Medical Clinic in South Gate, California. In addition to ensuring quality care to his patients, Dr. Chambi brings his Christian commitment to bear on his profession by continually promoting preventive care and healthful living. He is involved in his community through a variety of activities ranging from sponsoring folk music concerts to speaking to high school students on health. In recognition of his community service, he received in 1994 the La Sierra University Presidential Citation for Humanitarian Service.

Ebenezer Chambi and his wife, Esther, have three children who are pursuing advanced studies: Esther Janet, Ebenezer Howard, and Eber Caleb.

■ *Dr. Chambi, what influences have shaped your life?*

Perhaps the same four major influences that shape all of us: family, education, community, and religion. The family teaches us how to care for each other. Parents care for children, children care for each other and their parents. In a good home, we learn to love people unconditionally. Education is one of the major ways to learn about ourselves and develop our talents and intellectual skills. It structures our personality. Community teaches us that we are not alone—no one is an island. We depend on other people and they depend on us. Christianity gives us inner strength, especially when we feel discouraged and

don't have energy to keep going. There is a higher power, God, ready to help us. Religion gives us the powerful tool of confidence. It brings us strength and hope. It keeps us from giving up on life. At the end of the journey, it gives us the assurance of a better life.

■ *What type of research did you do in epilepsy?*

Epilepsy can be a very debilitating disease, and our team wanted to find its cause and determine whether it could be successfully treated or even cured. We studied a diverse population in the Los Angeles area, seeking ways of helping epilepsy victims. The results were rewarding. Some were cured. Many were

able to live relatively normal lives and return to their vocations.

■ *Currently, what does your practice cover?*

I am involved in general practice. Beyond the regular treatment of patients, I focus on preventive medicine. I want to teach people how to live healthier, happier lives. In my practice, I see a lot of baby boomers. I'm one of them, so I know what they are like and how they live. Because they work so many hours and have so many activities, they often wait until the last possible moment to come to see me, knowing that a visit to the doctor takes time. They usually don't come in when they have a slight cold or a stomach ache. They visit my office only when they sense that they are in serious trouble and need help. We do a complete check-up, including blood and urine tests. Most of the time we find that they have high cholesterol levels; they are not eating right and not exercising. Most of the common problems can be prevented, and I emphasize that.

■ *How do you convince busy people to live healthier lives?*

The key is behavior modification. We can give objective explanations of why a person should exercise more or spend some time relaxing rather than overworking, but it is challenging to convince people that they need to make fundamental changes in how they live. At times a physician needs to be quite direct, even blunt, to persuade patients to radically alter their lifestyle.

A while back, a man, suffering from exhaustion, came to my office. He was

working at two jobs so he could buy a new house every year. His wife told me that he worked too many hours a day and did not take time to relax and enjoy life. She told me that they already owned three homes and that he wanted to buy another one. I told her, "Don't worry. The more he works, the more houses he will leave to you when he dies!" He got the message and changed his habits.

■ *Do you also utilize the media to educate the public?*

When I was doing my residence in Puerto Rico, I started a radio program on health prevention and promotion. Then here, in the Los Angeles area, I hosted for ten years a weekly radio forum called *El Médico Habla* (The Physician Speaks) that was quite popular. We have also prepared several short video programs on health that I make available to pastors and TV cable stations.

■ *Does the emphasis on exercise and nutrition in the popular media help in having people change their lifestyle?*

Yes. Ten or 15 years ago, it was more difficult to convince people that they needed to exercise and eat well. But now, the media's coverage of prevention and health has made my job easier in terms of education. The problem is that many people who understand the principles of healthful living aren't putting them into practice. They still eat too much fast food and stay up too late watching the late shows.

Fortunately, people are beginning to see the light. The city where I practice has a park where you can see more people running, walking, and doing other exercises than in any other park in the nearby cities. I like to think this has something to do with our emphasis on exercise.

The hamburger place that is near our office now also sells vegetarian burgers. I think that shows some of the positive influence we've had on people who are

trying to eat more healthful foods.

■ *How can people who are not involved in the health-care profession effectively spread the message of healthful living?*

All of us exert an influence and convey a silent message wherever we go. People are searching for a better life, and they look up to good role models. If we spend time with people, we can influence them positively by your example. I've found it effective not to preach at people, but rather to lead by example. We can encourage others to see that there's a better life.

■ *It's easy to become so focused on our own studies or profession that we forget that we are part of a larger community outside our walls. How can a person who has become so insulated begin to interact with the larger community beyond their family or church?*

Before I became active in the community, it was easy to be critical of those outside my circle. But after I became involved, I discovered how much good I could do and how much I enjoyed it.

Get to know other people, especially those with whom we would not normally associate. It will help with your social and intellectual development. You will also learn how your community works and how you can help.

Becoming involved begins with something as simple as the way you greet people. Start with a solid and sincere, "Good morning. How are you?" Speak words of encouragement. Learn to listen. Meet with the people who are having problems in your area of expertise who don't know where to look for help. Focus on relieving their suffering.

A few years ago, an earthquake hit the Los Angeles area. When people asked me why I left my office to volunteer in the relief efforts, I told them that I was just paying part of my debt to my community. The community has given me a lot and I want to give back. It's a two-way street.

And don't forget to have fun! One of

the things I do is organize folk-music concerts. And though lots of people enjoy them, I enjoy them the most!

■ *How do you apply this involvement in your church?*

I love my church like a family. I do things not to be recognized or rewarded, but because I want to do something for Christ and my church. If you start a project with the goal of being recognized for your efforts, you miss the point. Instead, do the job because it is important and necessary.

■ *As a successful physician, a health educator, and community leader, what would your counsel be to people who are just entering their careers?*

Learn from successful people by watching how they live, how they get along with others, and how they maintain their emotional balance. Emulate their good traits. If I retrace my journey, being active in the church and in the community were the most important factors that kept me on track. Those of us who have been blessed by talents and education can do much good. Put yourself where God can use your skills. Take the initiative to help the community and make people's lives better. That is a worthwhile goal in life.

Interview by Michael Peabody.

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The five excuses of Moses

by Bonita J. Shields

To the mind of a child, my hometown church was *huge!* I remember the *long* stairway that led downstairs into my Sabbath school room. The fellowship hall was *massive* because we could play crab football there. And the playground was the ultimate.

While still in my teens, I suddenly realized that my church wasn't that large. It's not the smallest of churches, mind you, but it's definitely not the huge, massive structure of my childhood.

Moses' life of faith didn't begin in Hebrews 11—"The Who's Who of Faith" chapter. It began beside a burning bush in conversation with God. Moses didn't say boldly, "Yes, Lord, Your will be done." It was more like, "Lord, can't you send someone else?"

The powerful image of an Egyptian prince, prophet, and military general who led millions of people out of slavery is what we remember from our childhood stories. We saw the picture of a bigger-than-life character and thought, "Wow! I could never be like him." But a mature reading of the Bible narrative helps us see Moses in a more realistic light. It is this picture, while not downplaying the impact he made on world history and salvation history, that gives me hope and courage and faith.

Moses grew up as a prince in Egypt, but fled from Pharaoh after he had broken up a fight between a Hebrew and an Egyptian, and killed the Egyptian. Having been in exile in the desert for about 40 years, Moses, roughly 80 at this point in our narrative, was tending sheep near Horeb, when he saw a strange sight. Flames were rising from a bush, but the

bush wasn't burning up. As Moses approached the bush, he heard a voice calling his name. The voice identified the speaker: "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."* God then proceeded to share His plan with Moses: He had heard the cries of His people about their oppression in Egyptian slavery. He was coming down to take care of the situation. And He wanted Moses to join with Him in their deliverance (Exodus 3:7-10). At this point, Moses began presenting a series of excuses, some of which may sound familiar to you.

Excuse No. 1: "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" (verse 11).

Good question. Moses had been herding sheep for 40 years, and the thought of a shepherd, whom Egyptians despised, going to speak to a king was contrary to the usual protocol.

God's reply: "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I that have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain" (verse 12).

Not only did God promise His presence, He also gave Moses assurance that the mission would be successful. Even in the presence of an earthly king, he had no cause to fear or feel inferior. However, Moses didn't quite see it that way.

Excuse No. 2: "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" (verse 13).

Another good question. If you're go-

ing to tell a group of hundreds of thousands of people that you've been asked to lead in their deliverance, it would be helpful to have the name of the person from whom you get your authority. Also, names were very important to the Semitic mind because they described the character of the person.

God's reply: "I am who I am" (verse 14).

In Scripture, after God had revealed Himself to His people, frequently they often described Him in a new way because of how they experienced Him (see for example Psalm 140:7, "my strong deliverer"; Psalm 71:5, "my hope"; 2 Corinthians 1:3, "God of all comfort").

The Jews always recognized I AM as the name that distinguished the true God from false gods. There would be no mistaking who would send Moses on his mission. Not only did God tell him who He was, He also told him exactly who to talk to, what to say, and gave him the assurance that they would listen to him. Now Moses is ready for his mission. Well, not quite!

Excuse No. 3: "What if they do not believe me or listen to me?" (Exodus 4:1).

Let's note this: God had just assured Moses that the leaders of the people would listen to him. It's becoming quite apparent that Moses is not a willing subject. However, God knew that Moses' faith still needed to be strengthened. So, the Lord worked through Moses to turn a staff (or rod) into a snake, to make Moses' hand leprous and then healed it, and to turn water into blood.

Don't we often wish God would show us supernatural signs, and *then*

we'd promise to trust and obey? His Word doesn't seem to be enough.

Egypt, here we come! Well, not exactly.

Excuse No. 4: "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue" (verse 10).

In the light of what has taken place—God has promised Moses His company, has assured him of the success of his mission, and has provided him with miraculous signs—Moses' reluctance is not a sign of humility or a recognition of his own inabilities. It reveals his lack of trust in God's abilities.

When we refuse to join God in His work, we are revealing a distrust of His ability to work in us. God's Word is full of promises and assurances of His presence and His ability to work in us. We need to learn to take Him at His Word.

There have been times when I've asked God, "Why have You given me this assignment? There are so many other people who don't have the weaknesses I do. Why don't you use *them*?" But then the response comes: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). If we feel weak, limited, or inadequate, we are the best material through which God's power can work.

This is not meant to insinuate that God wants to keep us under His thumb as weaklings. God is in the business of growing people. He desires that we be confident and have a strong sense of worth. However, instead of our confidence and feelings of self-worth coming from things or other people, they are to be the result of our relationship with Him.

God's reply: "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say" (verses 11, 12).

Apparently, Moses didn't quite grasp

that the God who created his mouth, ears, and his eyes was fully capable of making them function. At times we forget we're dealing with the Creator of the universe.

Now, God *commands* Moses to go and promises to be with him. Is Moses ready?

Excuse No. 5: "O Lord, please send someone else to do it" (verse 13).

In our English translation, it sounds like a whine, but in the original Hebrew it actually borders on rudeness: "Please send by the hand of him whom you will send." In other words, "Would you please give this information to a person who's going to accept the assignment!"

When God met all of Moses's excuses, his hidden motives were revealed: He didn't want the assignment. I think Moses *wanted* to join God in His work—he just had difficulty believing that God could make him *good enough* for the job.

It's the same way with many of us. When we are reluctant to obey God, it's not that we don't want to. It's that we don't feel good enough. But that's where we must learn to take God at His word. We must trust Him enough to believe that He is capable of equipping us for the work to which He calls us. And when we are willing to step out in faith and obey Him, we will experience God as we have never experienced Him before.

God's reply: "What about your brother, Aaron?" (verse 14).

God had established a relationship with Moses. He wanted Moses to join Him in His work for His people, so God was willing to meet Moses where he was. Unfortunately, the power that God promised Moses wasn't sufficient for him. He only acquiesced when the aid of a finite creature was offered. Moses would speak through Aaron, and this limited him in his work.

What about you? Have you used any of Moses' excuses in dialogue with God? Are you having trouble trusting that God is capable of equipping you for the work to which He has called you?

If God wanted perfect creatures to join Him in His work, He could have used angels. But, instead, He has chosen *us*. If we allow God to work through us, we will become an unquestionable evidence of His power. Through obedience, Moses became a powerful leader—powerful enough to change the course of history. Even more important, he became a powerful man of faith who participated with God in salvation history, and who was resurrected and taken to heaven because God considered him "his friend" (Exodus 33:11).

You're in good company.

Bonita J. Shields is an associate pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Spencerville, Maryland.

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

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If you are a Seventh-day Adventist student attending a non-Adventist college or university, the Church has a plan that will allow you to receive *Dialogue* free while you remain a student. (Those who are no longer students can subscribe to *Dialogue*, using the coupon on page 18.) Contact the director of the Education Department or the Youth Department in your Union and request that you be placed in their distribution network for the journal. Include your full name, address, college or university you are attending, the degree you are pursuing, and the name of the local church of which you are a member. You may also write to our regional representatives at the address provided on page 2, with a copy of your letter sent to the Union directors listed above. In North America, you can phone us at 1-800-226-5478, fax us at 301-622-9627, or reach us via E-mail: 104472.1154@compuserve.com. If these contacts fail to produce results, write to us at our editorial address.

Berkeley Student Conference focuses on campus ministry

by Chris Drake

One hundred twenty Seventh-day Adventist students and chaplains from 21 public colleges and universities assembled on the campus of the University of California, Berkeley, September 13-16, 2000, to celebrate their faith, to strengthen their fellowship, and to charter their future. Organized by the Berkeley Seventh-day Adventist Student Association (BSDASA), the conference drew delegates from Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, England, Germany, Ghana, Kenya, Romania, Zimbabwe, and several campuses in the United States.

Berkeley 2000 was the first-ever gathering of Adventist young people to focus specifically on public-campus evangelism and ministry. The goal of the conference was three-fold: to establish a network of Adventists on public university campuses, to share campus-ministry

strategies and materials, and to mount a sustainable Adventist outreach to secular campuses. The conference organizers hoped to have eventually “a network of fellowship around the world,” according to Will Sutton, the event leader and Berkeley doctoral student. Nicole Chao, another Berkeley student leader adds: “We want to provide contacts for other Adventists involved in secular campus ministry.”

To help motivate the conference in achieving these objectives, the Berkeley organizers brought in an impressive array of speakers, including Jose Rojas, director of young-adult ministries for the North American Division; Dan Matthews, speaker emeritus for the television program *Faith for Today*; Dwight Nelson, senior pastor of the Pioneer Memorial Church in Berrien Springs, Michigan; and Ron Pickell, a veteran leader



Photo by Adam Bujak

Much time was devoted to prayer.

in secular campus ministry. Several other supporting ministries were also present, including the General Conference Committee on Adventist Ministry for College and University Students (AMiCUS), which publishes *Dialogue*.

The three-day event was filled with activity. Each day started and ended with general sessions for all participants, which dealt with spiritual life and witness. In between were various focus groups and seminars—all targeted toward equipping college/university students for ministry.

According to Humberto Rasi, world education director for the Adventist Church, the Berkeley conference came “at the right moment to galvanize the movements that have begun on 50 to 60 campuses in many parts of the world,” and to help the church in North America develop a stronger public campus ministry.

The high point of the conference was the “Berkeley Resolution”—a statement of commitment and a call for a North American Division-wide plan to expand and consolidate secular-campus ministry. Among the items included in the resolution was a request that one year, within the next five, be selected to focus on “the opportunities and challenges of



Photo by Chris Drake

Participants pose in front of the administration building of UC-Berkeley.

students on non-Adventist campuses.”

The North American Division leadership has already appointed Richard Stenbakken, director of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, to coordinate public-campus ministries in its territory, in consultation with student leaders and chaplains, and with the support of the Education and the Youth Ministries departments.

Chris Drake is a senior mass communication student at Walla Walla College. At the time of writing, he was finishing an internship with the Columbia Union Visitor. He can be reached at drakch@wwc.edu. Readers interested in a copy of the “Berkeley Resolution” may request it from the editors of Dialogue.

Dick Stenbakken can be contacted via E-mail: 74532.1614@compuserve.com

Attention, Adventist Professionals!

If you hold a master’s degree or its equivalent in any field, you are invited to join the Adventist Professionals’ Network (APN). This global registry assists participating Adventist institutions in locating consultants, short-term volunteers, and candidates for positions, while fostering international networking. There are no charges or dues.

Obtain a registration form by contacting: APN - GC Education Department; 12501 Old Columbia Pike; Silver Spring, MD 20904; U.S.A. You can also request the form by fax (301-622-9627) or e-mail: 105541.3200@compuserve.com Or you may submit directly the information requested via the World Wide Web: <http://apn.adventist.org>

Guidelines for Contributors

College and University Dialogue, published three times a year in four language editions, is addressed to Seventh-day Adventists involved in post-secondary education either as students or teachers, and also to Adventist professionals and campus chaplains around the world.

The editors are interested in well-written articles, interviews, and reports consistent with *Dialogue’s* objectives: (1) To nurture an intelligent, living faith; (2) to deepen commitment to Christ, the Bible, and Adventist global mission; (3) to articulate a biblical approach to contemporary issues; and (4) to offer ideas and models of Christian service and outreach.

Dialogue usually assigns articles, interviews, and reports to specific authors for publication. Prospective authors are urged (a) to examine previous issues of our journal, (b) to carefully consider these guidelines, and (c) to submit an abstract and personal background before developing a proposed article. Unsolicited submissions will not be returned.

•**Essays:** Well-researched and stimulating articles that focus, from a biblical perspective, on a contemporary topic in the arts, the humanities, religion, or the sciences.

•**Profiles:** Interviews with Adventist men and women who are successful in their careers or professions, and who are also active Christians.

Recommendations are welcome.

•**Logos:** A fresh look at a Bible passage or theme that offers insights and encouragement for the life of faith in today’s world.

•**Campus life:** Practical ideas for the college or university student, chaplain or teacher who seeks to integrate faith, education, social life, and outreach in an academic setting.

•**Action report:** News of activities by Adventist students, chaplains, and teachers, on a regional basis.

•**Books:** Reviews of significant books by or about Seventh-day Adventists, published in either English, French, Portuguese, or Spanish. Recommendations are welcome.

•**Viewpoint:** A personal approach to a sensitive or controversial subject worth of consideration by Christians.

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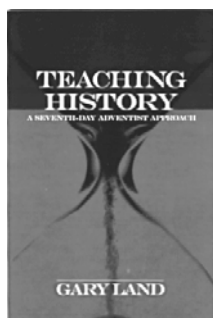
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Teaching History: A Seventh-day Adventist Approach

by Gary Land (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 2000; 115 pp., soft cover).

Reviewed by Floyd Greenleaf.

For as long as they have been teaching history, Seventh-day Adventists have wrestled with the question of how to bring to their classes an Adventist perspective on the subject. One major obstacle has been the dilemma of believing but not being able to explain how God intervenes in human affairs. This problem has disturbed many Adventists because they have commonly considered history as unfolding prophecy and themselves a people of prophetic destiny. Adventist historiography shows that some Adventist historians have unsuccessfully attempted to construct an Adventist philosophy of history based on divine intervention. Not surprising, as author Gary Land cautions in *Teaching History*, “Beyond New Testament times, the Bible gives little specific information regarding God’s intervention in history” (p. 40).

From the vantage point of a career at Andrews University spent in reflective study of philosophies of history and their applications in Adventist classrooms, Land expresses belief in divine intervention but does not think that a sweeping Adventist philosophy of history is plausibly founded on the unexplainable. Instead, he offers alternative ways to create an Adventist approach to history by encouraging teachers to exploit distinctive features of Adventist understanding of history, which is only one current in the larger stream of Christian history.

Land starts with a worldview shaped by the Adventist emphasis on a cosmic struggle between God and Satan. This structure provides Adventists special appreciation for broad issues such as liberty of conscience and the notion of moral progress; more specifically, the idea of a remnant, relationships among Christian groups, and the emergence of Adventism as part of a general reform movement. He suggests that when discussing these matters and whenever appropriate, Adventist historians should apply principles of Christian moral judgment, a biblical understanding of human nature, and the significance of a spiritual life. He uses case studies to demonstrate how they can accomplish this without generating a sense of moral superiority.

Adventist teachers will benefit by his suggestions, but it is worth noting that practicing them demands thoughtful, honest opinions, shared unapologetically with their students.

Also, the book begins and ends with statements about experiential knowledge of Christianity being essential to an understanding of the intellectual nuances of Christian approaches to history. Adventist historians should take Land’s proposals for what he intends them, not as an overarching Adventist philosophy, but a practical and fundamental classroom approach.

Floyd Greenleaf (Ph.D., University of Tennessee) is a retired Adventist educator and author. His latest work is a revision and updating of Richard W. Schwarz’s *Light Bearers to the Remnant*, published by Pacific Press this year with the title, *Light Bearers*.



In Six Days: Why 50 Scientists Choose to Believe in Creation

edited by John F. Ashton (Sydney: New Holland Publishers, 1999; 360 pp.; paperback).

Reviewed by Joe Galusha.

At first I wondered: Is this book a collection of wild statements about the horrors of the theory of evolution? After reading just a few pages, I was pleasantly surprised to find an intelligent and considered approach to an old problem.

Editor John F. Ashton, an Australian research scientist, has gathered a significant and varied collection of essays written by authors who explain why, in their view, it is right to believe that God created the earth in six literal days a few thousand years ago. The collection is divided into two sections: “Science and Origins” and “Religion and Origins.” Articles in the latter section are shorter, but convey the deep, genuine commitment to a literal reading of Genesis held by the authors. I liked both sections.

Two core arguments appear repeatedly in the book. First, the need for a Designer in a world that is irreducibly complex. Second, the fact that energy doesn’t come from “nowhere” and that it is running out (according to the first and second laws of thermodynamics). Other arguments frequently used as evidence for Creation come from molecular genetics, DNA sequencing information, and chaos theory.

I was impressed with the eclectic nature of this volume. The authors represent a wide spectrum of disciplines from theoretical physics to mathematics, geology, chemistry, biology, even agriculture and food science. Though some of the positions taken by the authors were based upon their areas of expertise, in many cases they were not. This could be seen as a

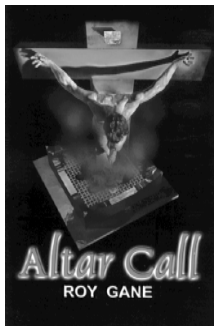
weakness of the volume.

In the preface, the editor informs us that these scientists were invited to address a single question: "Why do you believe in a literal six-day biblical Creation as the origin of life on earth?" No other requirements were specified. I wonder if it might have made for a stronger book if there had been more cohesion, maybe even interaction, between the articles. Had the authors been aware of the major arguments and points of fact used by the others, they might have structured their contributions differently.

Perhaps I am wrong. Maybe a major strength of this book is that it has many authors bringing varied perspectives to a single topic. The fact is that I have read the book carefully. And I will read it again. I will also recommend it to intellectuals who are Christians and are likely to be encouraged by the testimony of spiritually active scientists speaking from the heart. I encourage you to get a copy soon and read it for yourself.

Joe Galusha (D.Phil., Oxford University) teaches biology and is the dean of graduate studies at Walla Walla College. His mailing address: Office of Graduate Studies; Walla Walla College; College Place, Washington 99324; U.S.A. E-mail: galujo@wwc.edu

In Six Days may be ordered through www.answersingenesis.com



Altar Call

by Roy Gane (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Diadem, 1999; 358 pp.; paperback).

Reviewed by Nancy Vyhmeister.

In 46 brief chapters, Gane presents the ancient sanctuary services and their meaning. Not only does he tell us about the Israelite sanctuary, but he also shows how it ties into the heavenly sanctuary and the work of Christ, our High Priest.

Gane's work is based on a careful study of Old Testament ritual, accomplished as part of his doctoral studies. His scholarly endeavor is well dressed in a lively and lucid writing style that makes the book readable and interesting.

The author draws his illustrations from Bible stories and daily life. Furthermore, he ties the parts of the book together with the human drama of the story of Scott Grady, the American flyer shot down over Bosnia and rescued six days later.

In every part of the sanctuary service, Gane sees evidence of God's loving provision for the destruction of evil and the salvation of His people. Christ as Saviour is portrayed in the

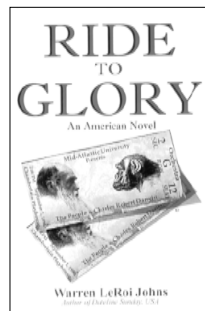
rituals and sacrifices. Not only could the ancient Israelites look forward to the fulfillment of the type they saw daily; we can also look back and understand Christ's ministry through the sanctuary services.

Gane addresses questions on the Day of Atonement, typical and antitypical, and answers them satisfactorily. He shows clearly that by understanding the ancient rituals we can understand Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. The pre-advent judgment, beginning in 1844, is the real day of atonement when God judges His people. Yet it is not a frightening event, for "the basic issue in the judgment is whether or not they [God's people] continue to accept through faith the grace He gives them" (p. 263). "Forgiveness that we have received is only undone if we sever our connection with God" (p. 337).

For Gane, "the cross is the altar to which Christ draws us." In this cross we find the "answer to our questions about God's character" (p. 344). And this cross provides assurance, while demanding love and loyalty.

Altar Call should help readers get beyond the blood and gore of the Israelite sanctuary to a clear understanding and deeper appreciation of the provision made by a loving God for the restoration of a sin-sick world. Because Gane has written with such clarity and verve, no one who has an interest in this topic need be excluded from the learning experience this book provides for the heart and mind.

Nancy Vyhmeister (Ed.D., Andrews University), an educator with broad international experience, served until recently as professor of missions at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Her E-mail address: Vyhmeister@andrews.edu



Ride to Glory

by Warren L. Johns (Brookeville, Maryland: General Title, Inc., 1999; 414 pp.; hardbound).

Reviewed by Kenneth Wilson.

Warren Johns, a well-known Seventh-day Adventist attorney, deals with the interesting topic of scientific creationism in his book in a unique and intriguing manner. Weaving oppositions and explanations to the popular scientific theory of "Mega-evolution" through a novel that has romance, drama mystery, and suspense captivates the reader's imagination.

Using well-described characters, including young super-

Continued on page 33

Vietnam: 25 years later

By Ralph S. Watts

I will never forget that moment for as long as I live. It was the culmination of many emotions that had flooded my heart during that eventful week—the most difficult week of my life. At that particular moment 180 Vietnamese, along with one lone American missionary, dashed toward a sleek C-141 aircraft, used by the U.S. Air Force to haul cargo from the United States to various military airports in Asia. Only this time the precious cargo was Vietnamese people—infants, boys and girls, moms and dads, aunts and uncles, and grandparents. They all rushed from buses that had brought them to this location at Tan Son Nhut Airport.

Who were these people? Why were they leaving Vietnam? Where were they going? What about those who were left behind? What would become of them?

These were the thoughts that raced through my mind as we lifted off from the runway. We had to ascend in a tight circle to avoid being hit by rockets and mortars from the invading forces. Once we reached a safe altitude, the pilot turned the plane in an easterly direction. After midnight we would land at

Anderson Air Base, in Guam, a flight of nearly eight hours.

I looked around me at the large group of Vietnamese on the plane. I was one of a few fortunate people to have a seat in the aircraft. It was not a commercial aircraft, but one designed for military purposes. There were no seat belts for the vast majority, and many were seated on the floor of the aircraft.

Although I recognized a few people, most were total strangers or brief acquaintances. Some whistled and cheered. Some were stoic and expressionless. Others sobbed or cried openly. For some, the decision to leave had been made for them within the past few hours. They were among the fortunate to get their names on a manifest, a requirement for everyone who was boarding a flight. Others had anticipated it for days. Many had had no opportunity to say good-bye to relatives and loved ones. Others had walked away from their jobs when they found a way to the airport. Some were too young to know what was going on. But most recognized that they were leaving their homeland, the land of their birth—probably never to return.

With me in the aircraft were some of the leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Vietnam—the mission president, Pastor Le Cong Giao; members of the Saigon Adventist Hospital administrative staff; leaders of the church's educational work in the capital; and publishing house and other employees. Why were they leaving? Did they not have a responsibility to stay behind even though it was obvious that it was only a matter of hours before the North Vietnamese would capture Saigon and

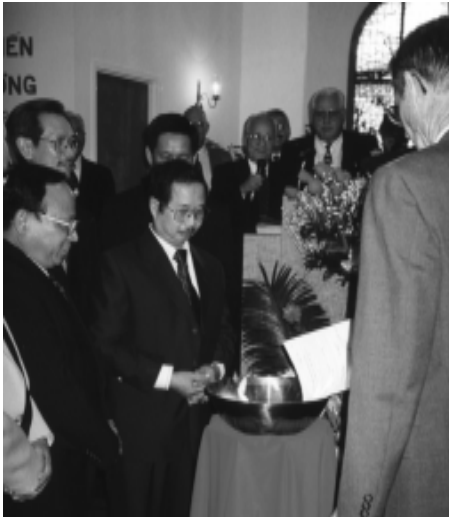
the entire country would fall under their control? Why was it necessary for them to leave at this time? What would happen to the work of the church and the institutions left behind? These were some of the issues and questions we had to wrestle with and agonize over during the few days that had led up to the event of Friday afternoon, April 25, 1975. These questions will never be resolved until we get to the New Earth.

Thousands of members and many pastors and teachers and other employees remained behind in Vietnam. They had to pick up the responsibilities of leadership and carry on the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to the best of their ability. Some lost their lives. Some were forced into re-education camps. They could not move or travel from one area to another without permission. Most of the churches were shut down, and all the schools were closed. Most of the decisions that affected people's daily lives were made for them by higher authorities. Life was extremely difficult for many of years. Only in the past few years has there been an easing of the restrictions governing the work of the Adventist Church and agencies such as the Adventist Development and Relief Agency International (ADRA).

In retrospect, there are two parallel stories to tell about the past 25 years: One deals with what happened to the Vietnamese who left in April 1975; the other covers the work of the Adventist Church in Vietnam and the activities of the only legal organization that the Vietnamese government recognizes—ADRA.



The last U.S. aircraft leaves Vietnam in 1975.



Dedication of a Vietnamese church in Florida, U.S.A.

The church in Vietnam

My wife, Patricia, and I along with Pastor Le Cong Giao and a few other friends were recently in Saigon for the 25th anniversary celebration of the reunification of Vietnam. The heart of Ho Chi Minh City was packed. Big celebrations were underway. Signs advertising this event were on every corner and on most of the buildings. It was a festive occasion, somewhat like a New Year's celebration.

As we looked out from our hotel balcony to the street below to one of the major intersections of Ho Chi Minh City, I was impressed with the fact that many who were there celebrating the event had not even been born at the time of the fall of Saigon and the reunification of Vietnam. Little did they realize what their country had experienced over the past 25 to 50 years—the bloodshed, the maiming, and the killing of millions, many of them innocent civilians. The war took its toll on the Seventh-day Adventist Church along with other religious communities. This was evident throughout the country—especially for me.

During the last few years, I had returned several times to Vietnam, not

only to Ho Chi Minh City in the South but also to Hanoi and other northern cities. I had had the privilege of meeting with some of the highest officials, from the foreign minister and other foreign ministry personnel to the heads of other key ministries and entities—particularly health-care institutions.

My first visit to Hanoi took place 12 years after the fall of Saigon. I found government leaders eager to rebuild the country's infrastructure and to provide assistance to people, cities, and communities. I also heard them state on several occasions that religious freedom was a constitutional guarantee. But I discovered that what was guaranteed under the constitution and what was reality were two different things. Adventist leaders do not have the freedom to travel around the country on church business as they would like. Evangelism is extremely difficult.

However, witnessing is being done, lives are being changed, growth is taking place, baptisms have occurred, the church is growing—but not as rapidly as in many other parts of the world.

A new and young group of Adventist leaders is emerging. Some are fortunate enough to study abroad with funding that has been made available from other sources, since the Adventist Church in Vietnam has very limited resources. Whether and when the church will be able to re-establish schools remains in question. We don't know when our publishing house will be back in operation. The publications our members use today are either brought in from the outside or are produced by individuals within the country using whatever technology is available.

The Adventist World Radio station in Guam beams Vietnamese broadcasts into the country. The broadcasts and the Bible correspondence courses have reawakened an interest in spiritual matters for thousands of Vietnamese who are eagerly searching for a better way, a surer hope, and a brighter future.

ADRA continues to expand its services throughout the country. Several projects are making a positive impact upon the local communities. Major health initiatives are a very high priority for the work of ADRA and similar agencies. A number of small hospitals have been built throughout the country. The communities that benefit from the services provided by these facilities have a very high regard for ADRA. Medical personnel in major health-care institutions are being trained by experts from other countries under the sponsorship of ADRA. Micro-enterprises are another activity promoted by ADRA, helping people to develop skills so that they may become successful in operating little business enterprises and provide economic welfare for their families.

Disaster assistance also has been much appreciated by the government, for the country does get hit with torrential rains and typhoons almost every year. Three of the highest ranking officials in the Vietnamese government recently visited ADRA's world headquarters to discuss future expansion of development and relief activities in their country. Funding for these initiatives will come from diverse donors. ADRA Australia has played a major role along with private donations from the U.S. and other nations.

The Vietnamese in the U.S.

Now, to the Vietnamese evacuees who came to the United States, particularly the Seventh-day Adventists evacuees. In addition to more than 410 who left Vietnam during that last week of April 1975, thousands more have arrived over the years. Some crossed the borders into other neighboring countries. Tens of thousands of people of all ages endeavored to leave Vietnam by boat—the so-called "boat people." Thousands of them lost their lives in tropical storms or at the hands of pi-

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Adventist Frontier Missions: Reaching the unreached in this generation

by Pamela Duncan

Are you looking for adventure? Try Adventist Frontier Missions. Organized in 1985, AFM works closely with the Seventh-day Adventist Church to expand the frontiers of God's family. AFM recruits committed Adventists to live among unreached people groups, to share the joy of knowing Jesus, and disciple new believers. Their guiding motto is: "Reaching the unreached in this generation."

AFM student and career missionaries learn the local language and culture, live among the people, and minister to their needs. They share the gospel with their new friends and invite them to know Jesus. New believers are then trained to take on church leadership

and share their faith with those around them. When a church is strong and is growing on its own, AFM missionaries move on to begin work with a new unreached group.

AFM is currently seeking 32 students and young adults to support the work of full-time missionaries in nine countries. AFM needs to fill positions in several categories.

The first category, home school education, allows you to support directly missionary families by working with their children. This frees the missionaries to focus on building relationships with local people and evangelism. Qualifications needed: a love for children and the knack of making learning fun.

Health care is the second category. This area allows you to teach local people how to take better care of themselves and each other. Many unreached people believe in spirits and witch doctors. Showing them what causes disease and how to improve their health helps break Satan's hold on their lives. Qualifications: a basic knowledge of health principles and certification in first aid. This area of service is ideal for registered nurses or nursing majors.

Literacy training is the third category. By teaching the local people how to read in their own language, you enable them to read the Bible. Qualifications needed: excellent interpersonal skills, small-group leadership skills, and a good command of the English language. You are expected to know how to convey successfully information and concepts. To teach Bible classes, you need to understand fully and be able to explain Bible principles and Adventist beliefs. Because literacy training involves learning the local language, this area of service is best suited for those willing to commit to serving more than one year.

And, finally, community development. Student missionaries assist the local people in developing water systems, successful farming, or business enterprises. Qualifications: a basic understanding of agriculture, water systems and/or basic bookkeeping and business skills.

AFM student missionaries must have a passion to follow Christ wherever He



Adventist Frontier Missions student volunteers for the year 2000.

leads and do whatever is asked, no matter how small the task. You need to have patience, flexibility, adaptability, responsibility, and organizational skills.

AFM asks all student missionaries to attend a four-week training session. The next session is scheduled from July 15 to August 11, 2001. AFM asks all missionaries to raise funds to support them during their service. Each student missionary is required to raise at least US\$4,200. (This amount covers the cost of passport, visa, required vaccinations, transportation, a four-week training session, and stipend.)

If you love adventure, enjoy a friendly relationship with Jesus, and feel the call to reach the unreached, I invite you to join Adventist Frontier Missions.

Pamela Duncan is Student Missions Coordinator for Adventist Frontier Missions. During 1994-1995 she served as a student missionary on the island of Yap in the Federated States of Micronesia. She graduated from Walla Walla College in 1998 with a B.A. in Mass Communication.

For more information

To learn more about AFM and the student-missionary positions open for the 2001-2002 school year, contact Pamela Duncan: P.O. Box 346; Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103; U.S.A.

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Ride to Glory

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hero Joshua Chamberlain Ryan as the scientist who "testifies" in a play based on *Inherit the Wind*, the author gives logical answers to the evolutionists' mantras regarding the origin of life and their deviations.

Johns has thoroughly researched the historical details of the 1925 Scopes trial in Tennessee, which also centered on evolution versus creation, and refers to it often in the book. His scientific explanations on evidences of design in nature demonstrate many fallacies of the evolutionary viewpoint. The author is meticulous in details and rigorous in his scientific research, and has consulted with members of the Geoscience Research Institute in Loma Linda, California.

The main plot of the story centers on a play depicting a courtroom drama that provides the creationist's answers to the theory of evolution. The drama's star is Josh Chamberlain Ryan, named after the famous Colonel Josh Chamberlain of Gettysburg fame during the American Civil War. Ryan is not a typical religious creationist, but a serious archeologist-paleontologist who thinks scientifically and sees design in natural phenomena. He believes that mega-evolution carries true observations beyond the parameters of authentic science. Dealing with topics such as biochemistry, paleontology, probability, embryology, geology, and others, he gives explanations opposing the theory of mega-evolution that appeal to one's logic. I believe, however, that a non-scientist would have some difficulties using the same rationale in arguing with an evolutionary scientist due to the technical nature of much of the material.

Ride to Glory offers not only a gripping story with a meaningful outcome, but also presents the rational arguments supporting scientific creationism in a way that is both intellectually and emo-

tionally satisfying. Above all else, the author challenges the reader in an exciting and confident manner to believe that creationism, far from being a fairy tale, is supported by the evidence found in nature. "Truth stands in three dimensions; it needs no defense. Falsehood collapses on itself, melting at the whim of the sun" (p. 267).

Read the book and enjoy the story, even as the arguments sharpen your intellect.

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The road to Jesus

by Cezar Luchian

Once I believed in New Age, now I am bound for the New Earth.

The news was absolutely shocking. For years, my friend was a convinced atheist. Agnosticism held its sway over his entire approach to life. Then one day in late 1991, he broke the news to me: He had decided to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I didn't know much about Adventists; only some rumors and criticism spread by communist propaganda in partnership with the Greek Orthodox Church in my homeland of Romania.

Unable to hide my astonishment and disapproval of my friend's choice, I argued with him, trying to "rescue" him. However, at the end of a long debate, I found out that things were not so simple and crystal-clear as they appeared to me, and that there were certain issues in Christianity that deserved careful study and reflection.

Is the Bible relevant for all matters of life? How safe is it to follow tradition? What does God require for my salvation? How effective is it to pray to the Virgin Mary? Which day of the week is the Lord's Day? What does the future hold for us? Do all religions lead to heaven?

With these questions in mind, I went back to Bucharest to start the spring semester in my last year of studies at the university. But that also happened to be my first year in the school of Christ.

At that time, like many other young Romanians, I was involved in all sorts of New Age practices that had invaded our country after the fall of communism. Believing in a sort of syncretistic philosophy, which for me reconciled all differences between religions, I was studying Zen and practicing Yoga meditation, being attracted by the monks' solitary life-

style, as I prepared myself for the future.

Given this context, it was very hard for me to accept that there is only *one* Christ, *one* way to be saved, *one* inspired book, *one* holy day, and *one* true church. Nevertheless, I began to read the Bible. My friend advised me to start with the Gospels. For seven months, I spent two hours each evening reading my New Testament, even as I continued my New Age adventure. The more I read the New Testament, the more uncomfortable I felt about my New Age meditation and about certain doctrines of the Greek Orthodox Church.

Summer came, and I was back home, still struggling with many unanswered questions. I told my friend that I needed more time to study. I asked him for more books to read. He gave me a book dealing with Bible prophecy and a brochure about the controversial issue of the Sabbath. Interestingly enough, almost the same day I found the book *The Great Controversy* in my mother's shelf. Mother had never had time to read it, but I decided to make up for her negligence.

So, I spent an entire month reading my new discovery, in addition to studying the Bible and other books. I was reading almost eight hours a day. Soon I found myself at a crossroad in my life. I was at a decisive point where I had to make a choice. I could accept the new found truth and let it change my life, my religious philosophy, and my plans for the future. Or I could reject it and continue in my old ways. At the end of that month, I decided to give up my New Age beliefs and practices, accept Jesus as my Saviour, and observe the

seventh-day Sabbath. It was not easy for me to take that step, and I am sure that some day I will find out about the "angelic battle" that took place over my soul during those days. I left the New Age and found myself on a journey toward the New Earth.

For me, the Bible soon became the most fascinating book ever written, and Jesus Christ became my *only* true teacher and a most precious friend. I made my decision to be baptized at the end of one of Elder Brad Thorp's evangelistic crusades in Bucharest in the fall of 1992. Then God began to pour His many blessings and gifts into my life—including working for the church as the editor of the Romanian *Signs of the Times*, marrying Cecilia, a wonderful wife, two lovely children, and last but not least, getting a full scholarship that allowed me to complete a degree in Theology at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee, U.S.A. I also accepted God's call to teach and share the saving truths of the gospel.

Shall I say that I am thankful to God for all these blessings? That would not be enough! Words cannot express my gratitude—and eternity will be too short to utter it.

*Cezar Luchian is a graduate student at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, planning to return to his homeland, Romania.
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Vietnam

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rates. However, many were eventually able to make their way to the U.S. and other countries. The local Vietnamese community led many of them to the small Adventist Vietnamese congregations scattered in the Western and Southeastern regions of the United States. As these congregations ministered to them, many realized that the love, care, and support they were receiving from their fellow countrymen was prompted by the love that came from a higher power. They too chose to unite with God's people.

A number of those who left Vietnam in April 1975 on the Air Force plane were not members of our church, but worked in our Saigon Adventist hospital. Many have joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Some were well-trained physicians and other health-care professionals. Their talents have been well used in their adoptive country, and their children have gone on to become successful professionals such as physicians, educators, researchers, and computer experts.

The work of Adventists among the Vietnamese in the United States has flourished. There are now 12 fully organized congregations; eight of them possess their own facilities, which were built with their own sacrificial efforts and resources. They are faithful in supporting the work of the church, generous with their gifts, and zealous to share their faith with others. While the membership growth in Vietnam has been difficult and slow, the growth in this country as the result of the evacuation that took place 25 years ago has been phenomenal. We praise God for the commitment and dedication of the Vietnamese leaders in this country.

On September 2, 2000, I had the privilege of leading out in the dedication of a new Vietnamese church facility locat-

ed in Orlando, Florida. This was a thrilling experience, one in which we reminded ourselves that we are all pilgrims, strangers in a foreign land. Although we work, study, and live in this country, it is not our permanent home. We are only transients. Heaven and heaven alone is the home to which we all really look forward.

Ralph S. Watts is the director of Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and the author of Saigon, the Final Days. His address: 12501 Old Columbia Pike; Silver Spring, Maryland 20904; U.S.A.

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21st century

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Interchange

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